

ARTHUR RAYMOND SQUIRES

Experiences as a Prisoner-of-War, World War 2

Interviewed by

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Arthur Raymond Squires:

Ray Squires....

Charles G. Roland, M.D.:

Is that your full name?

ARS:

Arthur Raymond Squires, born in Saskatoon, joined the army in Victoria, in June 1940. Born July 26, 1912. Joined the medical corps first, spent a year in it and when I asked the doctor a question in a lecture he said, "That's all you need to know." I decided this is where I came in, so I moved heaven and earth till I got out. And I joined the signal corps and I went over as a signalman.

I was over there for four months in prison camp. I never told anybody I had any medical experience, but I did some nursing in the Gordon Head army camp -- quite a bit of it as a matter of fact, and I had a little bit of experience. After three months the dysentery got much worse and beside the huts were little ditches, cement ditches and they were full of blood because the fellows couldn't get to the toilets. And the flies were all over everything, your rice was covered with them and you swept them off with your hand and before you could get the spoon up to your mouth it was back again.

So I was talking to one of the boys and told this lad that I had this experience and I thought I should go and offer myself. So he said, "Well Gordon Gray's around," that was Dr. Gordon Gray. And so we're sitting talking and he comes walking along so I went and asked him and he said, "Just a minute, I'll be back in

a few minutes." I went on the dysentery ward in about 20 minutes and I nursed it for about 3 weeks, I guess.

Then one night I was all alone, 26 patients and no lights, and I was lifting up a little guy called Kenny Martin, had a helmet for a bedpan, and I lifted him up (and a cigarette package for toilet wipe), and I'm leaning over to hold him up, it was very late, and I'd taken the bedpan from under him and I was leaning over him and I felt a moist smear go by my mouth and I knew what it was, it was paper.

We had some carbolic dilute and, Doc, I got two or three mouthfuls and gargled on it, and about two days later I got it. Gord Gray got me some sulfa tablets. I had three or six, that had been through the black market and one of our black market friends had picked them up; his name was West. And I maybe owe my life to him because it was very deadly at that particular time, and two days later I was back doing the job again.

I did it then through possibly another month, and diphtheria broke out and we had a few cases. And then I started to go very quickly and we opened the Jubilee Buildings and they ran it for about a month and things weren't going very well. And Dr. [John] Crawford called me in one day and said, "As of now you're running the Jubilee Hospital." And I said, "Well, how can I do that when your men are running it now?" And he said, "I don't give a goddamn." And I said, "Will I have to fire anybody?" He said, "Whatever you like." So I ran it all the way through till the end, and the doctors came in the morning for an hour, which was [Dr.] Martin Banfill, and then it was my baby till the next morning; the doctors weren't allowed back in again. And we had

about up to possibly 340 in the Canadian ward and the other half of the building was the British and they had about the same in that part of it.

CGR:

And what was the problem? Why were you asked to take over? What was the difficulty?

ARS:

Well...[machine off briefly].

ARS:

The fellows that were good were very, very good.

CGR:

One of the men who was in the dysentery ward as an orderly suggested that he wasn't so much a volunteer as that he had been volunteered, in typical army fashion. Is that about the way it happened?

ARS:

What happened was, it was a time when nobody wanted to go near the bloody place. It was bloody. This fecal matter was large strings and pools of blood in the bedpan, or whatever, with strings of white mucus about that long [2"], thick, thick stuff and it was, obviously, very contagious. And so somewhere over in the Rifles lines they had some kind of a meeting, which I had nothing to do with them, and they sent these guys over. And they turned out to be good with maybe one or two exceptions. But I can give you three or four names, if you want to put in your list, that were very good. One was Claricoates [Cpl. R.]; one was Pat Poirier [L/Cpl. J.P.]; one was Al Johnson, who is deceased now, [plus Marcel Dorion, RRC]. He was an orderly in the

San, the T.B. ward, in Saskatchewan. He knew more about nursing than I ever did, but he had no take-charge abilities, but he was a very good man. There was one more, who was it? Freddie Drovers, a Newfoundland boy, and they were good; you had half a dozen that you could really depend [on] -- oh, and Doc Savage, Carlisle Savage, we called him "Doc." And he was older than me, quite a bit, and very wise, and I got a lot from him. But you had to pick it up from other people because I hadn't had that type of experience.

CGR:

And what did an orderly do?

ARS:

Well there was four floors. Has this been described to you before, have you seen the building or a picture of it?

CGR:

I've seen a picture of it.

ARS:

Stairs from floor to floor; no elevator, and a lot of them were walled up because they were married quarters, so you had to go down and then back up to get up again to the next group. It was bombed out, there was a little bit of sanitation. On some floors there were toilets that worked, some didn't. The Japs put barbed wire in the backyard, down the manholes, so nobody could escape. So some of the guys wiped their asses with their shirts, these went down and plugged it up, and the next thing you know the backyard, which was cement, all cement and the cement wall, Hong Kong style, [was filled] with this much fecal matter, water, and crap, oh....

CGR:

A foot or more, yes.

ARS:

I had to get down there on my hands and knees and fish it out with my chin just not quite in the water, just about -- I've forgotten how close now. But the orderlies themselves, I had eleven that did sanitation, and had these big buckets on the floor and they were about so high and so wide with a bar through them and two men carried the bucket. And they had to be carried down from the top floor or the second floor, whichever floor, down to the ground and then loaded into a tank thing and carried up again.

CGR:

Well maybe 5-gallon cans?

ARS:

Oh no. They'd be closer to fifteen; like a small garbage can. You sat on them with a bar across like that and the bar was there. And they had other jobs, but that was the biggest job they had to do. Well, one day two of them fell down the stairs with one of those buckets and you never saw such a mess in all your life. One got ahead of the other and the thing slid down the piece of pipe. That F. Fury [W.G.], I remember that.

They did whatever the patient needed. They served the meals to 300 people, that was one of the jobs that they had to do and that took quite a while; it had to be dished out into their cans and the odd one they would feed, if he couldn't feed himself, but most of them could. Sometimes a friend would feed a friend, but

there was some, they were getting low. That's about that part of it.

CGR:

So basically they did the kinds of things that in a hospital now would be done by nurses, nurses aides, orderlies, all of these people combined. They did everything.

ARS:

That's right. We had dysentery ward in the diphtheria ward, there was no bedpans, and this kind of -- whatever. And we had helmets for the first while and then I heard, somebody came in and said, "Why don't you get some bedpans from the Limeys, they got all kinds of them." And I said, "You're kidding!" So he said, "Go and see Staff Sergeant Hayman, charge him." And I went over to see him and he said, "Oh no." He said, "They're on our charge, you can't have any of those." And I went and complained to the officers and I got some. Those are silly little things, but that's the way it actually, you know, very....They considered, of course, that they were better educated than we were, etc., etc.c etc. I guess they kind of -- we were colonials, you know, human.

CGR:

Sure. They had 400 years of tradition.

ARS:

Yes, but they had also some other types of tradition that went with it. Maybe you've heard about it.

CGR:

Tell me about the diphtheria.

ARS:

We had no serum to start with, and then we got some serum in the camp through a Japanese interpreter called Watanabe, who had been educated in the state of Washington and was pro-Christian, allied, or whatever you want, with a Japanese uniform. They beat him up for it. And [Dr.] Selwyn Clarke (you may have heard of), well Selwyn Clarke and he were two that were concerned; they got it, and where the money came from I don't know. I think maybe our officers put some up because they got this money. And then we had enough to do only a few cases. You couldn't do everybody, there wasn't enough, so they decided that if a guy was going to die anyway, well, we can give it to the guy that might live. But this was the way it worked out. And I was fortunate and I think I might have had it when I was about -- not diphtheria -- but been inoculated when I was about 7 years old at school, and I was very small. I remember a little glass ampule and they scratched my arm. Would that be it?

CGR:

Could be, although that could also be smallpox vaccination.

ARS:

Well I don't remember what it was, but I remember getting it. I don't think we had it before we went overseas. And I looked down their throats and they were all greenish--yellow phlegm in the throats and they'd cough in your face. They even had it in their fingers here, you know, and in their balls, in the cracks in their balls. Mostly, of course, it was in the throat but not necessarily. If they got the serum, the small amount (and it seems to me it was 3-500 units that they were

getting, which should be in the thousands, if they got it, they would generally pull through. Some of them after they got better or were nearly better, then would develop paralysis from the toxin and they would still die, but not too many. And we had, at the worst, we had 3, 4, 5 deaths a day, most of the time. In the last year we got a little bit better food, I think, and we started to get medicines. They brought in panniers from the Red Cross and that made a difference, but the first year was probably the worst.

And when things were worse, at it's worst, and some of the fellows had already picked up bacillary dysentery, then they passed all the food through them -- whatever they go they didn't digest it, it was gone. And I think they were the people mostly that had the really bad eyesight and beriberi and drop feet. I guess you've never seen the drop feet.

CGR:

Not from beriberi, but I've seen it from other causes.

ARS:

Well, they curl up almost like a chicken's foot and they couldn't stand on them. And they were quite common. They were very touchy, you couldn't touch them.

CGR:

This was the "electric feet" deal?

ARS:

It's part of the same deal, yes. But they wore, it was unbelievable the way they'd go like that. They'd be walking on it like this [showing awkward, delicate, painful short steps].

CGR:

Now you say in the bad times there were 4 or 5 deaths a day. How large was the ward? How many patients would you have in the ward?

ARS:

That was for 300. Well, maybe it was before the worst of it. A lot of that was dysentery, some of that was dysentery, not diphtheria. But that was the worst. Obviously, if we did that for a year, there'd be nobody left. And there were times when we went, I would think we went two weeks or a month and didn't have a death. But the big killer was two epidemics of bacillary dysentery; amebic dysentery didn't kill anybody. I mean, it goes on for years; but the other, in 72 hours you're either nearly dead or you're over it. And then we had a second one about a year later, we were in Sham Shui Po. It could have been 6 or 8 months later. I guess it would be the summer because the flies - - and it was deadly. That particular strain -- our doctors were worried it was cholera at first. It was very similar to cholera.

CGR:

Did you ever have cholera?

ARS:

No we didn't have it in the camp that we knew of, but we've suspected it once or twice when these people died in 72 hours.

CGR:

Smallpox?

ARS:

No.

CGR:

And little tuberculosis. That's kind of surprising, isn't it?

ARS:

Well I can think of one lad in town here, we had two, or three, or four -- I don't think we had more than four, if we had four. I only remember two, I can't think of the other lad's name. And I remember Dr. Banfill saying, "Now remember, if you're going to nurse these fellows, sometime in the next 20 or 30 years it's a bigger chance of your getting tuberculosis because you've been in contact with." I don't think we had more than -- I'm not sure, really I'm not, but I don't think that I remember more than two or three cases, because we stuck them over in one corner by themselves, in a ward.

CGR:

So were you in Sham Shui Po right through? You didn't go to Japan? No.

ARS:

I was on three drafts. The Japs would put so many on a draft, or they'd pick you out and I never asked to stay or go, I didn't know which was the best and it didn't matter. And each time the doctors, Banfill I think, chiefly, had me taken off the draft because of what I was supposed to be doing.

CGR:

Did things get better there after things started to thin out a little, as drafts were sent off?

ARS:

No, it didn't make any difference because you just got that many rations of rice, and the basic food was rice, as you've been

told -- a little bit of lettuce leaf boiled in a little cup, but you got a little cup full like a -- you know these little pate meat spreads in the little tins?

CGR:

Yes.

ARS:

One of those filled with lettuce leaves, boiled, or a Chinese radish, they'd bring one thing into the camp as a rule, and that was what you got. And some days you didn't get any, but generally there was something. Once it was red peppers and we couldn't eat them and the Japanese got mad. We threw them over the sea wall and they were furious. We thought they'd sink but they all floated and they're all floating down the harbor.

CGR:

Evidence not very well hidden.

ARS:

We tried them and they gave us the shits and they were hot and you couldn't eat them, nothing else but boiled. It's funny you know.

CGR:

Tell me about the doctors.

ARS:

For the record?

CGR:

Whatever. Yes.

ARS:

Well I'll tell you about the good ones. Banfill was super. At first the officers didn't get any money in the camp and then

the Japanese, because of the Geneva Convention I guess, said we will buy that, we will pay 30 to 70 yen (or whatever it was). And so Banfill lectured the officers and said, "Now, these are your men, they're badly undernourished. I want you to put some of that money into a pool where we can use it for the sick." So they did and they started something we called a "Jimmy's Kitchen," because Jimmy's Kitchen was a well known cafe in Hong Kong or a night spot, or whatever you want to call it. I never was in it but that's what it was, very well known apparently. So they'd get some beans or something they'd buy on the outside and they'd cook up this. Generally there was as much as, well it was almost a 4-gallon square can, oil cans, and would be filled. A little dipper, and they'd come around (that was another job my orderlies did), and everybody that was really sick that we decided needed it, got a scoopful of this mixture which had, oh, whatever they brought in or we could get hold of that was extra. And that was paid for by the officers. But Banfill was the guy that said, "Do it!"

Gordon Gray was wonderful. He's in Edmonton, retired. He was head of the Northern Affairs Hospital for Alberta, Northwest Territories, and then he retired from it and he was on the Workman's Compensation Board and he's retired from that. He's not well. And he was here to see me a couple of years ago, Banfill was out to see me. They're my friends, honest to Peter.

And he did a good job, and Crawford was administrator and as administrator I guess he did a pretty good job. But the other two were the people who saw the patients generally and decided what to do with them.

CGR:

Banfill and Gray?

ARS:

Banfill and Gray. There was another one -- Reid.

CGR:

Reid. I was going to ask about Reid, yes.

ARS:

Reid went to Hong Kong on an early draft. Why he went, I don't know, because officers didn't

CGR:

To Japan, you mean?

ARS:

Yes. And the boys tell me he did a good job. He came back and he had (so they told me) a practice in Vancouver and he had no, he as touchy, he wouldn't have anything to do with it, nobody saw him or anything. And he died about, I imagine, four years ago. I never saw him again.

CGR:

I knew he was dead.

ARS:

But he was okay. Then we had another one, Ashton-Rose and he was a proper bastard. He was an East Indian, you've heard about him I guess.

CGR:

Not much other than his name had come up, yes.

ARS:

You're more careful than I am!

CGR:

Tell me what you can and then I'll turn it off if there are other things you want to say.

ARS:

No. But he ran his little empire. He was in with the Japanese. The Japanese, as I understood it -- I didn't actually see it happen -- there were certain officers in the Japanese army that had syphilis or gonorrhoea or V.D. in some form. In their army they don't treat it. If you're stupid enough to get it, you're stupid enough to die with it. So they used to come in and he used to treat them and give the inoculations of whatever, or whatever treatment he had, and he knew all about the black market and where to get stuff and the Japanese could return the favor. So they made him number one medical officer for the camp, and Crawford and Banfill, and there were three or four Brits -- Lancaster, who I tangled with once; Rodriguez a Portuguese, was good; a guy called Nobbie Brown, who was a big tall 6-foot Englishman, a bit snotty-nose type, but I think a good doctor.

And anyway, he [Ashton-Rose] was in charge of the whole works, he was boss, and the Japs said he as boss. So he built his little empire, had a nice place to live and extra food and he took, drew servants out of the sick pool and made them do things that weren't really suitable -- carrying bricks on stretchers to build walls around the back of his place, this kind of stuff. And he had his own orchard. He had papayas, lots of papayas. Bananas, I don't think they ever came to anything but he had them the height of this ceiling, but they weren't ready when we left. And he was difficult, very difficult and not satisfactory, let's

put it that way. I never had much to do with him. I tried not to. I had a lot to do with Crawford and a lot to do with the others. But he had more to do, in a way, with the English ward.

But, anyway, he tangled with Crawford near the end and he had Crawford and Banfill put out of the hospital area completely, and the Canadians. I stayed on and I was put in with the British at a bottom of the roll, and that was only for three months, right near the end. This happened at the end.

CGR:

What was the issue there? Do you remember?

ARS:

No, I never knew except that it was -- there was no issue other than professional antagonism. But that was the way it happened. What happened to Ashton-Rose, I don't know. But he put a major up and I now he wasn't a major when he came into the camp -- put his crown up -- and beyond that, I don't know.

CGR:

You mentioned your bout of dysentery. Other than that, how was your personal health throughout this time?

ARS:

You mean in the prison camp?

CGR:

Yes.

ARS:

I had malaria twice, and Martin Banfill got me Atabrine, which I don't think was any too plentiful. And I got over it both times with a moderate amount of trouble -- rigors and sweating for about every second day for about two, three weeks -- and

I got over it both times. I think I was re-infected the second time, rather than carry it on, because the mosquitoes were there all the time. And outside of two bouts of bacillary dysentery; the first one was in North Point Camp. I'd only been in camp, I spent a month and a half in Bowen Road first with shrapnel in my elbow because in the war I worked as a signaller and I was out fixing lines and I got the thing. But the first time was when the flies were very bad and it was a very virulent type, I think; and a Dr. Rose [R.A.M.C.], a British doctor, was running the ward, it was in a horse barn, believe it or not, that the Japanese had and there was horse manure all over the place. I was laying on a stretcher; I laid out all night first. There was no room in the ward for me and I nearly froze to death. And about four in the morning I said, "Can I come in and sit on the toilet?" They just got some toilets and they're just wooden boxy things. They said, "Yes. As soon as somebody goes in you can have their hole." And I got the guy's hole and Dr. Rose gave me 17 straight doses of mag. sulph. On a torn up bowel that's very, very painful but it cured me, it did the job. I was better inside of a couple of weeks, probably. I would have never believed that, but that did the job, and he said it would. A little guy with a little mustache, a little fussy guy but he was good. Don't know him, not a friend, never talked to him again.

In my sickness, I had the usual that everybody had -- I had the aching fever, which I still have incidentally. I can feel them all the time, but they're mild. The backs of my hand and the soles of my feet and the tops of my feet and up into the shin here, I can feel them now, I can feel the sole of my feet. But

I'm used to it and it's not severe, and I guess if I wasn't used to it, it would bother me. If I don't think about it, if I go to bed at night and it's a hot day, then I lay with my feet out of the covers and sometimes put them in cold water, not very often any more. And for half an hour, an hour they will bark, and then I'll go to sleep. In the morning they are all right. But ordinarily I can do ordinary things. And it never bothered me mentally. In fact, I think it did me good. I wouldn't have missed it. I wouldn't want to do it again, but I'm glad I didn't miss it.

CGR:

How do you feel it did you good?

ARS:

Oh God, that's a silly question. If you get to work with 1500 people -- let's say you get to know maybe 600 of them very well. You become good friends, partly just because you looked after them in some cases, but you become good friends. I think you would notice talking to, oh say Jenkins, or whoever, that there's a bond that you won't find among the average -- I may be wrong, but I think you feel it. Am I right?

CGR:

I would say you're right.

ARS:

Well that's part of what I'm talking about. I got a letter in the mail today (I haven't read it yet) from a lad in England, Bill McCormick [R.C.S.]. And we fought, we were in the fighting together and he was about from me to you [6 feet] when I got the shrapnel in my elbow, and he dropped first and it sprayed us like

this. And I got it because my elbow was sticking up in a little cement drainage ditch and it sprayed and caught me. It caught my feet but I don't think it hit anything but the soles.

But anyway, he 's the same type and I'll go anywhere for him and do anything for him. He came out to see me two years ago and he's in much worse shape than I am. And he's had a stroke, whether that's got anything to do with it or not, I don't know. And he's got other problems that go with it. He was on the Lisbon Maru.

CGR:

The what?

ARS:

The Lisbon Maru. Have you heard of the Lisbon Maru?

CGR:

Yes.

ARS:

Well he was on it, and he was picked up by the navy, they came along and picked him up afterwards, and he ended up in a hospital in Japan. They gave him drugs and what not, and they experimented with him. And he never knew what they were doing really. And he's not been well since. He worked in the post office for quite a while, but he's another one of these guys that's really six feet tall, very good, very good. Some good bricks and some bad ones. He was one of the really good ones. And that letter I got today, he wants me to go and see him. I don't know whether I will or not. But I know what he wants before I open the letter; got it all planned.

So what else do you want to know?

CGR:

You lost a lot of weight?

ARS:

When I came home I had, but I don't remember weighing -- but I was probably 120 lbs. and right now I'm 160, or close to it, and when I went overseas I'd be around 170. And I think in prison camp I was probably down to, with the dysentery, down to -- oh, you just bled yourself out, you just turned like a prune. All your body fluid just went. And I think I would be down then to 90 lbs. or so. That was the first time not the second one, because I got the sulfa and thanks to Gordon Gray and a little guy called West. He was a dealer. There was three or four of them in the camp that dealt with the Japanese, and he was one and nobody had much time for these quick dealers. I knew him fairly well but not that well. And I found out afterwards that Gordon Gray got those pills from one of those dealers -- that we kind of looked down a little bit on because they were making a quick buck -- and maybe to him I owe my life, because it was tough. The guys were dying fairly steadily on that ward.

One little instance, just for amusement, was a Provost Corporal called Jean Lavoie -- he was French-Canadian, and I said, "You can get up and go to the bucket you don't need a bedpan," this is in the dark. And he kind of grumbled and he got up and he got to the bucket, and he's sitting on it and it's got the bar across it. He fainted and he fell down into the bucket like Mutt and Jeff. You know, Mutt put Jeff in the ash can like this, and then the bucket tipped over and it was nearly full of

this bloody fecal matter. And it was night and it was black as ink and I had to clean it up before the Japanese got around in the morning because they'd beat you up if the place was dirty. There was a piece of sheet metal, and getting some dirt outside, I got it pretty well cleaned up by morning. Part of it was in the daylight because it was getting light.

My sickness wasn't, I wasn't sick. My eyes have stayed pretty good. Last night I've got one little diary -- believe it or not but I haven't looked at this thing for years, if ever. My wife, the night before last, was cleaning out my bureau drawer and she came across it and she handed it to me. But there's one little bit here that might interest you, so I'll read part of it: "Probably 10 percent can recognize the fact at 40 yards and I suppose will be permanently afflicted. About 20% walked very slowly with drop-foot action, someone like a child of two or three years. If they continue much longer, their chances of walking will be nil."* That was, I'll give you the approximate date of that. I can hardly read this thing. I had to keep it hidden because you weren't supposed to write them. Twenty-five, forty-three. I don't think there's anything....Oh, I know what to show you.

We were called on parade and the Japanese lined us up and

*Diary loaned to CGR.

Saito, the camp medical officer, said (through the interpreter), "These men are dying because you are not nursing them properly." And then he rolled up his sleeves (and he had a white shirt under it) and proceeded to slap faces all the way down the line. And Crawford was standing at one side and he came up to Crawford.

Crawford is 6'6" and Saito was about 5', and he stood on his toes and slapped Crawford's face on both sides. And Crawford was as red as a beet, standing at attention. And I think about nine didn't get slapped and I was one because I had loose bowels and I thought quickly -- I've either got to go to benjo (that's what we always called it) and maybe be late, or I'm liable to have troubles. And I went to the benjo. I was on the tail end of the line and he slapped maybe 30 or 40 and then he got tired and he quit on the last nine and I was one of the nine.

CGR:

Now why was Crawford's note addressed to Corporal Kerr? Who was Corporal Kerr?

ARS:

Corporal Kerr worked with me doing the same thing and he was one of Crawford's men. He didn't work on the diphtheria ward and he loved to play saxophone, he used to play it by the hour. I didn't have any saxophone, I wasn't interested in it. And he stayed healthy and he came out, and he is retired at Naramata, up on the lake in the interior, and he doesn't come out, or do anything, or mix. He was rather quiet in his way, a good enough man, a good person. And that's about all there is to it.

[This is a note addressed to Corporal Kerr, Canadian Hospital. "It was with a great deal of regret that I witnessed the shameful episode today in which all the nursing orderlies and myself participated.

It is a particularly bitter pill to swallow when it is realized that the soldiers now acting as nursing orderlies are doing so entirely of their own free will. It seems that a beat-

ing is but poor thanks for the good work which they are doing.

Will you convey to all the orderlies working with you my very deepest regrets for the incident of today, and my deepest thanks for the assistance which they are giving. Assure them that this matter will be carried as far as I am able to carry it." (Signed) J.N. Crawford, Major, RCAMC, dated Sham Shui Po 17-10-42.]

That's it there, so Kerr should be there somewhere. Don't see it. [Examining list.]

CGR:

Not on that one at least.

ARS:

Well that was Jubilee, and I think he was working in the lines. I think he was doing the emergency treatment in the lines, I think so. And that, I don't know what that is. It was dropped for the Chinese, not for us. That was an escape map that I had hidden in a little hole in the bricks and this is the crickets. The crickets are everything. They'd even eat your toenails. We had fellows with toenails with little holes in them, and for a while we couldn't figure out what in hell was making these little toenail holes, and it was the crickets at night.

CGR:

Propaganda, eh?

ARS:

Yes. Here's the deaths and the dates and you can see that some of them are pretty close together. And they're all acute enteritis, there's no dysentery written down and that was because

(this might interest you), the Japanese found out about these dysentery deaths and it sounded like it was their fault, so they wouldn't let us use the word dysentery. So it became acute enteritis, and they were quite happy about that.

CGR:

And in that particular list a lot of diphtheria too.

ARS:

Yes. Well that was when the dip. was bad. But quite a few of the deaths were a combination of the two. I kept that. I think that's for me for Atabrine. I'm not sure. Isn't it?

CGR:

Yes.

ARS:

Signed by Martin Banfill. Yes, that was our little check that we had. We had a pharmacist, a Winnipeg Grenadier on civvie street and he ran a little pharmacy, whatever we had to use -- Pop Mawson. He died about three or four years ago. But somebody put all those in the book and pasted them in and fixed it all up for me. That was very nice. These are the wooden sandals. I don't know where it came from.

CGR:

Ah yes.

ARS:

This is Inouye Kanao. I've often thought of taking that and sending it or a copy of it just all of the paper to CBC, that are pushing more for the Japanese that were left in Canada, you know, and he was a Japanese-Canadian. I get a little bit intense when I think of this guy. And he was educated in Kamloops in Vancouv-

er, spoke perfect English; he went over to Japan and joined the army as an interpreter and he was one of the guys that if he had stayed here he'd have been putting arsenic in the drinking water because he would do anything. And he killed specifically, they charged him with killing the head of the Shanghai Hong Kong Banks, Sir Somebody, and they used the water torture on him and they left the towel on a little too long and the guy was about 60 and his heart wouldn't stand it. And there's another one on Cissy Boone in there I think. He was a Brit that went -- this is interesting maybe to you, I don't know.

When we were in Manila on the way home they gave us all \$100 or \$200 in \$20 American bills when we hit Manila. And I still had about 20 orderlies with me and they each gave me \$20 and they had an officer, Cecil Thompson, who was on the same boat at that time and he was one of the directors of Birks of Montreal, wealthy in other words, very wealthy and I asked him to get these [watches] for me. And so he got them at wholesale and if you ask [John] Crawford, if you see Crawford you ask him to let you see his watch and he will be glad to show it to you. And written on the back is "From the Orderlies, Hong Kong, 1945," or whatever. He got them and had them inscribed and I gave him the money and he mailed me that back. He's dead now. Cecil Thompson, he was a nice chap, quiet. He was a captain. And that's one thing I get satisfaction out of.

CGR:

Seeing this drawing of this woman reminds me, one of the things that I ask about is -- what about sex?

ARS:

That's interesting. After two months on the rice diet, there wasn't any. I don't think -- I know I didn't -- I don't think anybody had an erection, literally, in the whole four years. I don't think anybody masturbated, and that would be very unusual, wouldn't it? And as far as I know, no. And we had no fights, no fist fights. Guys would argue when they played cards or something, they'd argue. But once we had been in, I remember one fight right in the beginning and it was two guys from New Brunswick and they were trying to gouge his eyes out and one was trying to push the other into the barbed wire, I don't ever remember anybody hitting anybody, and that's kind of amazing. And that was on, I guess, a no-protein diet. Of course we didn't have much energy, but then there was a little bit of ball played at times and the guys went on work parties.

Things like that fit into this, but as far as I know I've never been checked out.

CGR:

Well this is exactly what I've come to find out about.

ARS:

But maybe you could take something like this and you could say to a sex offender, "Now, if we let you out and you eat this diet, you might be all right," you know.

CGR:

There must be a photograph that goes with that I guess.

ARS:

Yes, there is. Oh that's the photograph, I think, that's the photograph you remember I showed you with the blind guy.

CGR:

Oh yes, right.

ARS:

McPhadden, Sergeant; that's Grimstone that had the T.B.; that's Les who was shot through the shoulder and through the wrist (you've heard about him); and Father Deloughery was a Roman Catholic priest; and that's Gordon Gray. That's Gordon Gray sitting in that picture. I'll show you if you want to look at it.

CGR:

No, that's a different picture, I think.

ARS:

Gee I remember all these guys, you know, and I can't tell you all their names. That's Pat Poirier the blond French-Canadian. That was a good orderly. That's Ron Claricoates. That's a French-Canadian, that guy's dead.

We had a little bit of mental trouble. Oh, this is our nut house, mental house, or whatever you want to call it. And we had quite a bit of trouble because we couldn't keep them in properly and they wanted to roam around. And where's Reg Kerr? There's Reg Kerr. This is typical of the buildings we had. The windows were bricked up, a little bit of light through the top, and a door and that was it. And that is pretty typical.

CGR:

Would you just tell me a bit about these mental difficulties that people had?

ARS:

We had a fair amount of mental problem and probably about 6

or 8 extreme ones. I can remember one, a Winnipeg Grenadier, crawling or getting up on about a 6-foot-high ledge of a bombed-out building, and a plane was going over in the evening and the air raid sirens are going, it was only a scouting plane, and it was just setting the sun and he dived on his head, down on the cement about 6 feet below. They brought him to me and all he did was knock himself out.

And another one cut his wrists and lay in bed with the other guys around him for probably half an hour before we found him. He cut his throat, badly, but he didn't cut his jugular vein. And the doctors sewed him up and then we had a problem of what to do with him. Dr. Crawford said I should take him for a walk and I said, "Well, I don't know if I can handle him." Well he said, "Somebody should take him," so I decided it better be me. And we walked on the roadway along the edge of the hut, beside the edge of the camp. He wanted to go to the gate and I turned him around and I wouldn't let him go to the gate. He was about the same weight as me. And then we walked up along the side path to the Japanese guard post with a guard behind a cement-block round encasement effort and concertina wire piled three feet high in front of it. And all of a sudden, he tried to break loose from me and he hit me (didn't hurt me particularly), hit me in the face and ran for the guard and went head first into the concertina wire and two fellows and I had to get him out and it folded around him and he was a mess. And as far as I know, he's still in, if he's still alive. Somebody said he'd asked to see me about three or four years ago, but I decided any memories he had of me wouldn't do him any good. But he was in the Pay corps and

he was a nice person, a good person.

And we had another one that was rather humorous and his name was Dubois. He was a Winnipeg Grenadier and we had to put him in a little room with no windows in it and a door in it. And there was a hole in the wall in between the bricks, it was bricks white-washed white. The Jap sergeant-major came along with the guard counting the men in the hospital, which he did twice a day, and he came to this door and wanted to know what was in it. And they opened the door and Dubois, sticking his finger into the crack in the blocks, he says, "This is a Jap and I'm fucking him." And the Jap didn't know what he said or didn't want to know and nothing happened. And that was, oh, I can't remember. Forty years is a long time.

CGR:

Sure is.

ARS:

There weren't very many, there weren't very many. They weren't a serious problem. We had one or two who refused to eat and who died because they wouldn't eat. We had one boy who was a religious persuasion that couldn't take medicine and we had six sulfa pills for him which would have stopped his dysentery. And Ronnie Claricoates said he gave them to him and in the morning he came around and he said, "He's dead." And I said, "Well, he can't be. He's had his pills." And Ron said, "Yes, I gave them to him." They were all under his pillow. And he was a nice, soft-spoken -- Cousins, something like Cousins. He was dead.

CGR:

Sad, isn't it.

ARS:

I guess maybe you would see something mental there, I don't know.

And another one wouldn't eat, and the boys were feeding him, his friends were feeding him. We had some chowder, they brought in some very cheap fish with a lot of little bones in it that they didn't like and we made a chowder with it. And I went to have a look at him and I opened his mouth and he was packed, all inside his mouth was packed with these little fish bones, and he hadn't swallowed his food, or very little of it. He just let it stay in there when they pushed it into his mouth and he died. But not many.

The morale was medium, not bad, really, all the way through. Everybody thought the white horse was coming over the mountain from Chungking and we waited for it. And a few of us used to think -- when you heard the planes go over, the Americans went over a lot after a while, and the Japanese story was that if they ever tried to paratroop we would be all shot on the spot. We couldn't help but think about this. But that never happened.

CGR:

What happened when the war ended? I mean right away, how was that?

ARS:

(I have to think for a couple of seconds. Ask you something that happened forty years ago, you're going to think too!)

Disbelief. After four years of hearing benjo rumors it just didn't seem possible. The first thing we heard was that they

dropped an atom bomb and I promptly said, "There's no way because nobody's figured out how to split the atom, and it's just an impossibility and it didn't happen." But the Japanese were suddenly very solicitous to our welfare and they brought in a truckload of water buffalo meat. (This might be interesting to you, I don't know.) And we cooked it up, just stewed meat with quite a lot of fat in it and there was, oh, I imagine there'd be 3 or 4,000 pounds of it, 2 or 3,000 anyway because it was a truckload of hind quarters and front quarters, all we could eat. We hadn't had any meat for, literally hadn't had anything except a can of bully beef shared between -- we had 6 or 7 Red Cross parcels the size of a shoe box, that was it. Very poor. And the next morning everybody had very violent diarrhea and you couldn't get into the outside toilet. It had about 12 or 16 stalls, each with a bucket and a bar, and you couldn't get near it and the guys were crapping in the ditch all along the side. There were big nullahs all over because of the rain, cement nullahs. And everybody was really upset. After that I never ate that much of it, but I ate -- I guess our stomachs might have been a little bit shrunk, I don't know, but it was just, we couldn't handle the fat or something; but everybody was very, very sick, nearly everybody.

Then the next thing, the rumor came around, the Japs have left the shibu. That was the camp guardhouse on the outside of the fence but right at the fence. They just disappeared. Crapped on the floor. I think one of those pictures came out of that, was on the floor and a guy brought it to me. It's a Japanese picture. I think that's where that came from.

CGR:

Two men in uniform. I was going to ask about that.

ARS:

Yes. It was left on the floor in the shibu when they left in a hurry and they went and holed up in a hotel downtown. And then we sort of wandered, because the Chinese were starving. There were probably 200,000 living fairly close to the camp area in Kowloon. We were in Kowloon then, not on the island. And we thought, well, they'll try to get in. But they didn't; they were on the outside but they didn't try to get in. We're right on the edge of the heavy population, right on the very, very edge of the sea wall on the other side. And we had this guy Boone. (There should have been a picture in there of him), Major Boone. Did you hear about him?

CGR:

Yes.

ARS:

Cissy Boone?

CGR:

I heard the name, yes.

ARS:

Well anyway, we put him in a room and had to put two guys outside with bed legs guarding because they figured somebody would kill him. And he was very unpopular; he was a weak character. He certainly wasn't vicious. He was very weak and pro-Japanese. I had his trial. He was court martialled and it should be in there. I don't know where it's gone. One of the boys from England sent it to me. And they tried him, and God!

CGR:

Yes. One of the Grenadiers I talked to in Winnipeg was telling me something about that too.

ARS:

A tall skinny guy.

We had quislings in the camp, about two or three that would report on you. You had to be careful, if you said anything wrong. You didn't talk.

We had a radio twice in the camp. Somebody had it in the kit bag. I never knew who had it. But we used to get a little piece of the headlines of the news off it once in a rare while and it would be written on a little piece of brown toilet paper, the little squares that the Brits had. That's what they had. Somebody got hold of it, because we didn't ever have it in prison camp to use. And I had this thing in my pocket [radio news] and it was a day I was working, I was in the Jubilee Hospital, and I had to go across the lines where the cook houses were, across that parade square because we were six, I think it was six rations short. Well if you're six rations short you've got to find them. A guy isn't going to starve to death when he's hungry.

So I'm halfway across and I got my thing [paper with the news] and then I heard the "Ger, Ger, Ger." And that was this guy called Hamida, a big Jap for a Japanese. And he had a piece of hose and he stood me to attention and pointed at it and then he started to beat me across the face with it while I stood at attention.

But what was making me sweat was I had this little thing in my shirt pocket, this little piece of paper, and I was sweating

blood because you don't know whether you're going to talk. You say, "Well, I wouldn't talk," but maybe I would. So he didn't take me to the shibu. I thought he'd take me to the shibu and beat me up or something, but he pointed -- "Go back to where you came from." And so I walked away and as soon as I got about 12 feet from him I picked it out and swallowed it, and then I was fine. But I don't know -- would you tell on the guys? I didn't know who had it but I knew who gave it to me. But they didn't pass them to everybody it was just a few people who had it, and you kept quiet and didn't say too much because obviously....

CGR:

Were you married before the war?

ARS:

Yes. Six months. I was slated to go to -- oh hell, this doesn't interest you. I was slated to go to UBC on a science course and instead of that I went to, I volunteered for overseas services.

CGR:

What were you doing before the war, before you went into the service?

ARS:

Well, I was raised in....my younger years were depression years. And I always worked but I worked at whatever I could do or get. And I, oh, I worked for Dominion Construction once, till they had to fold it up in the cold, and I was painting houses when I joined up. And then I joined up in the medical corps. I kind of liked the idea until a certain Captain Stoker, a doctor; and we were having a lecture and he was showing us some T.B.

slides and I asked him a question about it and he said, "That's all you need to know." And that fixed it right there. So I went, I had trouble, but I got out and got to Sigs.

Then I was fixing a telephone for Sigs and you used to go and get a work order in the morning -- this is working in the barracks. There was about, oh, a couple of thousand men in all the different offices, with phones and you used to fix them. And they sent me to this one and I didn't look at the door, I went in and he said, "It doesn't work," and so I took it apart and fixed it. And called back and it rang and the guy who was sitting beside the desk of the officer and he said, "Could you make the bells a little softer or a little louder?", or something. So I adjusted them and I said, "How's that?" He said, "Fine." And he said, "What experience have you had in this?" And I said, "Well, my father, when I was a kid, was in telephones and it's quite simple and I enjoy it." So he said, "Would you like a course?" And I said, "Well, what have you got?" So he gave me a list and I said -- no, I was courting then and I didn't want to leave Victoria; I didn't tell him that. So I said, "Are you busy tomorrow night? I would like to come and see you for 20 minutes." And he said, "No, I'm not." It was Captain Kenneth Black. He's a professor, I believe, recently retired at UBC, and he was an officer in the army at this time. He'd be about, oh I don't know, 38 or something.

And so anyway, I had the idea for the proximity fuse, which came in 1943, about; rough, but I had it and I had another one for -- I'd figured out radar and I told him this and I showed him what I had and I had drawn up. And he was quite impressed

and he said, "Well, I want you to go over and see Dean Finlayson at UBC." So he sent me over to see Dean Finlayson and I went into this big house, potted palms, and a little girl with a white apron and a black dress on, the whole thing. And I talked to him a little while and he said, "Well, I'll make a decision and let you know in a couple of weeks." I didn't ask for anything I just -- so in two weeks he came back and a message came. Black sent for me and he said, "We've arranged to send you to UBC. You are to take science and it will be a month or so before we get it arranged." So I said, "Okay, but I've volunteered for draft for overseas." Well he said, "If you're called, come and see us right away and we'll take you off." And I never went back. And when the war was over or just before, one of those papers I got through that they had the proximity fuse. But I figured that.

CGR:

It makes you wonder, doesn't it, what would have happened if you had done the other thing, and so on.

ARS:

Oh you don't know. There's something called fate. You can call it some other name but -- you became a doctor because of some particular little thing. You admired a doctor or your father or mother sowed it in your head, or whatever, or a school teacher. I've got one son that's a doctor. He's in Africa, believe it or not.

CGR:

What's the best book on Hong Kong, in your opinion? I assume you've read them all.

ARS:

No, If I'd have thought about it, I have two or three around here but they are not mine.

CGR:

I think I have all of them, but I was just curious to know what your opinion was, if you had an opinion.

ARS:

Well, they're biased (the ones I've read), are naturally biased by the author. In other words, if it was a Brit that wrote them -- now there was a Brit here two years ago, a major from some British regiment and he interviewed some of us. We were asked if we would come to the hotel -- maybe Speller, did you see Speller?

CGR:

No, I've talked to him but I haven't seen him.

ARS:

And anyway, we went to see him and I saw a little bit of the book. I don't know whether Speller had it or what or was told about it. Anyway, it's only partially true and very much one sided in favor of the British, and the British with some exceptions didn't show up too well. The Hong Kong volunteer older men, who were on not the Sham Shui Po but the other side at the North Point area, they were in the pill-boxes and they were men of 60, 65. They did very well and they stayed there and a lot of them were killed in the pill-boxes. The Royal Rifles did very well on Stanley and the Winnipeg Grenadiers did very well in Wong Nei Chong Gap in these places; and the Royal Scots were pushed out in one night. As soon as the Japs hit them they were re-

treating in a matter of nothing and they had these defenses and trenches and the whole thing, and rolls of barbed wire in front of them, and they were gone. The East Indians weren't too bad. If they had something to do, if you could give them something to do, they were all right. If they had nothing to do they got kind of....but they were pretty good -- two regiments, Punjabis and Rajputs. And I was with them for a little while and they were very quiet and they didn't talk and say anything. This was up on the, near Devil's Peak, up on the Kowloon side. We went up to fix some telephones. Jenkins was there. He and I were together because we were both Sigs.

CGR:

Anything else you can think of, particularly of a sort of medical or medically related nature that we haven't touched on, that we've skipped over? I'm sure there's probably hundreds of things, but anything that comes to mind right now?

ARS:

Well, the kitchen cook area for the staff was bad -- not for the staff but for the camp, period. The setup was such that any tidbits and food could disappear before they got down to the people that needed it the most, and if there were another prison camp, that's one thing, but I don't know how you'd change it. But that was bad.

CGR:

You don't see skinny cooks.

ARS:

No, even in prison camps, you didn't see too many skinny cooks. That covers it very safely. Your definition is

excellent. I imagine you've got to be kind of careful of what you do and what you don't do too, whose toes you step on. But I never saw any point in dragging something up that's going to hurt somebody unless it's -- I only had one regret on that, that I didn't say anything, and that was two Canadian officers who were no doggone good and they left four or five of their men (you may have heard of it) -- one went on in the permanent forces and he should never have stayed in. And when I was back about a month or so, they said they wanted to see you in Intelligence and I say, "In Intelligence. Where's that?" They said, "Down in the Belmont Building, downtown." So I went down and there's a couple of officers sitting at their desks and they said, "Sit down sergeant." I was made a sergeant in the prison camp, which is unusual, paid for back pay. I was a private. And they said, "What do you know about Captain so-and-so?" And I knew plenty. And I looked at them for a minute and I said, "Gentlemen, as far as I'm concerned the war is over." And they said, "Do you mean that sergeant?" and I said, "Thank you sirs," and that was it. but if I'd have known that one of them was going to stay in the forces I would have changed my mind.

But generally, the officers were pretty good. They were very good, really, on the whole. I don't care whether it's the Mounties or who it is, the doctors if you like, you're going to get the odd lemon, and you can't screen them.

CGR:

People are people. Well, thank you.

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