

China Under Attack

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Japan attacked China in 1937, launching the second Chinese-Japanese War. At first, Japanese forces overpowered the Chinese. But when Japan bombed the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in 1941, China gained a powerful ally—the United States. The United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan in 1945, forcing the country to surrender and ending World War II and the Chinese-Japanese War. Jonathan Miedel talked to his grandmother, Mary Yu Chang, about growing up in China during the war.

When the war began, my grandmother was only 6 years old. Her family lived in Shanghai, but her father had to leave because his job had been moved to the temporary capital, Chongqing.

When he realized that the situation in Shanghai was getting worse, he sent for his family to join him.

The most direct route from Shanghai to Chongqing was by boat on the Yangtze River. However, the Japanese had occupied many coastal cities by that time. My grandmother's family had to take a huge **detour**¹. They traveled by sea to Hong Kong, then to North Vietnam. Then the rest of the trip was in crowded diesel trucks traveling through the mountains. "On some of the sharpest turns, some of the trucks slid off the edge of the cliffs," my grandmother recalled.

Every time someone heard an airplane, the passengers would jump out of the trucks and crawl on their hands and knees through cornfields. My grandmother said that the leaves would cut her face. Everybody was covered in blood and mud.

When my grandmother and her family finally arrived, Chongqing was extremely crowded with refugees. Fortunately, her dad's company had houses for its employees. My grandmother's new house only had two rooms, so it was extraordinarily cramped.

¹ **detour**: a roundabout way temporarily replacing a regular route