

Wartime life and U.S. army's stationing

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The Pacific War broke out when I was in the first grade of an elementary school located in Yokohama where I lived. In the beginning, victory continued. But the progress of the battle went worse to Japan in a year and air raid by B-29 began. We had to stay in an air raid shelter several times in a day. Even at night we had to take shelter right away if air-raid siren sounded. Every day, we had to go to bed with clothes on. We could not take even shower and there were lots of lice there. We were always hungry. I wanted to eat until I'm full and sleep nakedly one day even if I were to die.

Food situation went worse and we planted sweet potato and corn on vacant lands during school hours. It was a heavy work for me who was in lower grade and physically small.

In every assembly in the morning, there were "kyujou youhai (Salute toward the palace)" and instructions by officers. If a student could not stand still and fell down due to hunger, he or she was beaten by the handle of saber.

The school was closed before long and students were scattered according to group evacuation or evacuation to relatives' homes programs. Our family moved to relatives in Aomori and Iwate prefectures. I had to change schools five times before the end of the war.

Soon after the end of the war, U.S. army stationed even in the rural areas of Iwate prefecture. Children were very happy to get chocolates from U.S. soldiers.

Till the end of the war, my father was an English teacher at a middle school and after the war, he worked as an interpreter of the foreign ministry of Japan. He was so busy moving with U.S. armed soldiers on a jeep. A large officer with blue eyes came to our house too. I was a little scared at first but soon became interested in English because the officer spoke to us smiling. (This was the starting point in my activities for international exchange programs.) They gave us a set of baseball equipment for adults. It is still a pleasant memory that we enjoyed playing baseball till sunset with the equipment.

◆**Evacuation...**At the end of the World War II, Japanese government took the following policy; To evacuate students and seniors who lived in cities easy to be the target of attack of the enemies to rural areas.