

MR. KATSUTAKA IDOGAWA



Date of birth:
May 16, 1946

Currently living in:
Kazo City, Saitama
prefecture, 70 km north of
Tokyo central

Originally living in:
Futaba town, Fukushima
prefecture

Profession: former mayor
of Futaba

Married, two sons (30, 29),
one daughter (27)

“What I saw, I have never seen in my life before. I could see the ocean from the window of the city hall on the fourth floor. There were houses and trees in the waves. There were things which were not supposed to be there, and things which were supposed to be there but they were not anymore.”

Katsutaka Idogawa sits calmly, hands folded, while he talks about the day that changed his life forever.

Ten minutes before the tsunami hit the seaside road of Futaba, he drove down that road. “If I had passed it any later, I would not be here today.” The dimension of the disaster made him humble. “I did not know what to do. As a head of the city, all responsibility was on me to protect people and resources. I had to do it right.”

Mr. Idogawa wanted to do it right from the beginning. He constantly asked TEPCO and the central government: “Can you guarantee that no accident will occur in the Fukushima Daiichi reactors? Are they safe?” Always the same answer: “Yes.”

But he anticipated the official response before the disaster: “Even before Fukushima happened, I knew that the government and TEPCO would lie to us.”

On March 19, without consulting anyone, Mr. Idogawa decided to evacuate Futaba town as soon and as far away as possible, to protect the health of future and current generations. For him, the most important thing was the community. “Futaba town forever” is his message for his people. “We have a long journey ahead of us. And are like a ship without a navigation system. The message should remind us, that we don’t lose our destination. The message is for my people. It should encourage them.” He adds: “People should support people. Our government only supports nuclear companies and nuclear power. We were made to feel like we are the culprits. But the disaster completely destroyed our original way of life.” Something he calls an “unforgiveable act of murder, since we don’t know when and where radiation kills us”.

“The current situation is also a man-made disaster.” And it comes with a history. “In the first days after the 2011 disaster, radiation data was hidden. There was no general order to take iodine tablets to reduce the health risks. At the medical university there were only secretive talks but no radiation checks available for people. In Fukushima itself, there seemed to be a ‘safe-campaign’ running on the radio. Huge funding to not tell the truth seemed to be available. Children should have been evacuated immediately. There is a crime going on.”

Mr. Idogawa also refers to it as a battle with radiation. “In Japan, some people can live without radiation. Others not. Under our constitution this is not fair. We keep on living. But after three years now, this is an insult to the people of Fukushima. The disaster is on going. While our prime minister announced, it is contained. The government lies and lies and it came to an extreme situation at the moment.”

“We are refugees living inside of Japan. We are like forgotten people, who cannot be seen. Wasted people. We are talking about everything we lost. But how do we deal with it? We are treated without regard. We have nowhere to go. We need houses and places. But it has not happened.”

He puts his fingertips to each other, gestures mildly, cautiously. “As a community, we are not respected. In other places, victims can join rebuilding efforts as part of policy making. In Japan we cannot join. People who used to live in the contaminated places should decide what needs to be done. But we are forgotten. No one works with victims. The bureaucrats in Tokyo only think about how they can end the nuclear disaster as cheaply as possible to protect the nuclear industry. Children should be at the centre of policies for the future.” While others forget, he remembers details, dates and deceptions.

When asked what he misses the most, his voice trembles slightly. “Trust is what I miss the most. It is destroyed. The government and TEPCO are hurting us. I am totally disappointed in them.” He then apologises, leaves the room and returns with a wooden box wrapped in a silk scarf. Calligraphy of his family name decorates the front. Inside: his original family tree drawn on traditional Japanese washi-paper. The family tree goes back hundreds of years.

“The Fukushima disaster is a destruction of history. Of our personal history. It simply cannot continue. But this is not just about my family and me. It is about us all. We are all connected.”

Mr. Idogawa would like to stay connected and create a new Futaba town somewhere else. “This could be a town of hope for people from all over the world who could come to see us. This would be our contribution we give back to the world.”



Katsutaka Idogawa, former mayor of Futaba, reads a newspaper in the living room of the house where he evacuated after the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster.



The traditional style of family tree history, which Mr. Idogawa took with him when he evacuated his home in Futaba town after the disaster.