

The War Is Still Going On

新島学園高等学校 2年 山城 結花

Two years ago, I learned that my grandfather living in the USA had cancer. He was going to have surgery. I was shocked and couldn't say anything. What shocked me more, was that a doctor said his cancer might be caused by Agent Orange. Agent Orange is a chemical weapon that was used during the Vietnam War. When I heard this, I couldn't believe that chemicals used more than 50 years ago might still effect my grandfather's body.

My grandfather served as a soldier in the Vietnam War. He told me all about it. The war began in 1961. At first, America thought it would be over quickly because they had much more powerful weapons. But, Vietnam was a strong fighter and they never gave up. "We became so stressed because Vietnam never showed any signs of losing," my grandfather said. The US military dropped many bombs, but they didn't seem to damage the Vietnam Army at all. In the deep forests, the Vietnamese soldiers dug long underground tunnels and hid in them, confusing the American soldiers.

After a long struggle, the US army started to use chemicals called Agent Orange. It was sprayed from the sky by helicopter, destroying forests where Vietnamese soldiers were hiding. These chemicals contaminated the soil and the farmers were unable to grow any vegetables or grain. About 5 million Vietnamese people, not only soldiers but also civilians, were directly showered by these horrible chemicals. Many became sick and died. For the people that survived, the nightmares went on and on. The most frightening thing is that these chemicals have stayed in the human body for a long time causing cancer or nerve disorders. Agent Orange was used more than 50 years ago, but there are still many people who are suffering from it. It has been reported that three or four generations have been affected. In the US military as well, there have been many soldiers who have been badly affected by these horrible chemicals. My grandfather is one of them. "I was not surprised", he said. "I knew I was going to get sick in some way, because I was there when the

helicopter sprayed the chemicals,”.

After learning these facts, I now have strong mixed feelings. I am sad, angry and scared. I have realized a war will torture people much more than we can imagine. The Vietnam War was over in 1971, 49 years ago. However, considering what is happening to my grandfather, the war is still going on. And the same thing is happening to many people, not only to soldiers but also to civilians. War even hurts people who haven't even been born yet, our future generations. The start of a war means the beginning of endless suffering for us, the human race. This is just terrible. Don't you agree?

My grandfather looked at me and said, “Since I fought in Vietnam, the war has never ended in my heart. Probably it will never end until the day I die.” His sad voice and words echoed in my heart and still does. Thank you.