

DIRECTIONS: Read the story carefully. Then read each question and fill in the bubble next to the correct answer.

The Day Mother Sold the Family Swords

A True Story by Shizuko Obo

When people think about Japan, they either think of Old Japan—people wearing bright, flowing kimonos, living in wooden houses with thatched straw roofs and sliding paper walls, writing poetry on paper lanterns, and practicing the martial arts. Or they think of New Japan—everybody wearing business suits, rushing for crowded trains, working fourteen hours a day, making a lot of cars and cameras, TVs and VCRs, but still taking the time to practice the martial arts.

I grew up in Japan during a time between the old and the new ways of life, in the final days of the Second World War, when more changes took place in Japan than had taken place in the past thousand years. When I was a little girl, living on the outskirts of Tokyo, I could look out over one of the biggest cities in the world and see nothing but brown, burned buildings, and wreckage. There wasn't a tree or a spray of green leaves anywhere. Some of the things I remember about those days were shocking. Some of them were funny. One of the things I remember most clearly is the day my mother sold the family swords.

Near the end of the war that had started when Japan made a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, American B-29 planes dropped thousands of firebombs on Tokyo. During this biggest firebombing in history, most of the wooden houses with their thatched straw roofs and paper screens burned like stacks of crumpled paper. My mother had taken me and my older brother and sister to live with relatives in the country before this happened. However, my father and my oldest brother, Takeo, had stayed home. My father had to work. My brother, who was fifteen years older than I, had been drafted into the navy and was to begin flight training to become a pilot.

During the last days of the war, my brother Takeo was chosen to be a member of a special attack squadron called the *kamikaze*. By 1945, Japan was so short of trained pilots that young, inexperienced pilots were asked to dive their airplanes right into the American ships instead of trying to drop bombs on them. The pilots were killed, of course, when they crashed their planes into the ships, which were badly damaged or sunk. These kamikazes were the last weapons Japan had left in 1945. Many young Japanese were willing to sacrifice their lives for their country rather than give up.

Now answer the questions about this part of the selection.