

End of war and withdrawal in Harbin

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I was born in Fushun city, Manchuria (North-Eastern provinces in China today) and brought up in Harbin. The War ended when I was in the fifth grade at Hanazono Zaiman Elementary School.

Harbin at the time was a very beautiful town and there were so many Japanese residents as well as white Russian émigré. I was enjoying happy life but the life changed greatly at the end of the war. Japanese were told not to go out and I heard that gun powders for group suicide were distributed to each Japanese home.

To the silent residential area, Russian soldiers often came shouting with automation rifle and robbed us. We had nowhere to resort to and spent everyday frightened. There was a rumor that the Russian soldiers who came first to the town were released from jail and nasty. It was really scaring.

My father worked for the Manchuria Railway as a staff for administration department. He was suddenly taken away by Russian soldiers as war criminal when he was attending a meeting of the company after the war. A Chinese who was a team member of my father used his wit and could rescue him who had got skinny one month later. After spending uneasy life for a year in anarchy, long-awaited repatriation began. During the hot season at the end of August, we took only one rack sack and got on open wagon, walked long, slept in the open, and finally could arrive in Coro Island (Liaoning, China) at the embarkation point. We were safe fortunately but I hear some people were robbed.

We gave a cry of joy to see the Japanese crew of the ship waiting at the harbor to take us home. When we could be on board the ship to come to Japan, my parents said, "We are OK now." I remember, even now, the face of my parents at the time. It was full of tears. I want to say thank you to my parents for taking us home safe and sound. It wouldn't have been an easy job. Unfortunately, they are no longer here. I often say "Arigatou (thank you)" for them, putting my hands together.