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"My Journey to the Past: when my grandfather owed his life to sea turtles during WW II" by Anna Ishii

During World War 2, Shintaro Noda, my grandfather, was a member of the "Shiragiku" special attack corp in Tokushima. One day, he made up his mind to go on a final suicide mission for "Nippon." soon after takeoff, the flight he was with got the order to abort the mission due to bad weather, so they returned to Tokushima. But a radio set wasn't loaded into my grandfather's aircraft, so not knowing about the abort order my grandfather kept flying. Eventually, being unable to locate the U.S. Forces and after he finally noticed that there were no other aircraft in the air, he decided to return home, but he didn't have enough fuel to return to Tokushima. To keep flying as long as possible he jettisoned his bombs to reduce weight. Despite his attempts he finally ran out of gas and his aircraft crashed in the mouth of Issou River, Yakushima (Island).

He remained unconscious for twenty days after the crash. While he was sleeping, the local people of Yakushima poured sea turtle's eggs into his mouth to keep him alive. After that, he always said "sea turtle allowed me to escape death."

He often visited Yakushima after the end of the war. The local people of Yakushima said to him We often saved lives during the war, but you are the only persons to come back to meet us after the war. He proudly talked about his strong ties with his lifesavers. He told many people his story by giving lectures in nearby junior high schools and publishing booklets.

My grandfather passed away on June 16, of this year. many people who came to the funeral remembered my grandfather's story and talked to my family about it. We also found old maps, guide books and diaries of Yakushima when we cleaned up after my grandfather's passing. And then I remembered my grandfather's story anew and was interested in the sea turtles of Yakushima. On investigation, I discovered that the "Yakushima Sea Turtle Museum" looks for volunteers to help on research about the behavior of sea turtles. I wanted to help save sea turtles, so I decided to apply. If sea turtles hadn't allowed my grandfather to escape death, I might not have been born. My grandmother and relatives sent me as their representative to help repay the sea turtles of

Yakushima.

When I was researching sea turtles as a volunteer, Mr. Ohmura, a director of the Yakushima Sea Turtle Museum, said to me "Each nest is its own microcosm." It makes sense. I thought each sea turtle leads its own lives; some couldn't grow, some couldn't break the egg, and some died in the sand." I reflected on my grandfather's life, overlapping with that of the sea turtle. Though I finished my period of volunteer work today, I think that I had many precious experiences.

In addition to my experiences, an unbelievably happy thing happened to me. Mr. Takahashi, the officer of the Sea Turtle Museum, who lives in Issou where my grandfather's aircraft crashed, knew my grandfather's name. He works at the post office and knows the neighborhood very well, so he said that he would introduce the person who saved my grandfather to me if I told him their name and address. Yesterday, I finally met Mr. Terada. He is ninety years old. He is the one who saved the life of my grandfather. He remembered clearly what happened the day of the crash and happily talked to me about it. When my grandfather's aircraft crashed, at first he thought my grandfather to be an enemy. But when he saw my grandfather was Japanese, he rescued him from the aircraft and carried him on a door which he brought from his house. He poured sea turtle eggs into my grandfather's mouth at the military station of Issou. I was impressed by the story he told. Although grandmother met Mr. Terada two years ago, when I told him about the meeting over the phone, she tearfully said "Thank you."

It was a spur of the moment decision to participate as a volunteer, and though I spent only two weeks in Yakushima, I feel it was worthwhile. I will never forget the various benefits of sea turtles."