

Yaeko S. Weldon Biography:

Yaeko Sugama Weldon was born in 1925 in Tokorozawa, Japan. She was 16 years old when the U.S. entered the war following the Pearl Harbor attack. After the war, in 1958, she married an American serviceman stationed near her town, then moved to the U.S. settling in Joliet, IL, and occasionally visiting Chicago's Japantown area. Currently resides in St. Louis, Missouri.

War Experiences:

Ms. Weldon was a teenager during the war and, like many teens, did not pay particular attention to government matters. Japan did not have a free media, so she mainly remembers the radio announcing Japanese battle victories and not the losses or casualties suffered by the Japanese. She did not know much about why Japan was at war. She was working on the outskirts of Tokyo when the U.S. began their bombing campaign there. The home she lived in was destroyed. She escaped by hiding for hours in a river contaminated by waste water. She says, "I guess you can do anything to survive." She also witnessed a young coworker shot down by a U.S. warplane and was herself shot at while riding her bicycle.

On the atomic bombs and the end of war:

Again, Ms. Weldon did not hear much about that except radio announcements that much damage had been done to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by American bombs. She remembers being so happy the war was over – "who wanted war anyway?" Many people in her town were just relieved that the fear and uncertainty were over. Decades later, she visited the Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki and was horrified and sickened by what she saw there. She hoped that people had learned from that experience and that no country would ever again drop an atomic bomb.

Linda Austin Biography:

Yaeko's daughter Linda was born in Chicago, IL, but raised in Joliet. She attended Plainfield schools and later Eastern Illinois University and the University of Illinois, Champaign -Urbana. She grew up listening to her mother's stories and finally got to work writing a book about them after a family friend took the first steps. "The most difficult part was writing in my mother's voice so that readers would be able to hear her speaking her life story." Linda currently resides with her husband and two children in St. Louis, Missouri, not far from her mother.