

Summer Night of Nightmares – Tokushima in Flames

夏の夜の悪夢～徳島炎上

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The night of July 3rd, twentieth year of Showa, 1945, I was at home with my father and grandparents. My mother and brother weren't around as they had gone back to her family home. When I was a third grade student at Citizen's School (*kokumin gakkou* – now known as elementary school), I always had my school bag and emergency box by my pillow. Whenever there was an emergency I grabbed my things quickly as I slept upstairs. I don't know what time it was but I woke up suddenly, I could see outside because I had my windows open to let the heat out, Mt. Bizan was glowing red in front of my eyes. I didn't know what was going on so I got up and looked outside, many people came running to the front of my house, it was my classmate "A"kun's family. A man came and yelled at them "Don't run away! Put out the fire!" so they started heading back. After that my grandmother came and took me to the air raid shelter that was dug under the ground floor. My grandfather and father were watching the situation in the garden. Soon grandfather shouted "Come out quickly!" When I went outside it was as bright as day and sparks were flying overhead. For a little while my grandfather was

saying "Evacuate" and my father was arguing that we should "Stay and protect the house!" The momentum of the flames was getting stronger and it was dangerous so we decided to evacuate.

I was trying to get out of the front door but the flames were too close so I couldn't get out, I broke down the wooden backdoor, the house backed on to "B"san's house in Naka Sako-cho and entered their backyard, due to the evacuation there was nobody home so I ran through their house with our shoes on and through their unlocked front door out the other side. I ran through the alleyway next to Fukuzo Temple to Shin Sako-cho. By that time the plate fences were kindling and the telephone poles were wrapped in flames, there was nobody around.

When I left Kita Sako-cho and reached Sako Station there were no fires, I met those who had been evacuated. My grandfather said I should evacuate further away, I went north and came to Tamiya where several people were squatting by a roadside canal. The main house housekeeper was there (*omoya no obaasan*). I was crying and saying that I had been separated from my family. We walked together until the banks of the Yoshino River and then sat down. We looked towards Tokushima City and as the flames flared up it was a sea of fire on one side. The flames were reflected on Mt. Bizan so that it too looked like it was on fire. The fuselages of the planes that were moving back and forth

dropping incendiary bombs were stained red by the flames. The Yoshinogawa Bridge was burning. There were many people on the banks of the river but everyone was silent.

When dawn broke my father went to work at the army hospital, we left for Kuramoto which hadn't been burnt, and we were provided breakfast with an acquaintance at the Taisho-ro *ryokan* (a traditional inn), the rice was steaming hot and my grandfather said he would not chew it because it might misplace his dentures. I had left the house without my schoolbag and emergency box, all we brought with us was a single Buddhist mortuary tablet (*ihai*).

Everyone in the main house (*omoya*) was safe. "A"kun's parents were both burned to death but the children had survived. After that he lived at a charitable institution. I don't know what became of him other than that he worked in a soba noodle restaurant after graduating from junior high school. I too would have been burned to death if I had waited any longer. Even though I want to I cannot forget that nightmare I experienced in the summer when I was eight years and nine months old.