

The Most Memorable Day of My Life



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Friday, 21 April 1995

I was fifteen years old and it was fourteen days until my sixteenth birthday. There were no major events that day that most would consider important, but it was the day that set the course of my life.

When I was a child my entire family consisted of myself and three other people; my parents and my beloved uncle, my mother's older brother. The three of them had been inseparable, with the exception of my uncle's tour of duty in the United States Marine Corps, since 6 August 1945 when the B-29 Bomber, *Enola Gay*, dropped the first atomic bomb on their home, Hiroshima, Japan.

All three were outside the city, on some sort of organized outing, when the bomb exploded. My parents were both four years old and don't remember much of the day, but my uncle was eleven and he remembered the flash, that he always said was brighter than the Sun, and the noise of the explosion. They were separated from the city by a mountain that shielded them from the blast and the radiation.

Three children, my mother, her older brother, and a little boy who was their next-door neighbor, my mom's best friend and who would be, one day, my father, found themselves alone and helpless in a destroyed city. My uncle, who, obviously, was resourceful even as a child, scrounged, begged, and stole enough to keep them relatively safe and alive.

Eventually, he was caught stealing food from some sort of U. S. military installation, but a man he believes to have been a Marine officer, was impressed with how well he had provided for his small charges. Before long, all three were on their way to America and a new life; a life he made certain they appreciated.

When he first encountered Americans, he was confused. They weren't monsters, as he had been led to believe, but he never saw them act hostile in any way. What he did notice, especially after he was caught stealing from them, is that Americans were kind, generous and courteous people, even to the children of their enemy. Rather than being punished for stealing he was taken in and provided for. When they, my little family, landed in America they were, in their hearts, 100% Americans.

All three considered themselves Americans from the first time their feet touched American soil and what few connections they had to their homeland were forgotten. My uncle made sure that they understood that the bomb that took everything and everyone from them, in all likelihood, had saved their lives. He had been taught, in school, that the Americans were going to invade mainland Japan and would kill every man, woman, and child and that he was expected to defend his homeland and kill Americans. He didn't know any better; he believed what he was told. Even after he learned that what he had been told was propaganda, he knew that an invasion would have killed many Japanese along with many Americans. He recognized that the bomb, and the similar device that fell several days later, saved many lives on both sides.

I was raised by these three people to be an American; not a Japanese, not a Japanese-American but simply an American. I was taught to love the country, and the people that had taken my family in and cared and provided for them. I was taught that my country had already done more for me than anyone could expect and now, it was my turn to show gratitude.

My parents worked hard to provide for me and give me every advantage they thought I should have. My uncle had more time for me because he had learned a few marketable skills in Japan and was paid a higher wage because of that. He had the most time to spend with me and he made certain I knew the history of my adopted homeland and that I knew how and why it was such a great nation.

On Friday afternoon, 21 April 1995, my uncle and I were out shopping. He wanted to get me a nice dress for my birthday that was two weeks away. He also surprised me by telling me that the next day we were going to a friend's farm where I could get my first taste of driving even though I wasn't quite old enough. The car radio was on and we were half-way listening to the news. We heard a reference to the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City that had happened two days before. We stopped talking and listened. I believe I can recite the line exactly as the newscaster read it 25 years ago.

*“When Terry Nichols was apprehended, he was found to have, in his possession, copies of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States and **other subversive literature.**”*

Twenty-five years ago, exactly one quarter of a century, the news media openly declared the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution* to be “*subversive literature...*” and nobody cared. If you're ever curious as to how we got to where we are now... it was because nobody cared.

That was the only time I had ever seen my uncle cry.

