



## **LEGACIES OF THE KOREAN WAR**

Oral History Project

*www.legaciesofthekoreanwar.org*

Interview with:

**Teresa Um**

First Generation

Interviewed by:

**Sang-Min Kim,**

**Missing Pieces Project,**

**Korean American Youth Leaders in Training,**

**K.W. Lee Center for Leadership**

Date of Interview:

September 21, 2015

The North Korean soldiers crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and moved rapidly towards Uijeongbu, Seoul. From afar, I heard loud explosions and saw many people evacuating. At that time, people wondered where to go, held their infants, grasped onto their children's hands and carried their belongings on their backs.

So many refugees crossed the Han River to evacuate, but my family and I stayed at our house. Two days later, I heard that the Han River bridge was bombed without warning. People could no longer walk across it. Some people used boats to get across the river, but only a few made it across. People were constantly trying to walk across the river.

At that time, our family was harvesting crops, so many refugees from different regions came to our house to ask for food. Sometimes our neighbors would come and ask our grandfather for rice, and he would tell us to give them a few cups of rice. I saw them use their skirts to scoop up the rice.

My grandfather's friends would all come to our house. They were making shoes. But I had no idea why they were doing that. Later, I found out that my grandfather and his friends were helping out the refugees by giving them supplies.

Behind Ahyeon Elementary School, there was a creek. While I was walking by, that's when I saw countless deformed dead bodies that were piled on top of each other. That's war. It's incredibly scary. You could see a dead child reaching for his mother and the mother looking at her child. You can't imagine the kinds of bodies we saw.

We heard that if you went to Sogang Elementary School, there were dead soldiers all over the playground. We were only sixteen or seventeen-year-old kids at the time. We scurried up the hill and looked down. There were rows of dead South Korean soldiers sitting upright. They were dead before they could attempt to defend themselves. Those soldiers were all someone's beloved son. They were all someone's child.

When North Korean soldiers walked into our village, we looked out as they walked by. We noticed that the soldiers were really young men who were maybe 15 or 16. I still wonder if they ever got a chance to reunite with their families.