

Memories of War 004: Fusae Nakamura

戦争の記憶

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: Fusae Nakamura

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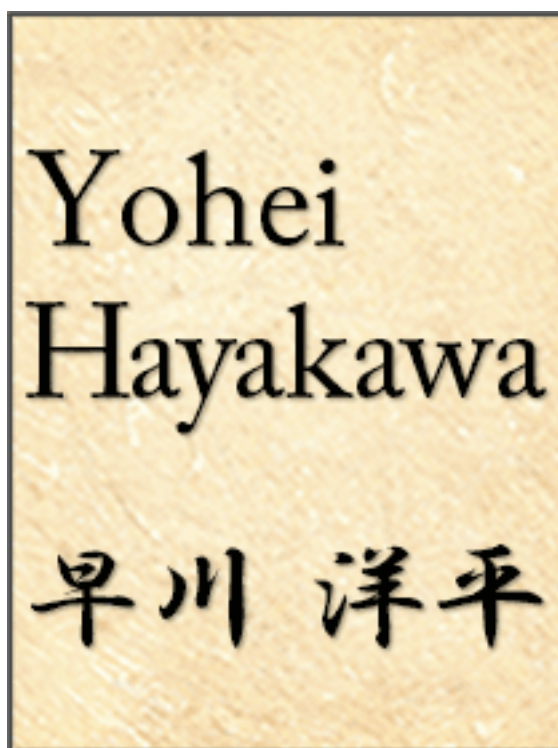
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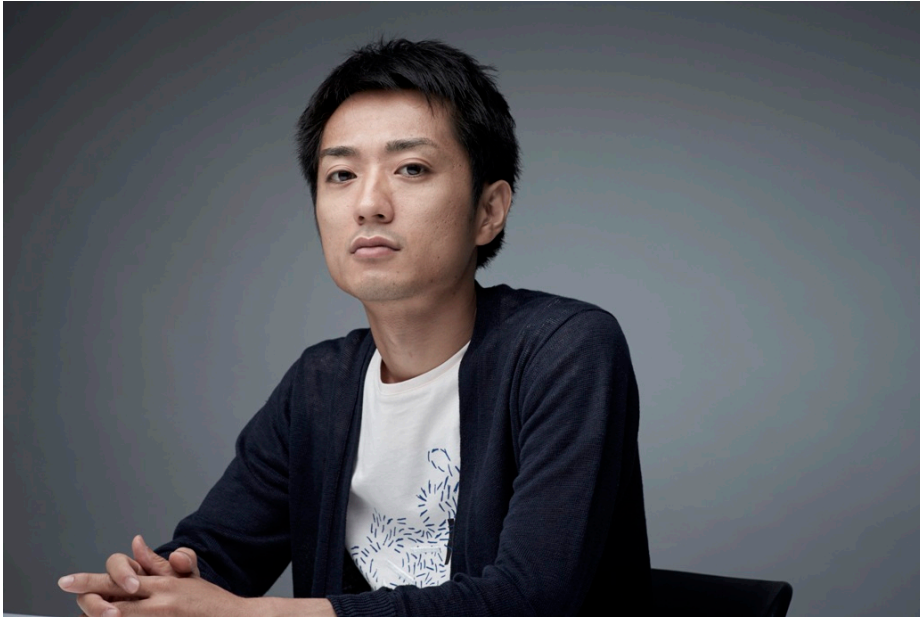
About This Project

Memories of War is a project which leaves voices of the people who survived the war. We are not supporting any specific organization, and we are not agitating any thoughts.

Also, please be consent about the following descriptions.

-The contents of the interview have left the voices and thoughts of the people who survived the war. Moreover, there might be inappropriate expressions but we have left the voices as it was spoken.

-The articles were recorded based on the knowledge and memories during the interviews were taken. Therefore, there might be incorrect memories and some ambiguous points.



Every year, at the day of the end of the war watching the media, watching the movie *Grave of the Fireflies*, I decide in my heart 'Not to make a war again. War is cruel.' But another busy day starts from August 16th.

This year 2013, it is not a year of a turning point, but after 68 years from the war, is it just me who feel that we have a lot of movies about war like *The Wind Rises*, *Emperor*, and *The Eternal Zero*.

As an interviewer, living in Hiroshima where we had the first atomic bomb in the world, I had to face this theme. I have been thinking about it for a long time. But I took time in starting this project ...

While it is during this time, a few people told me; I want you to hold interviews with people who experienced the war. Podcast can leave the voices for 50 years, 100 years, for the future.

Almost 70 years after the war, the number of people who survived the war is decreasing every year.

That is why I have to leave their voices.

Memories of War is not a radio program and does not agitate to any specific thoughts.

I just wanted to leave the voices of the people who survived the war, carefully with this interview for our future children, and to all people in the whole world.

I hope that people will start to think what peace is.

Yohei Hayakawa (Media Journalist)

October 1st 2013

About Fusae Nakamura

My memory of “Yokoana” bomb shelter

remembered vividly even now



Born in 1928, Kure City, Hiroshima

She is the owner and hairdresser of “Ginza Biyoshitsu” in Kure City.

(Biyoshitsu means beauty shop)

She lost her younger sister and mother because of the air raid in Kure City, Hiroshima.

Seeing B29s up close, she evacuated to “Yokoana” bomb shelter.

She has still remembered the scene in the shelter clearly.

After 8 years the war ended, then she began to run a beauty shop. Since then, she has continued to work there as a hairdresser.

The war led her to become a hairdresser, and the job helps her from her hardship of the war.

I interviewed her in “Ginza Biyoshitsu” in Kure City.

Air raid of Kure City on July 1st, in Showa 20 (in 1945)

Hayakawa: Today's interview is broadcasted from a beauty shop in Kure City. You started this shop by yourself right?

Yes. I started this shop when I became 20 years old, so 60 years has passed since then. I was born and still live in Kure City.

Hayakawa: This year (2013) is 68 years since the end of the war. After 8 years the war ended, and you started to run a beauty shop and continue this job now on too. Could you tell us how you spent your time during World War II?

I suffered from the war when I lived in what was known then as "Hondori 7 Chome" but now "Hondori 4 Chome". The air raid broke out in Kure City. The date and time were July 1st, in Showa 20 (1945), and about 10:00 p.m. I clearly remembered my clothing I wore at that time.

I was in the first grade of "Jo Gakkou". ("Jo Gakkou" is a school for girls. The first grade of "Jo Gakkou" is equal to the first grade of junior high school.)

I wore a sailor blouse and "monpe". (Monpe is like pants.) Right after I heard the sound of the air-raid siren, I ran away from where I was while holding a Futon over my head and carrying what was necessary for me in the rain.

My father, who worked at a police station, told us, "If bombs are dropped, evacuate to "Yokoana" bomb shelter. If the bomb is a "fire bomb", go to the bomb shelter in 9 Chome." At that time, a fire bomb was dropped, so we escaped to the bomb shelter in 9 Chome. There were many people running away. I followed them. As a result, I arrived at "Yokoana" bomb shelter.

Hayakawa: Could you tell us what "Yokoana" is like? Is it like a bomb shelter?

Well, it is just a hole in the surface of a mountain which people dug. My mother was one of the members of the women's association in this city and they dug the hole together. We were able to enter the shelter from both sides, and there was a well around one of the sides. The well remained there for people to drink water during their refuge.

I, my older sister, mother, and 2-year-old sister evacuated to this shelter, but we weren't able to enter there because it was full of people in the shelter.

It was raining, so we were talking about rain. However, we knew later that B29s were scattering oil from the sky.

Seeing B29s, we hid under the eaves of a house near Yokoana bomb shelter. There were no people living in this house because of the eviction order.

Under the eaves, we were lined up in order from a mother and her daughter who escaped with us, my mother who carried my 2-year-old baby sister, my older sister, and myself. We put the Futon over our heads. The fire bomb was dropped on this house. The B29 dropped the fire bomb flying at a low altitude.

The daughter and her mother suffered from the fire bomb firsthand. My older sister had her right leg burned because her Futon didn't cover over her right leg. I was burned on half of my face because of the same reason of my sister's situation.

After that, people got panic-stricken. We found a little space in Yokoana bomb shelter, so we entered there in a rush. My mother was around the entrance and I and my older sister entered the place about 5 meters inside from the entrance.

My teacher taught us at school, “When you can’t breathe well, dig dirt and cover your face by the hole,” so I did it.

Just then, I heard my mother calling my older sister.

“Mi-chan, Mi-chan, Kozue doesn’t suck the breast.”

(Mi-chan is my older sister’s name and Kozue is my 2-year-old sister’s name.)

My younger sister had already died at that time. My older sister screamed to my mother, “Leave her alone, if she doesn’t suck the breast. Mom, how about laying her down?”

My mother also passed away because of the shock of the younger sister’s death.

On the way to Shikoku, the existence of my mother beside the pillow

After that, a woman, who I didn’t know where she came from, was screaming, “Let’s help someone!” near the entrance of the shelter. I went outside from there. The woman said, “I found a young woman here. We have to get our enemy back for this air raid in the future.” She poured me water which she brought with her helmet, and brought me to the river. That is why I was able to survive.

There was one soldier who belonged to the navy. Before his death, he said, “Please forgive me to die earlier than you, my mother,” and he was singing a song “Umi Ikaba”. (“Umi Ikaba” is one of the military songs.)

I escaped to the river and when in the river, there was a man with my older sister next to him. We were in the darkness because of the night.

In the morning, when I took a look at the man, I noticed that he knocked his head against the stone wall and passed away with his head cracked open. I guess he may have been in a difficult state.

My father came to find us while riding in an ambulance, calling our names.

“Father, Father, we are here.” Then he pulled us over from the river.

He asked us, “Where is your mother?”

We said, “She passed away.”

The people who died in the Yokoana bomb shelter were piled up and cremated so we didn’t have my mother’s remains.

My father cut my mother’s hair and brought it back as her remains.

We were able to survive, and went to a bomb shelter in 9 Chome and lay there. Food was distributed to the injured people there, so I got boiled potato there.

After several days, we brought my mother’s remains to Iyonagahama, Shikoku area. This area is her hometown.

Before the departure for Shikoku, the ship was canceled, so we stayed at an accommodation near the port. My father put out her remains beside his pillow. When we got up in the morning, he said, “She sat beside my pillow.”

We asked him, “What happened, father?”

He said, “She said to me she leaves our two children in my hands.”

After that, we went to Iyonagahama, but we suffered from air raids again.

There was a beautiful and strong bridge there. This bridge was the way to go across to Shikoku. Unfortunately, the bridge was destroyed because of the air raid.

We couldn’t find her whole family in their house and didn’t know where they escaped. I and my older sister hid in the bomb shelter around the back of their house and hugged one another.

We said, “Don’t die by yourself. If we die, we should die together.”

Hayakawa: In Shikoku, you were in imminent danger.

Yes. When I was a student of the girls’ school, I wasn’t able to study because of many air raids.

One day, B29s scattered the leaflets; “Hey Japanese girls and boys, you are sleepy right? We let you sleep forever a little while.”

“How rude they are.” We got really angry at them.

We believed in Japan’s victory

Hayakawa: At that time, even if the complexion of the war is under bad situation, I heard that the media broadcasted Japan kept winning. How did you feel about that?

I didn’t know the truth that Japan was in a defeated state, because I felt Japan was winning.

I believed in Japan’s victory. Not only my father but also everybody had the same feeling as well.

My mother passed away in her 40’s. My father was 44 years old at that time.

People around him gave him advice to marry again. He went to a marriage meeting, and finally got married. Our stepmother was a hairdresser.

After the war, my older sister became a music teacher, so I became my stepmother’s inheritor.

In general, the students in Jo Gakkou could graduate when they entered the 4th grade, but I graduated from the school when I was in the third grade. I started to help in my stepmother’s job.

After I studied this job in Osaka and Tokyo, my father said to me, “I think you have the skill to open your own beauty shop.” So I opened “Ginza Biyoshitsu” when I was 20 years old. The opening date was January 15th, 28 in Showa (in 1953).

Hayakawa: You told us about the air raid in Kure City. The date of the air raid is January 1st, 20 in Showa (1945). Before this date, did some air raids happen?

Yes. Whenever I went to bed, I wore clothing to be able to escape as soon as possible, and put my baggage beside my pillow.

Hayakawa: Was your feeling “nobody knows what happens tomorrow”?

I didn’t think like that seriously. I believed in Japan’s victory, so I wasn’t afraid of that. However, I clearly remembered the experience of the bomb shelter. The situation where the soldier was singing the song “Umi Ikaba” still remains in my ears.

After I got the boiled potato in Hondori 9 Chome, our family moved to Higashiyokoro in Kure City and rented a house through my father's acquaintance. We started to live there.

Hayakawa: August 15th is the date of the end of the war. How did you spend your time at that time?

I heard "the voice of The Imperial Majesty" at a lecture hall in school. Mr. Watanabe, who was a social studies teacher cried saying to us, "I wasn't able to support our country. This is my regret." I was relieved the war finally ended.

Hayakawa: Some people speak about the responsibility of the Imperial Majesty. Could you tell us how you felt at that time?

I have no hatred towards the Imperial Majesty at all. However, Hideki Tojo forced this war right? We were excited and were in an enthusiastic mood during the "Pearl Harbor Attack", but it was an ambush wasn't it? If so, it is natural for Japan to win the attack.

The job as a hairdresser becomes my emotional support

Hayakawa: I heard some people spent many hard times after the war ended. How about you?

We were young so we didn't know it well, but my father started to build our house after the ruins of the land, and decided to marry the hairdresser. That is why he built a two-story house to run a beauty shop in. While under construction, we rented a house in Higashiyokoro, and went to Shikoku which is my mother's hometown. When we returned to Kure from Shikoku, everything was soaked because of the heavy flood. We would have died if we had stayed at home. Only a bay of dried sardine remained around the steps. Trays, clothing, and everything was soaked, so we went to Nishiyokoro.

Hayakawa: 60 years has passed since you opened this beauty shop. If the war hadn't occurred, you may not have become a hairdresser, wouldn't you?

I wouldn't have become a hairdresser. If the war hadn't occurred, I wished to have become an elementary school teacher. When I was in the 5th grade of elementary school, I was in charge of cleaning the second grade classroom. At that time, Teacher Komatsu, who was the teacher of the second grade students, passed me the test and answer sheets. She relied on me to check the students' answers. I wrote O or X, calculating the score. For example, I gave them a score of 90 or 80 or whatever they deserved. I really enjoyed the job. That is why I wanted to become an elementary school teacher.

When I started my shop, she came to my shop as a customer. Unfortunately, she passed away.



Hayakawa: Could you tell us your sorrow experiences in your heart after the war?

My stepmother was 35 years old and was young, so I felt sad when she spoke ill of my father to her customers. Because of that, I got away from home when I was 18 years old, and went to my mother's hometown, Iyonagahama.

The stepmother's pupil lived in Takahama, so I went there and stayed there one night. Then, I went to my mother's house because my uncle and aunt lived there. However they said to me, "You should go back home in case the stepmother becomes in a bad mood." At that time, Japan was under food shortage, but my aunt made many "Ohagi", which is one of the Japanese sweets, and gave them to me.

There were 9 people living and working in my house, so I gave these Ohagi to them. There was one boy who is my father and stepmother's child. He said, "I want to eat this Ohagi." So I gave him one of them. However, she said to him, "You shouldn't eat this! I will make the sweet for you by myself." She threw the Ohagi to the entrance. My stepmother's characteristic was strong-minded.

Since then, I noticed that I wasn't able to stay here anymore, so I decided to go to school as a hairdresser in Osaka. A teacher named Mr. Ando came to Kure City for the session. I asked him about his shop and finally could go there.

Hayakawa: During the war and after the war, I think you spent many hard times more than what I can imagine, but could you tell us what supported you under the situation?

That is my beauty shop, all in all. I started to study the way of dressing of “Kimono” when I was around 25 years old. I began to do this when I was 27 years old. My job is what I live for. I cried sometimes because of my family background, but I never felt hard times to my job. My job helps me.

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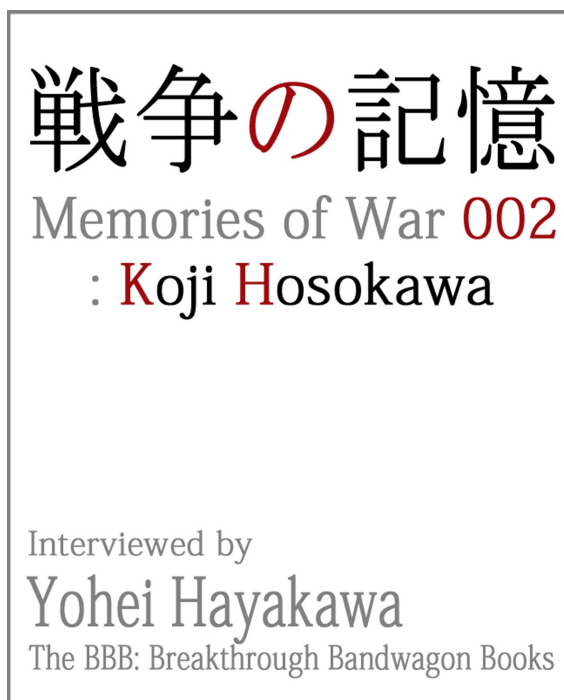
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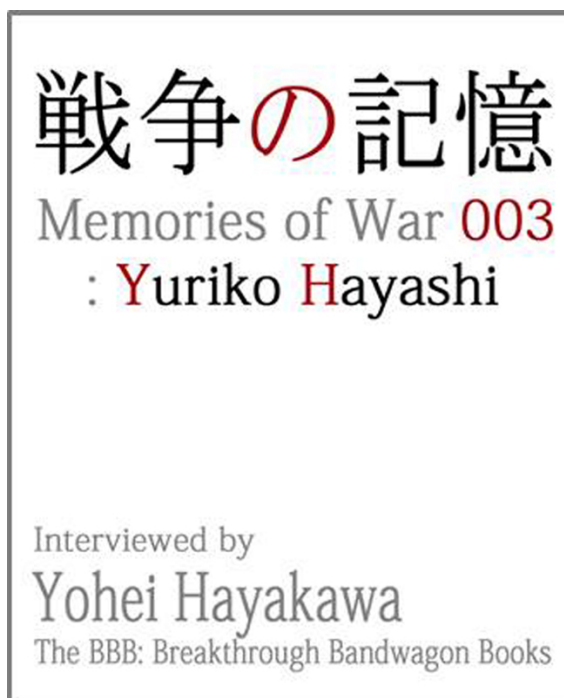
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