

PART FIVE

*“One Hundred Million
Die Together”*

*Kūshū da. Kūshū da. Sore kūshū da.
Aka da. Aka da. Shōidan.
Hashire. Hashire. Mushiro da, suna da.
Kūshū da. Kūshū da. Sore kūshū da.
Kuro da. Kuro da. Sore bakudan.
Mimi o fusage. O-meme o tojiyo.*

Air Raid. Air raid. Here comes an air raid!
Red! Red! Incendiary bomb!
Run! Run! Get mattress and sand!
Air Raid. Air raid. Here comes an air raid!
Black! Black! Here come the bombs!
Cover your ears! Close your eyes!

—A song for a children's dance to practice civil-defense techniques.
From the *Collection of the People's Favorite Songs* [*Kokumin aishō kashū*], widely used in 1944.

IN JAPAN, people had their first glimpse of how truly bleak were their prospects from news reports of the fate of the civilian residents of Saipan, which fell to the Americans in July 1944. Newspapers across Japan, for instance, carried translations of a *Time* magazine article that described women and children committing suicide, and especially the extraordinary sight of young Japanese women choosing to plunge off cliffs rather than surrender to American soldiers. Such awe-filled "enemy" reports were presented by Tokyo as clear evidence of the glory of civilian sacrifices, and portrayed as proof of the "pride of the Japanese woman." Typically, the *Yomiuri* newspaper carried a comment by a Tokyo Imperial University professor that "our courage will be buoyed up by this one hundred times, one thousand times" and exhorted its readers to "sacrifice before our great victory."*

This was fully in keeping with how the defeats the Empire suffered had been described to the Japanese public for more than a year. All such disasters, from Guam to Saipan, were called "great sacrifices prior to Japan's great victory." As the bombing of the Homeland increased in intensity, the press had little choice but to acknowledge that "America's edge in the war of material has been creating difficulty for the Imperial forces." This sort of statement was usually qualified, somewhat lamely, by the claim that "Japan's losses are limited."† It was also always emphasized that America, as an individualistic and liberal nation, had to try to fight a short war in order to keep pacifist sentiments under control at home. The Japanese public was repeatedly reassured by military men, government officials, and their favored intellectuals that if only Japan fought in the true Yamato Spirit, America's will to battle would collapse in rancorous homefront disarray.

While such official calls for sacrifice in the name of victory intensified, the most common topic of conversation in Japan's cities was how to cope with the difficulties of daily life. In the face of an increasingly effective Allied naval blockade and terrible labor shortages among farmers and fishermen, food shortages became acute. The price of rice on the black market soared, and police assigned to "economic" duty were kept busy checking packages and bundles on streets and trains, looking for all sorts of contraband. Even train tickets were impossible to purchase

* Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, *Ankoku nikki, 1942-1945* [*Diary of Dark Days, 1942-1945*] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1990), pp. 220-22.

† Japanese papers were virtually unanimous in their use of these turns of phrase at the end of the war.

without either official or military vouchers. In 1943, Sundays, as days of rest, were abolished.

Military setbacks on the rim of Japan's Pacific empire, no matter how cloaked, gradually brought the Homeland within range of American air attack. Defense schemes against such attacks, though prepared with great energy and involving the whole population, were totally unrealistic. People were encouraged to dig small, nearly useless shelters under the floors of their living rooms, or in the corners of household gardens. By the sides of city streets, slit trenches and person-sized holes were also readied. Everywhere, women sewed supposedly protective headgear stuffed with cotton for themselves and their children, and were ordered to carry these "helmets" suspended from their shoulders at all times, facing severe reprimands from teachers or officials if found "unprotected."

The responsibility for civilian defense fell primarily on women, since most able-bodied husbands, fathers, and sons were either in the military or at factories, which they were often obliged to "defend" in case of attack. Neighborhood associations conducted firefighting exercises, featuring such primitive methods as water-bucket relays and use of damp mops to put out sparks from incendiary bombs. Hand-operated pumps and fire extinguishers—little more than large water pistols—were stockpiled, and cisterns and kettles were filled. A blackout was strictly enforced. Even a lit cigarette in the night could bring a severe admonition. Later in the war, pulling down buildings *en masse* to create firebreaks was begun in some cities.

Concentrated attacks by American B-29 heavy bombers against Japan began in June 1944 from bases in China. Initially aimed at industrial targets and carried out from high altitudes, they grew heavier in the fall of 1944, when Allied bases in the Mariana Islands (captured in June) became operational. Raids now came regularly, but not until the early morning darkness of March 10, 1945, did the Americans first fully employ new tactics that would in the space of less than three months reduce most of Japan's major cities to ashes. That raid, as recalled by survivors in some of the interviews that follow, likely took the lives of more than a hundred thousand people; the figure will never be known, for almost all official registration records were destroyed in the inferno that consumed one-quarter of the nation's capital in a single night. A million people were rendered homeless at a stroke. Since the overwhelming majority of Japan's urban structures and almost all housing was constructed of wood and other easily combustible materials, no civilian-defense efforts could stop Japan's cities from going up in flames. Those who stayed at their "posts" in an air raid as planned, to defend home, neighborhood, or

factory, were simply the most likely candidates for death in the ensuing fire storms that ravaged urban Japan.

Yet official reports and public announcements sought to minimize even this catastrophe and turn it to propaganda advantage. The *Asahi* newspaper of March 11, for instance, carried the headline, "130 B-29s Blindly Bombed Imperial City. 15 Shot Down and About 50 Planes Damaged." In the words of the accompanying article, "the military, government offices, and the people jointly dealt with the audacious enemy's blind bombing. Our accumulation of war power for the final battle in the Homeland will not be blocked by such an enemy attack. Rather, it will stir our fighting spirit and our resolve to destroy the enemy."° Such statements were belied by the facts. By March 18—only eight days after the destruction of Tokyo—the major cities of Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe had each been devastated by an incendiary raid made by more than three hundred planes.

People learned how to react to these attacks, not from military or civilian authorities, but from their own terrible experiences. They learned that they should flee as soon as the air-raid warning sounded rather than trying to stay to extinguish fires. Although the authorities chided citizens for simply escaping, in air raids on Tokyo on April 13 and on the Tokyo-Kawasaki-Yokohama area on April 15, although 220,000 houses were destroyed, the number of fatalities and other casualties was only one-fifteenth those of March 10, despite a refinement in American tactics—the addition of delayed-action bombs meant to hinder fire-fighting efforts and to leave behind a fear of further explosions even after the bombers had departed.† Such air raids on cities meant an end to any possibility of making a distinction between front and rear areas. Mothers, children, the old—everyone was now in the combat zone. By spring 1945, neither Allied military institutions nor the Japanese military and government seemed to have any desire to differentiate combatants from noncombatants.

The battle for the Japanese Home Islands officially began on April 1, 1945, on the island of Okinawa, the southernmost of Japan's forty-seven prefectures. In early 1945, the people of the prefecture had already mobilized to defend their homes. The *Okinawa Shinpō*, the island's only daily newspaper, asked the army chief-of-staff on the islands, Colonel Chō Isamu, what the residents of Okinawa should do in case the enemy

° Saotome Katsumoto, *Tōkyō daikushū* [*The Great Tokyo Air Raid*] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1970), p. 177.

† Saotome Katsumoto, *Tōkyō ga moeta hi: Sensō to chūgakusei* [*The Day Tokyo Burned: War and Middle School Students*] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1979), pp. 171–72.

landed. His response was, "Accept the leadership of the military simply and without hesitation. All residents of the prefecture must become soldiers. They must destroy the enemy with such fighting spirit that each one of them will kill ten [of the enemy]." Chō added that a military's duty was to win wars, not lose them in order to protect local residents. By mid-February, the *Okinawa Shinpō* was already editorializing: "Arrogant America targets our South West Islands. Nimitz [Chester A. Nimitz, commander of the American fleet in the Pacific] begins his operation. It's a god-given opportunity to eradicate the enemy. All residents of the prefecture, exhibit your *tokkō* spirit!"^a

Once the American forces landed, the villages and towns of Okinawa and adjoining smaller islands became battlegrounds. Those residents not able to escape into the island's northern wilderness were directly exposed to what many described as a "typhoon of steel"—naval shelling, artillery, bombs, mortars, machine-guns, flame-throwers, and satchel charges. Soldiers from other parts of Japan assigned to defend the island, Okinawans called into the local defense forces or mobilized to act as guides, student nurses, boy runners, and other irregular forces, as well as women and children, all found themselves huddled together in caves—some natural, others man-made—helpless in the face of America's overwhelming military power. As described by survivors below, the "friendly forces" did not exactly turn out to be protectors of Okinawan residents. Japanese troops routinely ordered mothers with babies out of caves or forced them to kill their crying infants so as not to attract the attention of the enemy. Many local people were executed by their own forces as potential "spies" before Okinawa was declared officially secured by the Americans on June 22, 1945.

The costs of the Battle of Okinawa were enormous. But while many Okinawans still remained in hiding and resisted surrendering, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August ushered in a new level of frightfulness. ■

^a Ōta Masahide, *Okinawa no kokoro: Okinawa to watakushi* [*The Heart of Okinawa: Okinawa and I*] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1988), p. 65.

16 / THE BURNING SKIES

“Hiroko died because of me.”

FUNATO KAZUYO

She was living with her family in Tokyo on the night of March 9, 1945, when the Japanese capital was attacked by 325 B-29 heavy bombers.

The tactics adopted in this raid were a radical departure from those employed previously in attacks against Japan's cities. Most had been high-altitude daylight approaches to pinpointed targets, primarily employing high explosives. The commander of America's air offensive from the Marianas, General Curtis E. LeMay, ordered this raid to proceed largely at low altitudes of between 5,000 and 8,000 feet. Moreover, guns and ammunition were left off many of the planes, so that extra clusters of M-69 jellied-gasoline incendiary bombs could be carried. Each plane could carry 40 clusters, each comprising some 38 bombs, for a total of about 1,520 bombs per plane. The raiders dropped some high explosives and phosphorus munitions as well. Tokyo's residential areas, rather than specific factory complexes, were the intended targets. The dispersal of Japanese industry among small workshops was given as a reason for the selection of the Shitamachi district along the Sumida River as the primary target zone. Studies made of the fires that followed the Kantō earthquake of 1923 and analysis of the construction of Japanese homes and neighborhoods had shown that such tactics would likely start uncontrollable fires. The goal was to incinerate as much of the city as possible.

Today Funato Kazuyo lives with her husband and two sons in Katsushika Ward, Tokyo. Her husband was orphaned in the bombing of Tokyo that day. Recently she wrote a children's book about her experiences. Tears well up in her eyes, and she is frequently overcome as she recalls that night.

Our school seemed to be shaded in militaristic hues. The themes of school pageants were “soldiers,” or “buglers at the charge,” or “military nurses.” In all our compositions, drawings, and in calligraphy, we wrote to the soldiers of our gratitude for their fighting. Teachers became very strict, perhaps in order to bring up “little patriots” who would obey at a

single command. My school was new, so it was easily militarized. We were famous for marching. After the morning assembly, we marched, and it made us feel just like soldiers. Martial music blared from speakers as we rapidly formed four lines, then eight lines, all in step. It was thrilling, carrying out crisp moves to the piercing commands of the physical education teacher. We also had air-defense drills. We put on our special fire helmets and, holding our school bags, we hid under the desks in our classroom. You covered your ears with your thumbs and with the remaining four fingers covered your eyes. They said our eyes would pop out and our eardrums burst if we didn't. We also practiced putting out fires by bucket relay.

I had three elder brothers. Kōichi, my eldest, and Minoru, the next, were in pharmacy school and both had been mobilized under the student mobilization law passed the year before. Minoru was dispatched to the Army Medical Supply Depot around March 1944. On August 11, I became the second to leave the family. I was sent to the countryside under the Group Evacuation Law. I was in the sixth grade. There were three younger than me. Baby brother was only three months old when I left. If I'd remained at home I'd have been carrying him on my back, while supervising my younger sisters' play and running errands in our neighborhood. I wondered what would happen to the little ones when I left, but I was quite excited by the idea of going off with a large group. As it was, they evacuated to a relative's house with Grandmother.

We sixth-graders were finally sent home from our evacuation area in Yamagata on March 2, 1945. Six days after we got home came the raid. If evacuation was intended to save lives, there was no need for our return, but there wasn't space for us in the village anymore. New third-graders would soon be coming. I wrote Minoru a letter from Yamagata saying, "Let's meet in Tokyo."

I didn't know my younger sisters were already back in Tokyo. Hiroko had reached school age, so she had to have a physical examination in Tokyo. Grandmother returned with Teruko on her back, saying, "If Hiroko is going back, we'll go too." The idea was to get the whole family together again in conjunction with my return for graduation.

Besides, air raids hadn't been that frequent in Tokyo. We were really boisterous and happy. Yoshiaki, my third elder brother, returned, too. The night of March 9, Minoru came home from the site of his work mobilization. So, by chance, all of us were in Tokyo that night. It was so unfortunate.

A north wind had been blowing all day. It was cold. We were all asleep because those days you retired early, since you couldn't burn the electric lights late. The first air raid came a little after ten o'clock. It came

in a flash. There was a preliminary alert—three or four planes—but immediately, the warning was canceled. Just reconnaissance, they must have thought. Then the full force of the raid hit. When Mother woke me, all was in a terrible uproar, great loud noises everywhere. Father had to dash to his duty station at the school with his iron helmet and his haversack, because he was on the medical detail of the Vigilance Corps. At that time we always slept in *monpe*, so I awoke Hiroko while my mother put the baby on her back, and we went into the shelter dug under the shop. My three brothers had gone out to extinguish small fires from incendiary bombs. Suddenly Kōichi rushed in and told us to run in the direction of the school before our escape route was cut off. “We’ll come later,” he said. When we went out, we could see that to the west, in the direction of Fukagawa, everything was bright red. The north wind was incredibly strong. The drone of the planes was an overwhelming roar, shaking earth and sky. Everywhere, incendiary bombs were falling.

The baby on Momma’s back howled. I had Hiroko by the hand. Teruko was staying at Grandmother’s house. Minoru went there to get them. When he arrived, incendiary bombs were falling heavily and nobody was around, so feeling himself in great danger, he turned back. Mother, the baby, Hiroko, and I were by then in the shelters behind the school. They were uncovered and were more like lines of trenches. This was where we were supposed to assemble if anything happened.

Incendiaries began hitting near the school and the line of fire was coming closer. People panicked. Running, screaming. “We’re all going to die! The fire’s coming!” The sound of incendiary bombs falling, “*Whizzz*,” the deafening reverberations of the planes, and the great roar of fire and wind overwhelmed us. “If we stay here we’ll die! Let’s run!” Everybody danced to this theme. My mother and I, too. Many people who stayed there survived, but almost as if we were compelled to heed those voices calling, “Women and children, follow us. Why are you hesitating?” we jumped out. Somebody was shouting, “If you go toward Sunamachi you’ll be safe!” Sunamachi was south of our house. Large bombs had fallen in that area weeks before and many parts of Sunamachi were nothing but vacant lots. Sunamachi was downwind and it was an ironclad rule to go upwind in a fire, but we couldn’t go any further in the other direction. A firestorm lay that way. You’d have to go through it, and so many people were running madly away from the fire. “Make for Sunamachi!” We left the shelter and crossed the wooden bridge over the drainage ditch in front of the school. Then we ran into our three brothers. My father, too. The Vigilance Corps had given up. I felt, “At last we’re safe.”

Nearby was Sarue Onshi Park. Father must have judged that it would be safer to go in there, so we made for it, all holding hands. When

we got to the foot of the small Ōshima Bridge they wouldn't let us enter the park. It was already full of people coming from the Fukagawa direction. We had to backtrack through that firestorm. Even two or three minutes was a terrible loss of time.

"Hold on tight, don't be separated," Minoru told me as he took my hand. Kōichi put Hiroko on his back. We ran in the direction of Sunamachi. There are many rivers and bridges in that direction. We reached Shinkai Bridge. Sunamachi lay beyond, but that's where we were all scattered. The wind and flames became terrific. We were in Hell. All the houses were burning, debris raining down on us. It was horrible. Sparks flew everywhere. Electric wires sparked and toppled. Mother, with my little brother on her back, had her feet swept out from under her by the wind and she rolled away. Father jumped after her. "Are you all right?" he screamed. Yoshiaki shouted, "Dad!"

I don't know if his intention was to rescue Father or to stay with him, but they all disappeared instantly into the flames and black smoke. Everything was burning. In front of us were factories, red flames belching from windows. Kōichi, Minoru, Hiroko, and I, the four of us, were the only ones left.

There was thick shrubbery and a slight dip at the foot of the bridge, and we huddled together there. Kōichi shouted that we couldn't go further, and we really couldn't go back. Many people jumped into Onagigawa, twenty meters wide. We could just barely see a roadside shelter from where we were. Ditches had been dug along many roadsides in case of air raids. Kōichi took Hiroko's hand and I clung to Minoru. We dashed across the road through the flames. Hiroko's headgear caught fire. It was stuffed with cotton. The four of us tumbled into the shelter. We tried to remove the burning cover from her head, but it was tied tight so as not to be blown away by the wind. Hiroko tried to pull it off herself, so both her hands were burned. Her hair burned, too. We were finally able to tear it off and smothered the fire with our legs. We lay flat on our stomachs, thinking that we would be all right if the fire was gone by morning, but the fire kept pelting down on us. Minoru suddenly let out a horrible scream and leapt out of the shelter, flames shooting out of his back. Kōichi stood up calling, "Minoru!" and instantly, he too, was blown away. Only Hiroko and I remained.

There was someone else in the shelter, a schoolgirl. I was really saved by her. I don't think I could have endured the fear if it had been just Hiroko and me. There was no cover, and all the surroundings were aflame and sparks rained into the shelter, and Hiroko kept screaming, "It's hot, hot!" We would have jumped out, and my little Hiroko and I would have been killed. The schoolgirl came close to us. "I'm separated

from my family. Let's do our best, the three of us." She was perhaps two years older than me. I don't remember if she told us her name or not. She covered Hiroko with her body and then we put Hiroko in between us and lay flat at the bottom of the air-raid ditch. Hiroko was burned very severely. She kept crying, "My hands hurt, my hands hurt. Please give me water, Kazu-chan." I scratched out a hollow in the earth and put her hands into it. She said her hands felt cool and comfortable. We spent the night there, waiting for the fire to pass.

First the sounds stopped. At the earliest signs of dawn the girl said, "Let's go back where it's already burned. Everyone will probably be safe and will return there. You'll be able to go home then." The thought of being separated from this girl made me anxious. I asked her where she was going, and she told me the Eighth District. Our house was in the opposite direction. We left the shelter together. By the Shinkai Bridge many people had perished. Those who couldn't cross the street and make it to the shelter had jumped into the river. Dead bodies covered the water. Some people had tried to escape by running under the bridge but they, too, had been roasted.

When I separated from the schoolgirl and recrossed the bridge I'd crossed only the night before, I saw charcoal-black people. It was truly horrendous. There were some whose clothes were still smouldering but whose bodies weren't moving. Not just one or two. At the foot of the bridge was a small police station. Only the concrete was left. But I thought a policeman might be there anyway. I let Hiroko lean back against a concrete wall. Then the thought came that Father and my brothers would pass this way, that we'd meet here and go back to the pharmacy together. I was probably afraid of walking the street alone. I waited at the foot of the bridge, but nobody came. Hiroko asked for water. People said she should be taken to a relief station for treatment. Finally, we arrived at the burned-out area that once was our house. I was able to locate it only because in front we had a large concrete cistern full of water. In it was a dead man, half his body in the cistern. He wasn't burnt at all. Many of the glass bottles in my father's drug store had melted down. The store itself was a pile of rubble.

Everything was so quiet. Hiroko and I sat on the concrete steps at the entrance to the store and waited. A young woman from the neighborhood association came by and said, "Your eldest brother's just over there." Kōichi was sitting on a burnt-out truck in the garage of a delivery firm nearby. He couldn't see because he'd run through the smoke. He was trembling. "How could you have come back safe?" he asked. He'd assumed we were all dead. Tears of joy streamed down his face. As he left the shelter, he'd been bowled over and tumbled far down the street.

He regained consciousness flat on his stomach, resting against a slight curb. That little bit of curb saved him.

A little while later Father appeared with Yoshiaki. The people who came back were like ghosts, uttering no words. They simply staggered back, thinking somebody might be where their houses had been. Father said, "Minoru wouldn't let himself die. He's, too strong." He gave us first aid, using Mercurochrome and bandages. He told Hiroko, "You've been terribly burned, but Daddy's here. Don't worry." The five of us then waited for Mother. Quite a long time passed. Actually, Mother was already there, but no one recognized her. She wasn't shouldering my little brother. Her clothes were all charcoal. Her hair, too. She was covered from head to toe by a military blanket and she was barefoot. She was squatting down. Yoshiaki noticed her first, "Mom?" Father said, "What's happened to Takahisa?" My mother was silent. Her back and elbows were severely burned. Those who had run through that fire knew its savagery. We couldn't really ask what happened to our little brother. It was all one could do to save oneself. Mother's eyes were injured because of the smoke.

It's really a cruel thing to say, but I could see she had been holding Takahisa on her back. Where Takahisa's legs had touched her body there were horrible burns. Her elbows, where she was probably holding him to keep him from falling off, were burned so that you could see the raw flesh. She could barely walk. "You made it back, you made it back. That's wonderful!" was all my father could say. We put Mother in the garage and gave her some water and we all huddled together. Neighbors waited here and there for family members who hadn't returned. In my family, nobody else came back.

Near evening, our relatives from the Komatsugawa area, which hadn't burned, came to meet us with a pullcart. They said they'd seen red plumes of flames like lotus flowers in the distance. Father delayed leaving as long as he could. "Just a little bit longer, a little bit longer," he kept saying. Finally, he left a piece of paper from his Vigilance Corps notebook with the address we were evacuating to.

We made it to a farmer's house in Komatsugawa. Mother groaned but didn't say anything about Takahisa. She didn't even cry, just lay flat on her stomach. Father went back to the burnt-out area looking for Minoru, Teruko, and Grandmother. It took two or three times before he gave up. At first, we thought about finding the remains, but we never located them. We contacted Minoru's school in vain.

Hiroko's condition worsened. She asked for water all the time, but couldn't swallow any. Father said it must be tetanus. She had to be hospitalized, but most of the hospitals had been burned down. We were

told there was a small one in Komatsugawa, so Father took her there on the back of the cart. As we thought, she had lockjaw. Father was told a serum shot might save her, but they had no serum there.

Hiroko's face was burned very severely and her bandages soon became soaked with blood and pus. There were so few bandages available that we washed hers at home and then took them back to the hospital. That day, it was my day to wind bandages for her. She hadn't been there many days. I walked into the hospital room with the bandages. There was just one bed in a square concrete room. I said, "Hiro-chan, why are you sleeping with your eyes open?" I tried to close them, but they couldn't close. "Hiroko, Hiroko," I called. She didn't say a thing. Usually it was "I want water!" or "It hurts." Father, who had been staying with her, came in and said "Hiroko just died, even though I brought serum for her." I never heard of the tetanus virus before. Now, I learned for the first time that it lived in the soil. I was the one who had put her hands into that hole I dug in the moist ground of the shelter. The tetanus virus must have entered her then through her burns. When I heard this I couldn't sit still.

Many of our relatives were at Komatsugawa, and some said, "Kazu-chan, you were there with her, and you don't even have one burn, but Hiro-chan died." I'd done my best to scratch the soil to make a hole to cool her hands. I'd done it with all my childish heart. They'd praised me then. "You did so well," they said. Now, nine days later, my sister Hiroko was dead and they were whispering quietly about the reason. Father assured me it wasn't my fault. In disasters, tetanus and typhoid occur. But he also said poor Hiroko's life had been needlessly lost.

Although Mother never expressed it in words, I think she had the most difficult time. She had let the child on her back die. We don't know if she left him somewhere, or whether he just burnt up and fell. Once people who were trying to collect records on the Great Air Raid pleaded with us to ask her, but we couldn't. She's now eighty-eight years old. While she was still able to get around I used to take her to pray at their graves. She'd pour water on them and say, "Hiroko-chan, you must have been hot. Teruko-chan, you must have been hot."

At the Telephone Exchange

TOMIZAWA KIMI AND KOBAYASHI HIROYASU

We meet in an impressive conference room at the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone company's headquarters in Shimbashi in central Tokyo.

Miss Tomizawa, eighty years old, is dressed in a gorgeous kimono. Mr. Kobayashi, seventy, wears a blue suit and tie. They appear very formal as they are led into the room by the head of the company's Office of Development and Enterprise. He convenes the interview with the admonition, "Today the company is called NTT, but then it was the Ministry of Communications. We must be careful to make this distinction." Two company representatives remain present throughout.

Between seventy-five and one hundred thousand people were killed by the air raids on Tokyo which began just after midnight March 10, 1945, probably the single greatest loss of life in a single day from military action in that or any war, including the atomic bombings. An additional 40,000 persons were officially reported injured. An area of approximately fourteen square miles was devastated, with sixty percent of all buildings in that area destroyed.

TOMIZAWA KIMI: Back then, there were exactly 8,399 telephone jack sockets for the whole Sumida Bureau. Since I was a supervisor, I'll never forget that number. Sumida Bureau was the largest of the six common battery switchboards in Tokyo's Central Telephone Exchange. At that time, there was probably only one phone for dozens of houses. Unless it was crucial that you have a telephone, you really couldn't get a line installed. Government offices and police stations—they were the top priority. Ordinary households were the fifth and bottom priority.

The year I joined the phone company was 1921, the tenth year of the Taishō era. The only kind of work available for girls like me then was at the spinning mills, as a servant, or as a nursemaid. Being a telephone operator was a very good job for a girl. You could advance and you even got a pension. I was twelve when I started working there.

KOBAYASHI HIROYASU: The administration of all the machinery and equipment was handled by men. Connecting phone calls was the only job open to women. I worked on outside equipment. Even our chains of command were separate, we maintenance men and the operators. I often worked more than twenty-four hours straight. I'd come to work and stay all day long. At night, when the air raid sirens echoed, I'd come to work again, by bicycle. In the pitch dark. It was dangerous to use a lamp.

TOMIZAWA: I didn't know how to ride a bike, so I walked thirty minutes from home to our phone station. I covered my head with my air defense helmet, but I was often stopped by air-raid wardens who'd say, "Women shouldn't walk about under these conditions." They'd make me wait, even when I showed them my identification as a worker in the telephone exchange. It took me a long time to get there.

We did our best. Really. We now wore *monpe*. We were prepared

for fire and knew what we should do. We had fire drills with buckets and fire-beaters. We even had military exercises. "Advance! Take your positions! By sections!" They gave us military commands. I was still young, so I could do things easily, but I felt sorry for the older women. When they were ordered to march, they couldn't even keep their left hands and right feet in synch!

Communications were crucial. Even the railroads couldn't work without them. If communication links were knocked out, you had to work around the breaks. If even a single telephone line survived, you used that to restore communications, so crucial messages could be sent. The responsibility for defending and keeping our system operating was shared. It wasn't only taken on by us supervisors. We all shared a feeling that we were accomplishing our duty.

KOBAYASHI: We felt that, too. But when everything was burning there was no order issued to evacuate the office. No order came releasing you. Just defend your position to the death! That's it. The operators were all thirteen- or fourteen-year-old kids! If they had been at home, they'd have been the first to be told to run away. But here, in a sea of flames, they were still at their switchboards, or trying to pour water on the fires. The word "flee" never passed the lips of those above them. An ill-fated job.

TOMIZAWA: That day, I was on day-duty. But from five to eight was always the busiest time, so I stayed around until eight, then I returned home.

KOBAYASHI: March 9, 1945. I was there. Air-raid warnings came every day, so we weren't particularly shaken when we saw red spots far away, but soon the airplanes were flying above us. Places near us were turning red. Over there, it's red. Here, it's red! Some were still at the switchboards. The others were trying to extinguish the flames after the building caught fire. Outside, huge telephone poles, set against the building and meant to protect the windows and withstand any bomb blast, became like kindling under the incendiary bombs. When the poles started burning, there were still some working the phone lines.

TOMIZAWA: Our place had communication lines to the antiaircraft batteries and the fire-fighting units for the whole Shitamachi area. There weren't any wireless communications in use then, so crucial government lines passed through our switchboard. Until the last second, many operators were still working, plugging lines into the jacks.

KOBAYASHI: Parts of the building were still made of wood. The windowframes, for instance, and the rest areas. Wood, covered with stucco. Up on the roof, there was a water tank. Through pipes, it was supposed to lay down a curtain of water over the whole building. But the water in

the tank, when it was released, was soon exhausted. We opened up fire plugs, and though water poured out fast at first, everyone was using them, too, so it soon trickled to a stop. We had a small pond, maybe two meters long. It had goldfish we kept for fun. We drained that water, throwing it onto the windows to cool them down. The glass shattered, "*Ping!*" because of the heat. I remember those kids carrying buckets. Helter-skelter. Even the water in the teakettle was used up.

Outside, the world was ablaze. We had no more water. It was all gone. That was it. The operators and the night supervisor, Matsumoto Shūji, were there. Mr. Matsumoto was found dead in the shelter. Burned to death. He was a marathon runner, but he was responsible for them. According to a survivor, Miss Tanaka, they finally did try to leave the building. "Get out, get out!" they were told, but the flames were too strong. They couldn't flee.

TOMIZAWA: Only four of them survived. Fortunate to escape that dangerous situation. The remaining thirty-one all perished.

KOBAYASHI: When we left, we men thought we were the last ones. We couldn't really get the gate open, so we climbed over the side wall. The bridge over the Arakawa was jammed. People coming this way from the far side, and trying to go there from this side. They packed together in the middle and couldn't move. People are greedy. Even at times like that, people are carrying things. Our phone cable was next to the bridge, partially submerged in the water. We took a chance. There was no other way. We hung on to it and moved across hand over hand, our bodies in the water. All the way across the river to escape the burning air. It was like a circus act.

If there'd still been water, water coming from the hydrants, we probably wouldn't have made it. But there was no water. No way to fight the fire. Besides, our line of command was separate from that of the girls. We were later questioned. "Why did only the men flee?" They wanted to know why we didn't take more girls with us. But when they investigated, they found that even the coin boxes on the public phones had melted completely. Then they understood.

Not even a single line was still operational. When I returned the next day, where the thick cables went in, they had melted down. There were no windowframes. All the metallic things had melted in the heat and were bowing down, all bent over. The switchboards, anything made of wood, all burned. Gone.

TOMIZAWA: The interior cables were still hanging in the empty concrete box. A chill went through me.

KOBAYASHI: Some people could be identified. By their stomach wraps. Where it had been tight against their skin a name could be found

written on it. It wasn't burned. To tell you the truth, I couldn't tell if they were men or women. They weren't even full skeletons. Piled on top of each other. The bottom of the pile, all stuck together. A few bits of clothing could be found on them. The underpants of Mr. Matsumoto were left. Touching the wall of the shelter. When Matsumoto-san's wife came, nobody could hear to tell her that her husband was not there anymore. "You have to tell her," everyone told me. "You were on night duty together." There's nothing more painful than that. His wife confirmed that they were her husband's underwear.

Even after all the bones were buried, when it rained, a blue flame burned. From the phosphorus. Soldiers stationed there used to say, "Maybe they'll come out tonight," thinking of the ghosts and the blue flames.

I wonder what war is. I wonder why we did it. I'm not talking about victory or loss. I merely feel heartbroken for those who died. It's not an issue of whether I hate the enemy or not. However much you're glorified, if you're dead, that's it. Young kids worked so hard. Without complaint. It makes me seethe. Burning flames, huge planes flying over, dropping bombs. My feeling of hatred—"You bastards! Bastards!" you shout. But there was no sense that you're capable of doing anything about it. If you win, you're the victors. You can justify anything. It's all right if the ones who have rifles are killed. That's OK. But these kids didn't have weapons, they had only their breasts. Those are the ones whose end was tragic.

I wonder, does war bring happiness to anyone? The ones who perished here on duty were merely promoted two ranks. They got a medal from the Emperor. A long time afterwards. Their parents didn't even get their pensions. Only the men with stars are enshrined in Yasukuni. But where are those who perished here? Girls of fifteen and sixteen. Who did their best. [*His voice breaks.*] People even ask, "Why didn't they escape earlier? They should have fled earlier."

TOMIZAWA: They are the ones who should be enshrined.

KOBAYASHI: No! Not that! Their parents want them back!

17 / THE WAR COMES HOME TO OKINAWA

Student Nurses of the "Lily Corps"

MIYAGI KIKUKO

The Himeyuri Peace Memorial Museum stands at the southern tip of the island where the severest fighting of the Battle of Okinawa took place in 1945. It has just opened after eight years of hard work and fundraising by the survivors of the Himeyuri [Lily] Student Corps. It is thronged with tourists and junior-high-school students on their school trips. Hanging on the walls are the enlarged black-and-white photographs of young girls, each with a name beneath it. Some portions of the wall have only names, without pictures. Testimonies of survivors are on display, as are lunch-boxes, fountain pens, combs, writing boards, pencil boxes, and other artifacts, dug out from the caves where the students worked. The museum itself is above one of the caves, but the pathway leading down is blocked off. Okinawa is honeycombed with natural volcanic caves which were incorporated into the island's defenses and used as shelters by civilians and soldiers alike during the battle.

"If that war hadn't happened, all my friends and classmates would have led peaceful lives with their children and grandchildren," says Miyagi Kikuko. At sixty-two, she is one of the youngest survivors of the Himeyuri Student Corps. A retired school teacher, she spends much of her time these days answering questions from visitors to the museum.

Okinawa prefecture had a population of approximately 570,000 in 1945, about 80,000 of whom had been evacuated from the island by the time the battle officially began on April 1, 1945. Many students enrolled in the island's girls' high schools, middle schools, and normal schools were called up to serve in the student corps, with the students from the most elite schools joining the Himeyuri Student Corps for girls and the Blood and Iron Student Corps for boys. About 2,000 students were mobilized in all, and of these, 1,050 died,

In February 1945, just before I was mobilized, I went home to say farewell. I assured Father and Mother that I would win the Imperial Order of the Rising Sun, eighth class, and be enshrined at Yasukuni. Father was a country schoolteacher. He said, "I didn't bring you up to the age of sixteen to die!" I thought he was a traitor to say such a thing. I went to the battlefield feeling proud of myself.

The Himeyuri Student Corps consisted of the fifteen- to nineteen-year-old girls from First Okinawa Prefectural Girls' High School and the Women's Division of the national Okinawa Normal School. I was in my fourth year at the high school. On the night of March 24, to the accompaniment of the loud thunder of guns from the American naval bombardment, we were mobilized straight from the school dormitory to Haeburu Army Hospital. Although called a military "hospital," it was actually in caves scattered around the town of Haeburu. The hospital wasn't really complete, so our first work consisted of digging out the cave where we were to hide ourselves. Outside, it rained shells for five or six days.

We had our graduation ceremony in a crude, triangular barracks on the battlefield. While the bombardment continued, we knelt on a floor lit by two or three candles. It was so dim we could hardly see our classmates' faces. "Work so as not to shame the First Girls' High School" was theme of the principal's commencement address. We sang a song which went, "Give your life for the sake of the Emperor, wherever you may go." Our music teacher, only twenty-three, had earlier written a song for our graduation. It was called "A Song of Parting," and was really wonderful. Not a war song at all. We'd memorized it while digging shelters. I especially liked one verse with the refrain "We shall meet again," but there was no time for it at graduation. It was already after ten o'clock at night. Still, with the reverberations of the explosions shaking the ground, we sang it on our way back to our cave. The next morning that triangular building wasn't there anymore. Three days later, on April 1, the landings began.

In no time at all, wounded soldiers were being carried into the caves in large numbers. They petrified us all. Some didn't have faces, some didn't have limbs. Young men in their twenties and thirties screaming like babies. Thousands of them. At first, one of my friends saw a man with his toes missing and swooned. She actually sank to her knees, but soldiers and medics began screaming at her, "You idiot! You think you can act like that on the battlefield?"

Every day, we were yelled at: "Fools! Idiots! Dummies!" We were so naïve and unrealistic. We had expected that somewhere far in the rear, we'd raise the red cross and then wrap men with bandages, rub on medicine, and give them shots as we had been trained. In a tender voice

we'd tell the wounded, "Don't give up, please." Now, they were being carried in one after another until the dugouts and caves were filled to overflowing, and still they came pouring in. Soon we were laying them out in empty fields, then on cultivated land. Some hemorrhaged to death and others were hit again out there by showers of bombs. So many died so quickly.

Those who had gotten into the caves weren't so lucky either. Their turn to have their dressings changed came only once every week or two. So pus would squirt in our faces, and they'd be infested with maggots. Removing those was our job. We didn't even have enough time to remove them one by one. Gas gangrene, tetanus, and brain fever were common. Those with brain fever were no longer human beings. They'd tear their clothes off because of their pain, tear off their dressings. They were tied to the pillars, their hands behind their backs, and treatment stopped.

At first, we were so scared watching them suffering and writhing that we wept. Soon we stopped. We were kept running from morning to night. "Do this! Do that!" Yet, as underclassmen we had fewer wounded soldiers to take care of. The senior girls slept standing up. "Miss Student, I have to piss," they'd cry. Taking care of their excrement was our work. Senior students were assigned to the operating rooms. There, hands and legs were chopped off without anesthesia. They used a saw. Holding down their limbs was a student job.

Outside was a rain of bullets from morning to night. In the evening, it quieted down a little. It was then that we carried out limbs and corpses. There were so many shell craters—it sounds funny to say it, but we considered that fortunate: holes already dug for us. "One, two, three!" we'd chant, and all together we'd heave the dead body into a hole, before crawling back to the cave. There was no time for sobbing or lamentation.

In that hail of bullets, we also went outside to get food rations and water. Two of us carried a wooden half-bushel barrel to the well. When a shell fell, we'd throw ourselves into the mud, but always supporting the barrel because the water was everybody's water of life. Our rice balls shrank until they were the size of Ping-Pong balls. The only way to endure was to guzzle water. There was no extra water, not even to wash our faces, which were caked in mud.

We were ordered to engage in "nursing," but in reality, we did odd jobs. We were in the cave for sixty days, until we withdrew to Ihara. Twelve people in our group—two teachers and ten students—perished. Some were buried alive, some had their legs blown off, five died from gas.

They used gas bombs on May 9. Thrown into the cave with the third-year students—the fifteen-year-olds. Three students and two teachers perished. The way they died! Their bodies swelled up and turned purple. There were no injuries. It was like they suffocated to death. They thrashed about so much we had to tie up their arms and legs like the soldiers with brain fever. That was the cave next to mine. When our teachers returned to our cave, they wept bitterly, even though they were men. A poison-gas bomb was also thrown into the cave where the current Himeyuri Memorial is located. Forty-six of fifty-one perished there.*

About May 25, we were ordered to withdraw to Ihara. All the men we had nursed were simply lying there. One of us asked, "Soldier, what are you going to do with these people?" "Don't worry," he responded, "I'll make it easy for them." Later we heard that the medics offered them condensed milk mixed with water as their last nourishment, and then gave them cyanide and told them, "Achieve your glorious end like a Japanese soldier." The American forces were nearby. Would it have been so terrible if they had been captured and revealed the Japanese army's situation? Instead they were all murdered to protect military strategy. Only one person crawled out and survived to testify.

The road to Ihara was truly horrible, muddy and full of artillery craters with corpses, swollen two or three times normal size, floating in them. We could only move at night. Sometimes the American forces sent up flares to seek out targets. Ironically, these provided us with enough light to see the way. This light revealed people pulling themselves along on hands and knees, crawling desperately, wounded people calling to us, "Students! Students!" I had an injured friend using my shoulder as a crutch. Another friend had night blindness from malnutrition. She kept falling over corpses and crying out. We'd become accustomed to the smell of excrement, pus, and the maggots in the cave, but the smell of death there on that road was unbearable. And it poured rain every day.

Tens of thousands of people moving like ants. Civilians. Grandfathers, grandmothers, mothers with children on their backs, scurrying along, covered in mud. When children were injured, they were left along the

* There are Okinawan references to the use of poison gas by the American forces during the battle of Okinawa. As in this case, the way the victims died points to the use of an agent which caused asphyxiation. Miyara Ruri, a survivor from the Third Surgery Cave, describes the moment: "White smoked filled [the cave] at the same time as the sound *Daan, daan, daan*, rang out—I can't see anything! I can't breathe anymore! Breathing is agony—I felt like I was being choked." She regained consciousness after three days. Her story appears in NHK Ohayō Jaanaru Seisaku-han, ed., *Sensō o shitte imasu ka* [*Do You Know About the War?*] (Tokyo: NHK Hōsō Shuppan, 1989), vol. 1, p. 81.

roadside. Just thrown away. Those children could tell we were students. They'd call out, "*Nei, nei!*" and try to cling to us. That's Okinawan dialect for "Older Sister!" It was so pitiable. I still hear those cries today.

In daylight we were pinned down. In the wild fields, we clung to the grasses and cried out to our teachers, "I'm afraid." My group were all fifteen- or sixteen-year-olds and the teachers took special care of us. "Bear up! You can take it!" they'd reassure us.

Finally, on the tenth of June we reached Ihara. Ten days for what takes thirty minutes by car today. There the first, second, and third surgeries were reestablished. The second surgery was already completely full. There was only space to sit with your knees pulled up to your chest.

I don't remember going to the toilet after we moved to Ihara, we were so dehydrated. If you put your hand into your hair it was full of lice. Our bodies were thick with fleas. Before we had been covered in mud, now we were covered with filth. Our nails grew longer and longer. Our faces were black. We were emaciated and itched all the time.

We bit into moldy, unpolished raw rice and took great care gnawing on our biscuits. When we ate those, we felt as though we'd had a real meal. Those grains of unpolished rice were so hard that, one day, a teacher said, "Let's go out and cook them." Just warming them up that way actually let them swell a little so you could get it down easier. We got some water and crawled out with the teacher. Behind rocks, we gathered dried leaves and finally warmed the unpolished rice in a mess kit. Then we headed back, at last reaching the entrance to the first surgery cave. When I stood up and put my foot in, the ground felt wet and slippery. It was June 17. I smelled blood. I thought instantly, "They've just been hit!" We lived in darkness and sensed everything by smell. From below I heard my classmates' voices, "I don't have a leg!" "My hand's gone!" At my teacher's urging, I descended into a sea of blood. Nurses, soldiers, students killed instantly or severely injured, among them a friend of mine, Katsuko-san, with a wound in her thigh. "Quick, Teacher, quick," she was crying. "It hurts!" I was struck dumb. There was no medicine left, and near me a senior student was desperately trying to push her intestines back into her stomach. "I won't make it," she whispered, "so please take care of other people first." Then she stopped breathing.

Now, her words chill me to the bone. But a militaristic girl could say such a thing. How could she have been so strong? She was only seventeen. I saw weeping teachers cutting locks of hair from the deceased and putting them in their pockets. They no longer had the faintest idea of how to take care of us. All they could say was, "Do your best! Don't die. You absolutely mustn't die!" They were desperate to protect us, young

teachers in their twenties and thirties. I wonder how each of them must have suffered, and my heart goes out to them as I think about how brokenhearted they must have been. Out of three hundred students, two hundred nineteen perished. Twenty-one teachers went to the battlefield and sixteen died. No one imagined so many lives would be lost. Particularly in such cruel ways. The teachers, too, were utterly ignorant of the horror, the terror of war. Japanese of that time were like that. "Victorious battle!" "Our army is always superior!" That was all we knew. We were so gullible, so innocent.

On the eighteenth, the order of dissolution was issued. From then on, they told us, if we behaved as a group we would stand out too much. The U.S. forces were quite close, so we were to "escape" as individuals. Everyone shed tears, but what could we say? We didn't know what to do. And our friends, lying there injured, were listening to the order, too. They knew they would be left behind. There was no way to take them with us. Absolutely none.

We had to leave two students behind with the soldiers as well, because the Americans were so close you could even hear English being spoken. One of the students accepted milk from the medics. She might have been given cyanide, too. The other didn't want to die and forced her immobilized body to crawl. She was still crawling in the mud near Haebaru, when attacking American troops rescued her. They took her to the U.S. military hospital and nursed her with great care, but I heard she died there anyway. That was in May. After the war, one who'd heard her reported that she said, "I hated and feared these Americans, but they treated me with great care and kindness, while my classmates, my teachers left me behind."

Nineteen of us, three teachers and sixteen students, left the cave together. But a large bomb exploded and we lost track of four of our group immediately. We crawled, stood up, then crawled again, always under heavy bombardment. The next morning dawned so soon! It was the nineteenth of June. A severe attack was in progress. We were still in sight of the first and third surgery caves. So close! We'd gone such a little way! Hardly a minute or two by car, today. When we looked around we saw we were surrounded by tanks. Americans were whistling to each other. Tanks moved forward, attacking. Until then we'd had to flee at night. Now, we clung to the edge of the road. I heard a great booming sound and passed out. Eventually, I came to my senses. I was covered in mud and couldn't hear a thing. In front of me, two classmates were soaked in their own blood. Then they were screaming in pain. Third-year student Akiko wasn't moving. She'd died there. Two teachers in their twenties had disappeared. We never saw them again. Already on just that

first morning, nineteen people became twelve. Nearby, Japanese soldiers were running for their lives, yelling, "Armor! Armor!" Behind us, the tanks were coming on, spewing out a stream of fire. I was shaking with fear. The vice-principal, the only teacher left, shouted, "Follow me!" and we all crawled after him. My friends were covered with blood. We urged them to keep up and though they were moaning, "I can't. I can't go on. It hurts," come they did.

On the twentieth, the large guns stopped firing and they began burning things with flame-throwers. We were smoked out onto the cliff tops. We friends promised each other, "If I'm unable to move, or you're disabled, I'll give you cyanide." We each kept a hand-grenade like a talisman. "If we stand up, they'll shoot us," we thought, so we stood up. We walked upright with dignity, but they held their fire. We were slightly disappointed. It was weird, eerie. Yesterday it had been Hell; why was it suddenly so quiet? We reached the cliff's edge, an incredible precipice, and we climbed down, soon covered in blood, all the way down to the sea. We were in full view of the ships at sea. If they wanted to, I thought, they could kill us with a single salvo. Yet we reached the breakers. Everywhere the shore was full of people, all civilians. Later, I learned that nearly one hundred seventy thousand people were crammed into that narrow bit of island. People, people, people. They were almost piled up on each other. There was nowhere even to sit, and the waves were coming in lapping at them.

A small boat came toward us from a battleship. Then, for the first time, we heard the voice of the enemy. "Those who can swim, swim out! We'll save you. Those who can't swim, walk towards Minatogawa! Walk by day. Don't travel by night. We have food! We will rescue you!" They actually did! They took care of Okinawans really well, according to international law, but we only learned that later. We thought we were hearing the voices of demons. From the time we'd been children, we'd only been educated to hate them. They would strip the girls naked and do with them whatever they wanted, then run over them with tanks. We really believed that. Not only us girls. Mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers all were cowering at the voice of the devils. So what we had been taught robbed us of life. I can never forgive what education did to us! Had we known the truth, all of us would have survived. The Himeyuri Student Corps alone lost one hundred and some score students in the four or five days that followed the order to dissolve the unit. Anyway, we didn't answer that voice, but continued our flight. We were simply too terrified of being stripped naked. That's what a girl fears most, isn't it? We never dreamt the enemy would rescue us.

So, we climbed back up, but the top of the cliff was being scoured

to flame-throwers. We had to cling on midway. When we looked down we saw the white surf. It was the night of the twentieth. Moonlit. Everything was exposed. That was Arasaki Beach. Today it is all so green and peaceful. Our friends who were injured on the morning of the nineteenth were increasingly desperate and bloody, but still with us. Our hands were growing weaker. "Teacher, teacher, I can't hold on!" "Climb up," he'd say. Finally, we clawed our way to the top and just collapsed. Twelve of us. There we all cried out, "We can't take any more." The third-year students cried the most. "Teacher, please kill us. Kill us with a grenade!"

Teacher had always urged us on, but finally even he said, "I guess it can't be helped." We felt great relief at those words. At last, we would become comfortable. "Teacher, here's good enough. Please make us comfortable." For the first time we all sobbed. We all wanted to see our mothers. "*Okaasan!*" came from our mouths. We'd struggled so hard not to speak of our families up until then. [*Her voice chokes.*] I wondered how Father, Mother, and my younger sister were doing on this battlefield. I wanted to see them so badly, but to put such feelings into words was taboo in the cave. That day, for the first time, someone said, "I want to see my mother!" Yoshiko-san, who was an only daughter, clung to me. She was such a lovely person, a sweet person. She, too, said to me, "I want to see my mother just once more." We all said it. "We want to walk under a sky from which shells don't rain." For ninety days we'd been cornered like moles in dark caves. Someone now began singing a song about a home village and "the mountains where we chased the rabbit . . ." Of course, we dissolved in tears. That night we completely forgot we were surrounded by American soldiers.

Arasaki Beach was totally silent on the twenty-first. The military ships were still glaring at us from the sea, but not a shot was fired. I had a hand-grenade, and so did Teacher. Nine of our group were jammed into a tiny hole. Higa-san, Teacher, a Japanese soldier, and I—the four of us—couldn't fit into it. We were nearby. I was sitting facing a warship, glaring back at it, gripping my grenade. A small boat approached and signaled to us. They waved, "Swim out, we'll help you!" I shuddered. I was completely exposed. Suddenly, a Japanese soldier climbed down the cliff. A Japanese soldier raising his hands in surrender? Impossible! Traitor! We'd been taught, and firmly believed, that we Okinawans, Great Japanese all, must never fall into the hands of the enemy. Despite that, a Japanese soldier was walking right into the sea. Another soldier, crouching behind a rock near us, shot him. The sea water was dyed red. Thus I saw Japanese murdering Japanese for the first time.

Out of nowhere, a Japanese soldier appeared and dropped to the ground right in front of me. American soldiers must have been chasing

him. He was all bloody. Higa-san and I tumbled into a tiny hole. I saw Teacher and this Japanese soldier fly into the air. Then I heard, "Come out, come out" in strangely accented Japanese. Soon a rain of small arms fire began, Americans firing at close range. They must have thought we were with that soldier. They blazed away in our direction. A senior student, Aosa-san, was killed instantly, as were Ueki-san, Nakamoto-san, and the Japanese soldier. I was now under those four dead bodies. Three senior students were hit by small-arms fire and screamed out in pain. Yonamine-sensei, our teacher, shouldering a student bathed in blood, stood facing an American soldier. Random firing stopped. The American, who had been firing wildly, must have noticed he was shooting girls. He could be seen from the hole where my ten classmates were hiding. They pulled the pin on their hand grenade. So unfortunate! I now stepped out over the corpses and followed Teacher. The automatic rifles of four or five American soldiers were aimed right at me. My grenade was taken away. I had held it to the last minute. The American soldiers lowered their rifles. I looked past them and saw my ten classmates. The night before those third-year students had been calling for Teacher to kill them quickly. Now, there was nothing left of them. The hand grenade is so cruel.

I simply sat there where I'd slumped down. An American soldier poked me with the barrel of his gun, signaling me to move in the direction he indicated. I didn't speak English. I couldn't do anything but move as he ordered. To my surprise, three senior students had been carried out. Their wounds had been dressed and bandaged and they were being given saline injections. Until that moment I could think of the Americans only as devils and demons. I was simply frozen. I couldn't believe what I saw.

It was around noon, June 21. The sun was directly overhead. I staggered, crying, in the blazing sun. American soldiers sometimes called out, "Hey, schoolgirl!" I was skin and bones and covered with filth. My only footwear was the soles of workers' shoes tied to my feet with bandages. "Hey schoolgirl. No poison!" I didn't know what "no poison" meant, but when I got to their camp I was given something called "*ra-shon*." I didn't really feel like eating. I lay on the sand, crying aloud all night long. I was then sent to Kunagami Camp in the north. For three months I was taken care of by many families I don't know anything about. During the third month I met my father and mother. Mother, barefoot, ran out of a tent in the camp and hugged me to her. "You lived, you lived!" I still remember her crying out loud.

After the war, I refused to go the ceremonies of memorial. I tried to forget as much as possible. Because it was horrible and it was sad or for whatever reason, I just didn't want to remember. It is only very

recently I have been able to speak about it. I decided to get involved in constructing the memorial museum because I felt if I didn't talk, nobody would support it.

Young people sometimes ask us, "Why did you take part in such a stupid war?" For us the Emperor and the Nation were supreme. For them, one should not withhold one's life. Strange isn't it? That's really the way it was. We had been trained for the Battle of Okinawa from the day the war with America began. I hate to admit it, but that spiritual training taught us how to endure. That's why we were able to complete the museum library, don't you think? We still have to grit our teeth a little longer until we repay the huge financial debt we incurred building the museum.

On my way back to Naha from a visit to the battlefields, I mentioned to my taxi driver that I had spoken to one of the Himeyuri Corps. He asked me if they told me that when they moved into caves, all the civilians who had been there were expelled. "You should go see the Second Girls' High School memorial site too, not just the one for them," he said, and took me there. In contrast to the memorial for the Himeyuri, which had been bustling, this one was quiet, and I was the solitary visitor.

"Now they call it 'Group Suicide' "

KINJŌ SHIGEAKI

He is a professor of religion at Okinawa Christian Junior College. The school building where we meet stands on a hill surrounded by fields of waving green sugarcane, the ocean visible in the distance.

He lived on Tokashiki, the largest island in the Kerama archipelago, about twenty miles west of the main island of Okinawa. The island is six miles long, north to south, and about one mile wide. The speed of the American attack on the island made it impossible to launch any of the one hundred suicide motor-boats of the Third Sea Raiding Squadron which had been deployed on Tokashiki for the expected battle for Okinawa.

He has been supporting efforts to tell Japanese schoolchildren through their textbooks about the extent of the Japanese army's cruelty to Okinawans during the fight for Okinawa. He speaks evenly and dispassionately, even eloquently, until he comes to his own personal moment of tragedy. While his demeanor remains unchanged, words and memories come out only in broken fragments, as if, despite his best efforts, he is struggling to recall a nightmare he can only half remember.