

Memories of My Childhood

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BOOM ! I woke up to the sound of explosion and saw that the out of the glass window in front of me was bright red. We were sleeping on the second floor of a church in Okayama. With just our clothes on our back, my mother held me at the age of three and went out to the garden with my five years old sister. It was the last day of June 1945. My father, a pastor, had died of illness a month earlier but my mother had no time to bring his bone ash out. "Hurry up!" Urged by a man with a megaphone, we rushed to the designated air-raid shelter but it was already full and could not get in. So, we ran and rolled into another air-raid shelter. There were a person who had experienced the Tokyo air raid saved us by preventing fire from entering the shelter with a sheet of galvanized metal. We all managed to survive, crying out "very very hot". My sister and I kept praying with our hands clasped together, saying "God, please protect and save us till tomorrow morning".

When dawn broke, we went outside to find two stone church gates standing in the middle of a burnt and devastated field. My mother told me to say goodbye to the church gates, and we hurried to Okayama Station to return to my mother's family home town in Kami Suwa, Shinshu (Nagano Prefecture). My mother, carrying me in her arms, barefoot on scorched earth, and my sister wearing my mother's large tabi-socks, boarded the train from Okayama Station, near where a pile of coal was burning.

We were able to reach my mother's parents' house thanks to the goodwill of strangers we met who donated sandals for my mother and rice balls and fruit on my sister's knees. There was very little to eat at my mother's parents' house with four boys of the same age there. When I told my mother what I wanted to eat, she would draw a picture of the food with colored pencils and show it to me, saying "Here you are". I still remember we pretended eating it and fell asleep making us feel satisfied.

I strongly feel that the victims of war are always the weakest in all times.

◆ Air-raid shelters... Facilities built underground to provide shelter from enemy air-attacks, many of which were constructed by digging holes underground.