

Tokushima Air Raid Experiences 徳島市空襲体験談**Yuasa Kimiko 湯浅 喜三子****Fukui-cho, Anan-shi 阿南市福井町**

My hometown (*furosato*), in the centre of Yamaguchi-cho, is reached by walking four kilometres along the river bank from Kuwano Station. The high mountain to the north has been called “Sodegataki” since ancient times. The mountain has an eye-catching white limestone surface. Big trees do not grow there, the towering summit is bare. Behind the ridge is Akadani, Nagaike-cho, an area popularly known for the groves of plum trees. When you throw a stone in the deep limestone hole nearby it makes a “*kankara*” sound so it became known as “Kankara Hole”.

I was born in 1925. I was twenty years old. Before dawn on July 4th, 1945 (it is estimated that it was around 4am), I looked up into the sky over the limestone peak to the north of the house and the sky was glowing red. My body trembled in astonishment and my chest wouldn't stop throbbing. I prayed intently that it would disappear as soon as possible but the sky remained red. I was just waiting for the sky to become light and once I was sure it was light I went into my house. It would have been good to check the news in the newspaper or on the television but during the war that was not possible at my home.

Four towns (Nagaike, Takarada, Nakanoshima and Yokomi) merged from April 1944 and, so, the central youth school opened an office in the west, along the prefectural road. I was asked to teach there. I did my best but my ability was limited. At one time I took thirty students to work at Toyobo Textile Factory in Komatsushima. We planted sweet potatoes and vegetables every day, even on the banks of the Oka River because it was the era of food shortages.

One day, in late autumn, 1945, seven of us went to Tokushima because we were curious to see the aftermath of the bombing. When a single B29 bomber flew over it was frightening, when people saw it they hid in the air raid shelters. It is impossible to imagine the difficulties faced by the people of Tokushima. My heart was pained. I saw that all you could buy in the stores was dried radish and sweet potato. When I went for a meal they served a kind of sushi roll (*makizushi*). I was given udon noodles in seaweed, instead of rice, with egg and vegetables, it was really well wrapped. I thought it was a good idea as it tasted good and was unusual. In the kitchenware shop two bowls cost ten yen. During the war, sugar, salt and soy sauce had been rationed. We didn't have a lot of money either. We ate a lot more wheat than rice as a result.

My brother had been called to the front so I took his bicycle to the bicycle shop and had it converted to make it easier for a woman to ride. I rode the bicycle from

Yamaguchi-cho to Kuwano Station and commuted by train. I attended Murasaki sewing and vocational school in Terashima-honcho. War was declared on February 8th, 1941. Days were short as after 5pm we commuted home under blackout conditions. The lights in the train were covered with black cloth, light shone only directly under the bulbs.

Student organisations, hospitals, labour etc. the home front defended hard but on August 15th, 1945, the war ended.

I sincerely hope we can live in a peaceful country forever.