personally, it did not make much difference. After the war ended, many people originally from other places in China started to return home. The Nationalist government distributed money to help them go home. I was still an orphan with no parents and no home to return to.

A Teacher of the ZZEB
Yang Xianzhi, born in 1920 in Anhui Province

When the Marco Polo Bridge Incident took place in 1937, I was a seventeen-year-old student in a normal school established by General Zhang Zhizhong, who later became a war hero and died in a battle against Japanese invaders. After the fall of Nanjing to the Japanese in December 1937, I fled from Anhui to Wuhan because my aunt who was in the Nationalist army was stationed there. I arrived in Wuhan in early 1938 and enrolled in the Wartime Female-Cadre Training Program sponsored by the National Association of Chinese Women for the Cheering and Comforting of the Officers and Soldiers of the War of Self-Defense and Resistance against Japan. Late that year, when the Japanese troops were approaching Wuhan, we were ordered to retreat to Sichuan. The final destination was Chongqing, the wartime capital of China.

From Wuhan to Chongqing, we walked most of the distance, four hundred of us trainees, as a group. Every day, the Japanese planes came out to bomb the major roads that were filed with refugees. Every day, hundreds of refugees were killed by Japanese bombing, and the roads were littered with corpses. Because the size of our group could be an easy target for the Japanese bombers, we were instructed to walk at night and rest during the day. The journey to Chongqing was a very difficult one. The roads back then were not paved. If it rained, they became muddy and slippery. When they were dry, they were very dusty. In the moonless nights without any illumination, we had to walk by holding the back of the jacket of the person in front of us to remain in the procession. From time to time we would stumble upon a dead body or a sleeping refugee. When we reached Yichang, the Japanese bombardment was so intense that during the day we had to hide under the cliffs along the Yangzi River. Only when night fell did we come into the city, and the bombing that destroyed Yichang’s electrical facilities made the city a dark and ghostly place.
However, we were much better off than many individual refugees. Since we belonged to the XYCZFZW, we could get food supplies from local authorities wherever we stopped. Many individual refugees had difficulty finding food even when they had money. The unprecedented large-scale refugee migration had created food shortages along the way from Wuhan to Chongqing. We had two meager meals each day. In the morning we had a bowl of thin porridge and occasionally steamed buns. Then at night we had relatively thicker rice porridge with pickles. All four hundred of us were females and came from areas that had been taken by the Japanese. For most of us, the motive to join the training program was to fight against the Japanese to recover our homeland that had been lost to the invaders. Of course, it was also important to me that membership in the program guaranteed me a shelter, two meals a day, a uniform, and a relatively safe passage to the Great Rear—Chongqing.

Ever since I fled Anhui, I was separated from my family. I missed them very much and worried about my relatives’ safety. The war interrupted the postal services, and I could not contact them. I was so homesick that whenever I heard someone speaking the Anhui dialect, I cried. In the training program, since all trainees were refugees from the areas that had been taken over by the Japanese, we established a special friendship and relied on one another emotionally.

When we finally arrived in Chongqing after four months of walking, our life improved significantly. Madam Jiang Jieshi was in charge of our program and came to our training center almost every day. I remember that in one of our meetings, Madam Jiang advised us that developing our moral character was equally as important as learning academic knowledge. She told us that people with knowledge but without moral character would inflict great harm on society.

The majority of the graduates of our program were sent to work in the ZZEB homes. Upon my graduation from the training program, I was assigned to work at the number 8 ZZEB Home in Jiangbei, Chongqing. Madam Jiang played an important role in the establishment of the ZZEB homes and was crucial in safe-guarding their existence during the war years. However, after 1949, nobody dared to say anything positive about Madam Jiang and her role in the war. We former students and teachers of the ZZEB had to conceal our association with the ZZEB and Madam Jiang. Before the 1980s, no one paid any attention to the history and contributions made by the ZZEB until Deng Yingchao, wife of Zhou Enlai, said in a 1988 speech that the ZZEB had made great contributions in saving more than thirty thousand refugee children.
during the war years. After her speech, we were allowed to organize alumni associations. Now going to the annual meeting of the association becomes a highlight of my life.

The ZZEB homes provided free education and care for refugee children. At the number 8 home I was assigned to be a teacher/nanny. Most faculty members were females. I was only eighteen years old and like a big sister to many refugee children. Refugee children at the center called the director and other older teachers “mother”; they called me “teacher.” I spent twenty-four hours each day with the kids. I lived with the students in their dormitory. I had a framed bed, and the students slept on straw mattress on the floor. I was responsible for washing the young children and taking care of sick ones. I also ate with them. In the morning we had rice porridge with some cooked soy beans. For lunch and supper we had steamed rice with two vegetable dishes. Meat was scarce. If we were lucky, we each would have a few pieces of cooked pork once every two weeks. Before 1941, we had at least enough rice porridge or steamed rice to fill our stomachs. But after 1941, our center did not receive enough food supplies, and many students suffered from hunger. Many young kids developed nyctalopia [night blindness] because of malnutrition and had to be put under special treatment. We did have a medical doctor and a little clinic at the center. However, because of the scarcity of medicine, the doctor could only treat minor problems. The majority of our medical supplies came from overseas donations, especially from the United States, because of the efforts of Madam Jiang.

At the number 8 home, afternoon classes were devoted to work/study programs to generate income for the center. All faculty and students were required to participate. The older kids were either sent to work on our farm or to do other chores that required manual strength. The younger children were organized to make matchboxes. I normally worked with the youngest children in the center. Our job was to glue labels to matchboxes. Back then the glue was made of flour paste. Some kids were so hungry that they ate the paste. We also went to textile factories to collect thread ends and fabric scraps. We either used them for making shoes or sold them to automobile factories as cleaning cloths. Both students and teachers were highly motivated and committed to our tasks. We knew that what we were doing contributed to China’s War of Resistance against the Japanese.

Our home was located in a dilapidated Buddhist temple at the bank of the Jialing River, and living conditions were poor. We had neither electricity nor running water. We did not have heating in the winter, and many kids suffered from chilblains. Every day the older kids and the teachers had to carry
water from the river. Our food supplies were also sent to us by boat. When they arrived, the older kids and the teachers unloaded them from the boat and carried them back to the center. Most students at the center were mature for their age. Being separated from their families and harsh wartime reality made them understand the importance of self-reliance. They washed their own clothing in the river and were responsible for keeping their dormitories and classrooms clean. The older kids and the teachers helped the younger ones do their laundry. In the summer all of us took our baths and swam in the river. One summer a small child drowned in the river. Although he was not my student, I felt sad for a long time.

The students developed a self-governing system to handle disputes and disciplinary issues. Every morning and evening students held meetings to discuss their accomplishments and the challenges they faced and to conduct self-examination and criticism among themselves.

When I first started the job in 1938, my salary was twenty yuan a month paid from Madam Jiang's office. In 1939 my pay was doubled to forty yuan. Despite the terrible wartime inflation, I still managed to save half of my money each month to help my family back in Anhui. During the war years it was impossible to send money to my family in Anhui. However, through some business people's arrangement, I met a fellow person from Anhui who lived in Guizhou. Since his family could not send money from Anhui to him to support his study in Guiyang, every month I sent him twenty yuan, and his family in Anhui gave the same amount to my family there.

Students took academic classes in the morning. We used a book series called the *Kangzhan congshu* [War of Resistance against Japan book series] as textbooks. The books were appropriate for the refugee children because all of them were victims of the Japanese invasion, and the contents of the books were related to their personal experiences. I remember that the first lesson in the first-grade Chinese language book was to teach children several Chinese characters, including the character for “fire.” It placed the word “fire” in the context of the Japanese bombardment. “Fire, Fire, Fire, Japanese bombardment set up gigantic fire,” the lesson went. Many refugee children had never been in school before, but they all studied diligently. To many of them, their experience at the ZZEB homes laid the foundation for future development in their lives. The ZZEB homes not only provided them with good education and discipline but also nurtured their nationalism and personal identity. The majority of them finished their elementary education and moved up to middle and high schools. When they moved out of the home to middle or high schools, the Xyczfzw provided them with bedding, clothing, and liv-
ing expenses. The ones who made it into colleges and universities enjoyed free education as well. In 1942 and 1943, when the government launched the movement to recruit one hundred thousand young students to fight in the Burma Theater, many students from the ZZEB homes joined the Youth Army.

Teachers and staff members at the ZZEB homes worked diligently as well. The majority of the teachers and staff members were refugees themselves. Our displacement from our homes and the suffering we endured because of the Japanese invasion motivated us to contribute to the fight against the invaders. I strongly believed that what I was doing was part of the War of Resistance against Japan.

I taught at the number 8 home for three years, and in 1942, I was transferred to the number 1 home. This home was Madam Jiang’s showcase, where Chinese and foreign dignitaries visited. Life, of course, was much better there. Food was not only plentiful but also of much better quality. We had meat to eat every week, and children there were provided with milk powder and candies from the United States. We lived in newly constructed dormitories and were provided with uniforms and blankets from foreign donations. Young girls at the number 1 home were issued floral dresses for the summer. Madam Jiang came up to the home frequently and gave birthday parties with cakes for the children.

At the number 8 home all students and teachers were required to work at least half-time to generate income for the center in order to ensure our own survival. Here at the number 1 home the focus was on academic studies. Students spent most of their time studying academic subjects, and work was part of the physical education to train them to be well-rounded people.

The number 1 home was located on the Gele Mountain, where many Chinese dignitaries had their wartime residences. General Feng Yuxiang’s house was not very far from the home, and he and his wife Li Dequan often took their evening walk at our home. Li was one of the founders of the ZZEB; the kids at the home loved her and called her Mother Feng.

Ever since I left Anhui, I had been working very hard and tried my best to contribute to the War of Resistance against Japan. I did not date or even think about dating. I devoted all my time and energy to the ZZEB kids. I was assigned to teach the first grade at the number 1 home. Since the requirement for academic excellence was much higher there, I felt that I needed to improve my own ability as a teacher. I decided to go to college. I talked to my director, and she supported my decision, with the condition that upon my graduation I would return to the ZZEB home. In 1944, I passed the entrance
examination and was admitted to the National Women’s Normal University. The reason I chose a normal university was that it was free of charge. After the end of the war, all the ZZEB homes were gradually phased out.

**A Woman from a Rich and Powerful Family**

Chen Guojun, born in 1918 in Chongqing, Sichuan Province

I was from a rich and powerful family, and my father was the commissioner for the Fifth District and a Red Gang chief in Chongqing. My mother died when I was young, and my father remarried soon after. Although my father loved me, I could not get along with my stepmother. To compete with my stepmother for my busy father’s attention, I was mischievous and rebellious. I fought with my stepmother every day. Because of the tension between my stepmother and me, my father sent me to a boarding school. When the war broke out, I was a nineteen-year-old high school student at Jianwen, a private school in Chongqing. During my freshman year Jianwen students were mainly from the Chongqing region. However, during my sophomore and junior years, the majority of my classmates were refugees from the north and central regions taken by the Japanese, including Manchuria.

Most of the refugee students suffered a great deal to come to Chongqing, and many of them had lost their family members and loved ones during the war. My heart went out to them. Some of the refugee students were underground Chinese Communist Party members who had gone to college before they came to Chongqing. They repeated high school for the purpose of expanding the CCP’s underground organization and mobilizing the students for the war efforts. My roommate Zhang Ming was from Manchuria and was an underground Communist. I liked her very much, and we developed a close friendship. Since my father was a district chief, the school authority thought I was trustworthy and appointed me to be a student officer in charge of campus life. One of my jobs was to work with a deputy dean to spy on and report any suspicious student activities to the school authorities. The school authorities checked all students’ mail. After the mail was inspected, I delivered it to various rooms on campus. The school authorities suspected that some students belonged to the underground Chinese Communist Party and wanted to catch them.