

## **While there is Life 命あればこそ**

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The scars left by the events of the Tokushima Air Raid will never disappear...

"I don't want it. Not until I win."

"If you think about it, there isn't really a lack of poverty."

It was a war through which we struggled with gritted teeth. Since that time, sixty-five years have passed by and I have joined the elderly at the age of seventy-seven. The ability to have the happy life I have now is thanks my survival through that time.

I wanted to capture the disastrous events that unfolded on the worst night in history on camera. The sounding of the air raid sirens, the voices of people calling out, people trying to escape the sea of fire, the machine gun fire of enemy planes showering on people below, and I witnessing these bizarre happenings as a child; all of it, I saw with these eyes of mine. My mother and I managed to save ourselves by crouching underneath a large tree. As my mother quietly opened her eyes, she exclaimed "You're all right aren't you, Haruko!" and with incredible strength she hugged me tightly.

While the firebombs came raining down, we were aided by the blanket that my mother carried with her. Soaked with the dirty water flowing in the ditches, we used the

blanket to cover our heads and extinguish the flames that were climbing higher. Thanks to that, we were saved. We spent the night between the grave stones of Teramachi cemetery. When morning came, I tried to get up, but my legs would not move. Fear set in with a shiver and I couldn't raise my voice due to hunger; I just stayed there in a stupor. Soon after, a member of the military police came passing out rice balls. People began to scramble toward him with outstretched hands. "Children come first" he said, and he passed one to me. There were people with hands covered in blood; people with blood running from their heads; people whose legs had been torn off; people with torn clothing and burns on their bodies. Everyone was scattered about muttering "We have met with the Buddha in this hell. We are thankful, we are thankful", as they held on to rice balls.

Once again, the ear-splitting air raid sirens sounded. My mother and I rushed to the bomb shelter in front of us. Everyone inside sat holding hands and I could hear their silent weeping.

The streets of Tokushima changed from what they were the day before. What at first looked like charred logs were the remains of people scattered about on the ground. It was a pitiful sight. The smoldering buildings billowed out smoke. People were floating on the surface of the river. This was the awful tale of the air raids.

The generations also changed the streets of Tokushima and the scars left by the awful destruction of war are probably still left behind. It can probably be said that the only people who know of that are the generations born before the first year of Showa (1926).

My mother and I held on to life with one rice ball and were able to walk to a friend's house where thirty other victims of the war had also escaped. One lady said to me, "Since the army delivered some rice, eat these potatoes", and she put miso on to them which made them quite tasty. Even now, I feel that I will never forget the taste of those rice balls and potatoes. The sole reason for that is that it became a prized possession that allowed me to cling to dear life.