

**WORLD WAR II MEMORIES IN TAIWAN:
MY GRANDPA AND WWII
(Interviewed by Hamilton Yuan)**

The person that I did for my primary source interview is my grandpa on my mother's side. I had to call him up in Taiwan to do this interview. Though long-distance calling costs a lot, it was worth the money. My grandpa is very smart. He loves the subject of history and can tell you a whole bunch of detailed information about almost any historic event. It is quite amazing that my grandpa still has such great memories of the war. I expected him to know little bits and pieces, but instead, he could remember it all very clearly. It was all crystal-clear to him. I also expected him to reluctantly talk about such a horrid memory, but he was extremely open. He told me as many facts as he could and sometimes went a little over than I wanted. My grandpa gave told me a lot about WWII from a country that wasn't an independent country back then. Yet, the country still sent troops to fight in the war. The following is the information I had acquired from my grandpa about WWII in the country of Taiwan.

When WWII started in 1939, my grandpa who is now in his 60's lived through WWII. He was just a sixth grader back then and he was living in the country we now know of as Taiwan. The country of Japan, back then in WWII, controlled Taiwan. Japan was a vicious and fiery country. Japan was like a Germany, but in the continent of Asia. It was gobbling up as many countries as it fought in the WWII. One such victim was Taiwan and my grandpa did not like it since he was living in Taiwan. My grandpa lived in the outskirts of town on a rural farm. One of the many questions I asked him was, what was life like? He responded as in life was tough. Life was not easy. It was like being in Germany. If you ever said one bad thing about Japan or Hitler, you were put away. Sometimes you would be killed. One such example is if you said that, "Japan sucks and is going to be heavily destroyed and defeated in the war!" you would be in trouble if someone told on you. There was a police system in Taiwan like the Gestapo in Germany. The Japanese, if they found out what you said, would immediately take you away or kill you. My grandpa did not know what had happened when people were taken away because he was just a young boy and he did know many things. Though, he had a vague idea of what happened to the people and that was that the people would work like in a concentration camp. They would have to work on building things, making weapons, planting crops, and many other unimaginable things. My grandpa was scared of the Japanese and going outside. Since my grandpa lived in the rural areas of Taiwan, controlled by Japan, he would have to plant crops everyday other than going to school. He would have to tend to the

crops, feed the animals, do many daily chores, and harvest the food. "Life was not easy." he said. You had to do work. Work was required by everyone or you were sent away or killed on the site. One member of each family was required to go out and work someplace. Luckily, my grandpa wasn't that chosen person. My grandpa was poor at that time. If you had money during WWII, your lives would be a bit better. You were able to buy goods, more food for your family, and many other things. Basically if you had the money in Taiwan during WWII, you lived a better life and you could practically buy yourself out of trouble. Another one of the many questions I asked him was life different when WWII started. My grandpa replied saying that it was different. Very different than if there was no war. He said that acquiring food was hard. The Japanese had strict food control over the people. People were only able to get little rations each day. You could not get food anytime you were hungry. You had to either buy it or wait for the next meal. It was hard for my grandpa. There was allocation in Taiwan. There was also an illegal black market. Like said before, if you had money, you were able to get things. Usually the daily meal was some meager rice and maybe bits of pork. With money you could buy more rations and some other things in your meal. You could buy chicken, beef, vegetables, greens, and many others. In addition, every boy that were from the ages of about 18 to some 20s had to enlist in the army. It was required for men to fight in the war, since Japan needed many men. Another change in the lifestyle was that people had to be careful when they were out in the open. It was dangerous to be out in the open. There was constant bombings by us, the Americans. They used the B-29 Superfortress, bombing planes. These planes, my grandpa said, were quite amazing. They could fly at extremely high altitudes and drops bombs with heavy devastation on the victims below. They targets they targeted were railroads, roads, bridges, and any transportation system. The Americans wanted to isolate the people living there so that there would be no reinforcements or any news traveling to Japan. Sometimes, there were ground troops who carried big machine guns. It was dangerous if you ever saw a machine gun because you were basically slaughtered on site. Sometimes, the Americans also used the P32 fighter plane to create great havoc and devastation. The attacks from other countries like France, Great Britain, the U.S. and many other countries would attack at approximately at a certain time almost everyday. It would be in the mornings, noon, or 2 o'clock in the afternoon. It was dangerous when the B-29s started bombing. You never knew where the bomb was going drop. The only protection there was was on the banks of a nearby creek. It wasn't much protection, but it was the best that they had. Children still had to go to school. School was basically the same unless when there

was a bombing procedure. Then the whole school would evacuate the school and hide in the bank so the nearby creek. They rarely ever stopped classes. When school was over, the children sometimes talked about the war. In the beginning of the war, the children were all saying that they were going to win. In the end, they were saying that they were doomed, that they had lost the war. The people did not know much about the war because there was no form of real communication. They couldn't read the newspaper for information on the war because there really never was any. My grandpa's older brothers had fought in the war. One went to Indonesia, another went to New Guinea, and the other went to the Philippines. One other question I asked my grandpa was what was his personal opinion about the war. He said it was just insane. My grandpa said that Hitler was just pure evil and didn't deserve to live. He thought that this war was for a good cause and has a good moral lesson in that if any country ever tries to take over another country, the world will thwart your attempts. My grandpa also thought that the Japanese were just brutal and had no lives. They don't deserve to live. The Japanese got their supplies and resources from China during the war. That's why Japan lasted so long in the war. After that question, I asked for my grandfather's personal perspective and opinion about Hitler. My grandpa admired Hitler. He thought that Hitler with such a poor background could have so much power and leadership to rise his country to the top. Even though my grandpa knew he was a bad man, he still thought that Hitler was amazing. He admires the way that Hitler could just make his country become one of the strongest countries ever. My grandpa thought that Hitler was also very smart in creating the V-2 rockets and set up an attack on Normandy. He was a great conquer, that's what my grandpa thought. As you can see, my grandpa provided a whole load of information. His memory is far-reaching and inspirational. I thank him for his time and cooperation through the interview and I hope that there will never be a WWII for life would probably be about the same.

My Grandpa's Stories from WWII

(From interview by Hamilton Yuan)

Along with the fabulous information that my grandpa provided me with, he also told me some anecdotes. Each story is unique in a special way. He told me a total of three short stories. The following are the stories.

1. The soldiers of the Japanese army were loyal. They were extremely loyal to the king. They were like the ancient samurai. They valued honor and wanted to win. They fought furiously with spirit and determination. The soldiers fought for their king and not necessarily for themselves. To them, honor was above everything and serving the king in battle seemed a great honor to

them. The soldiers were really responsible in their duties and jobs. Sometimes, if the soldier could not accomplish the mission given to them, they would commit suicide. It was like the samurai. They committed seppuku, which deals with honor and suicide. Soldiers would get a small knife and thrust it into their stomach. They would then move the knife left and then a swift upward motion. That would kill them quickly and would be an act of honor.

2. The Japanese boats that the Japanese used to transport their troops were fast and agile. They could twist through anything and avoid many obstacles. One such example was when American submarines found these boats carrying Japanese soldiers. Immediately, the submarine fired torpedoes at the boat. Since the Japanese boat was agile, the boat could make a quick enough 90-degree turn and avoid getting hit. This was a uniquely designed boat. No boat can really make a 90-degree turn in the moment of urgency. Sometimes, these boats found they were fired upon too late so they were destroyed. Most of the boats survived. These boats were amazing.

3. There was an extremely famous Japanese general who was very important to the Japan army and was a great leader. This Japanese general's name translated in English is Iwo Jima. He was a very good general, sort of like Erwin Rommel. One day, when the general was riding his airplane from the Philippines back to Japan, he was attacked by American fighters. The U.S. government had found out that this general was going back to Japan so they sent fighters to intercept the plane. The general was killed in the attack. Because of the death of the general, WWII was shortened. If the general had not died, the war would have lasted and gone on for a longer time.