

The Great Tokushima Air Raid 徳島大空襲**Otaki Kiyoko 大滝 キヨ子****Kamihachiman-cho, Tokushima-shi 徳島市上八万町**

It was during the summer of the sixth grade of elementary school when I experienced the Great Tokushima Air Raid. At the time it was what is known as the citizen school system (*kokumin gakkou*) and I went to Hachiman Citizen School. The place I was born is now where a Otsubo Kane-no-Torii (a copper torii gate) stands in Hachiman-cho, Tokushima-shi. Since the school was far way we often didn't go and we would receive some education at the Ema-do (shrine building where votive horse picture tablets are displayed) of Hachiman Shrine. My teachers had to encourage us students from the first to sixth grades to come to school. In the sixth grade we often helped look after the younger students but I don't remember doing much studying. I went to the farms to help mend soldier's clothes or chop ramie nettles (*choma*). When I was small I thought I wanted to help others and the soldiers were fighting on the battlefields, I believed that Japan would do its best to win the war.

However, from midnight on July 3rd to the dawn of July 4th there was the Tokushima air raid. There was something different about this air raid alarm, the neighbourhood association volunteer's voice sounded desperate as he shouted "Hurry! Hurry! Get to the

safety of the air raid shelter!” I remember he screamed loudly. We turned off the electricity and went into the air raid shelter dug in front of the house.

My older brother was active service at that time, so, my father, my mother, me, my younger brother, younger sister – the five of us – went in to the shelter. The B29s always flew high in the sky but I thought they were flying low then. I saw bombs fall like rain on the neighbouring village of Hashimoto, right after the eastern sky turned red it looked like fireworks went off with a “*pachi pachi*” sound and I still remember that houses were on fire. I could never forget that scene. All five of us were frightened. I had been praying in my heart the enemy planes would go away soon. Fortunately, no bombs were dropped where we were, nobody was injured and our house was safe.

That morning, when it became bright, the people who escaped with their lives spent a frightening night under bridges and in the rivers of Tokushima. They made their way through the mountains to Ichinomiya and Kamiyama with exhausted faces and tattered kimono. I remember a procession of people walking to wherever their relatives lived. I will never forget that procession of battered people. Even in my home, distant relatives with nowhere else to go came and stayed in our barn for a while after their house had been burnt down. My mother did her best to make meals for everyone. It is only because of the sixty-fifth anniversary of the air raid that I am remembering these things.

These frightening memories should not be repeated again, we should learn from the memories of the past. Now, I am happy but this happiness is the result of many sacrifices in war and I remain full of gratitude.