

Airman's days and parting mother

Anonymous (Fuji, 87 years old)

I graduated from higher elementary schools in 1942. I joined the military after I became a Naval Aviator Preparatory Course Trainee (YOKAREN) and was assigned to the Katori air corps. When in the military, we got beat on our bottoms by a stick made of evergreen oak called the "spirit infusion stick" every day except for the 1st of January and the Navy Day. Everyone slept in a hummock back then, but we all slept on our stomachs because our bottoms hurt too much. I was okay with dying. Army life was so brutal that I felt dying was much better. It was so hard that some of us committed suicide or ran away. I was kept in a hospital almost for a month because I got a serious illness when I was a Naval Aviator Preparatory Course trainee. During that time, my friends were assigned to Kagoshima one step ahead of me. But lots of them were killed in the operation of a special attack unit. The cenotaph in Okinawa has their names engraved alongside the other members of the unit.

After the war was over, I went back to Toyama happily where my parents and seven brothers and sisters evacuated. I wanted to meet my mother so much that I shouted "mom, mom" in my mind as I reached the evacuation place. But my family who welcomed me home at the door looked down silently. I did not see my mother there. I asked "where is mother?" to my sisters and brothers. They didn't say anything and pointed at the altar. I vividly remember that even to this day. My mother had died a month later I got out of a hospital and my family didn't tell me that. It was the opposite of "GANPEKI NO HAHA". I feel like my mother took my place for me instead.

Serving in a war made me grow up mentally, but the experiences that I had back then are too harsh to talk about to this day.

◆YOKAREN... One of the training courses of the Old navy. They selected volunteered boys from 14 to 17. At the terminal stage of the war, lots of them were sent to operate special attacks(kamikaze) after the training.

◆GANPEKI NO HAHA... A hit song after the war.