

KATHLEEN G. CHRISTIE, RN
Experiences as a Prisoner-of-War, World War 2

Interviewed by
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Charles G. Roland, M.D.:

Miss Christie, I'm grateful to you for letting me talk to you today. I wonder if you would begin by giving me your full name, your birthdate and birthplace, your parents' names, and a few details like that.

Kathleen G. Christie:

Well my full name is Kathleen G. Christie, but apart from the bank and the income tax department everyone else calls me Kay. I was born in Little Current, Ontario, which on the Manitoulin Island, on the 10th of June, 1911.

My father was W.R. Collen Christie, which is Collen, his mother's maiden name; and mother was Maria Thorpe Christie, and both were from Ireland.

CGR:

And what did your father do? What was his business?

KGC:

I've never been quite sure what he did. I know that he left Ireland just as soon as he could, when he was 21 years old. He had been studying for the ministry as his father had been, but he came (I think as so many young people do) to get away from the strict atmosphere in the home, and I can never remember him using his education to the best advantage. And he did what work there was to be found. And he began up in Cobalt in the mining area, and why he came to Little Current I'll never know. But he moved from there to Sudbury and he worked with the International Nickle Company, and then he came down to Toronto here and was with the

Sun Oil Company for his entire years in Toronto. He retired from there, the longest employee on the staff of the Sun Oil Company, and this meant a great deal to him. But I'm sure he could have done much better. Children learn to be seen and not heard, and you certainly didn't ask questions.

CGR:

No.

Well, how about your education? You were in Sudbury then in Toronto..?

KGC:

I started school in Little Current. The first school ws in the back of the Baptist Church. There was space there; there were four rows of seats and each row was a different grade, as you would call them now. My first teacher was Ella MacDonald. And I can remember one day she couldn't come to school, so she sent her brother, Peter, up. He had just come back from the war, he was under age and they sent him back; he wasn't a teacher but he occupied us for the day. But that's just how informal the schooling was.

When I went into junior second, that would be Grade 5 now, I went to the big school, which was about a mile away. And there again there were just two classes in one room -- junior second and senior second. They had the double seats, two people had a seat and a desk, and in the winter we had to bring our lunch because it was a long way to go through the fields, which meant a lot of snow. At lunchtime, after we had eaten, I remember we used to play tag in the classroom, but not on the floor, up on top of the desks, leaping from one to another. And they talk

about the children now! But anyhow, that's the way my schooling began.

Then I went to Sudbury and into what was senior third, or Grade 6 now. [The following year] about Christmas-time our teacher told us that those who did well in the Christmas exams could take senior fourth work and try your entrance exams. So I did that, all through the encouragement of another girl who had just moved from Brantford to Sudbury. So we were sort of new girls in town. And she encouraged me and the two of us did our Grade 7 and 8 in one year.

And I'd just started high school there, the beginning of September, and then my mother wasn't well and we moved down to Toronto, the beginning of October. And then -- started into a city high school where there were nine first forms let alone, you know, five forms in the school, but nine -- that overwhelmed me and I was too young. Twelve years old. However, we had a very nice principal, Col. William C. Mitchell, who had a distinguished war career and he just lived down our street. But he was so kind and encouraged me, but we only had Col. Mitchell for two years and after he moved out it was different. I guess I just got into the wrong form, that was all. We fooled, and at Christmas-time out of, there (I forget how many, now), but I know I had an average of 48% and I stood 13th in the class. So that just shows you how awful we were, the whole lot of us.

And so anyway, I went on into fourth form, but I was getting a little weary of school and I bailed out at the end of fourth form and went to Shaw's Business College.

CGR:

Fourth form would be Grade 12?

KGC:

Grade 12, yes. And I went to Shaw's and got along quite well there. If only I had done my homework, you know, I could have -- that was my trouble, I never did homework. I brought my books home, put them down, picked them up in the morning and away I went. But I did some of the Work at Shaw's and got along quite well. And by the end of April, I finished all the exercises, as they called them, so they sent me over to Shaw's head office, over at Bay and Charles Street, to get some actual office experience.

While I was there a call came in from a brokerage firm who wanted a junior stenographer. And since I was the only one who was there, I was sent down to be interviewed. The office manager was a lady and when she asked me my name, then my address, she said, "Are you one of the children that live across the street from me?" So Kay got the job. I was there for 2 1/2 years, and during that time the crash of 1929-30 came along. And so I was told that I could stay on, but it would mean being the filing clerk as well. Well, I can bring order out of any chaos, but I want it left like that, and the filing department does not meet that qualification. So I decided (I had known since I was 5 years old that I was going to be a nurse), and these 2 1/2 years in the office were really until I was old enough to go into training. And so I left the office on the 30th of October, 1930, and went in training the next week at Toronto Western Hospital.

CGR:

How did you know, when you were 5, that you wanted to be a nurse? Why did you know?

KCG:

My mother's youngest sister and youngest brother came out from Ireland about the year before I was born, and my aunt was a practical nurse. She stayed with us when she wasn't nursing, because in those days there wasn't any hospital to nurse in. She went to the people's homes. And there was typhoid, and scarlet fever, diphtheria, all those things -- and she never got any of them. I've realized since that either she was immune or else she exercised very, very great care, because there's no inside plumbing. But one day I broke a doll, it's head came off and I remember crying and I wanted to go and get Dr. Flood (he being out in another village), and my aunt put the head back on my doll. I thought she was just so wonderful and that's what I was going to be.

I didn't know it at the time, my father's younger brother, half-brother, came out from Ireland and in 1915 (I was four years old), he went off to the war, and he came up to Little Current to see us. And apparently he wanted -- well, I still have a letter in which he asked my father could I be his nurse if he came back from the war minus an arm or a leg, or something.

I don't actually remember him saying those things, but I've always had a very warm feeling about him. And so there were two reasons why I should be a nurse. And I enjoyed my nursing. I think it was the right thing to be in. Those were the days when we worked 6 1/2 days a week, and when you were on night duty, you did a straight eight weeks with not a night off, not even a half

night off, 12-hour days. You were lucky if you got off at 7 o'clock. But you certainly were there at 7 o'clock in the morning. And it was hard work. We had a very strict superintendent. We have all agreed since that it didn't do us any harm, because you could never get into anything worse.

CGR:

Right.

KGC:

But I enjoyed nursing. They used to take in three classes a year -- one in March, one in September, and then a small class in November, and I was in the November class, there were nine of us. And when it came around to 1933, and graduation -- graduation was early that year, in May, because there was an international congress of Nurses in Britain, I think, and our superintendent wanted to attend. So we had graduation on the 25th of May.

So went and we wore our black bands and our white uniforms, and our white shoes and stockings, and our graduation pins, we got our diploma; we came back from it and we had to had back the pin and the diploma, get the white shoes and stockings off and the white uniform off; take the black band off the cap and go back on duty. That was in May I graduated.

In November I wrote my R.N. and got it, and I still wasn't finished. I had two months sick time to make up and I went on till the 24th of January, '34, before I finished. One of the first things I did was cut my black stockings into ribbons and then put the black shoes in the garbage, so I couldn't be called back on duty to finish out my three years.

And I did a little bit of private duty and then I went back

Yes, Lois was there. That's where she was discovered. But when I was there, the children were taken into the movies in Collingwood and different people came out to entertain them, but each group of children -- campers -- had to put on a performance. And I remember Lois. She was in a wheelchair and she was very shy, when it was her turn to sing, they wheeled her up where the platform was, but she was still so shy that she couldn't face the group, and they were just the other campers and the staff, and maybe an odd Rotarian and his wife were there. But Lois sat with her back to us and of all songs for a child to sing, she started on, "There'll always be an England." I've never heard the song since that I don't hear Lois Marshall singing it.

But anyhow, I finished up there early in September, and then in November I went into the army.

CGR:

How did you make that decision?

KGC:

Well, I had been asked in September of 1939 if I would consider going in it right then. Of course I could never make up my mind in a hurry, you see, I had to think everything through and I really couldn't see it then. I didn't know what it was all about and I said no, I couldn't just then. And then in November, Miss Sharpe, who was the one who asked me if I'd go up to Blue Mountain Camp to finish out the summer with the children, she called me to see if I wasn't ready to go into the army yet. So I said, well say I would go. But by this time everybody was going. It was the thing to do, really.

CGR:

It was obvious by then that it was not going to be over immediately.

KGC:

No, it was not. And so I agreed to go and she phoned me back and she said, "Why don't you belong to the RNAO?" -- Registered Nurses Association of Ontario -- because they weren't taking you in the army unless you belonged. So I quickly joined that and then I was called on the 26th of November to report the next morning. And that was in -- we called it the Toronto Military Hospital -- but it was the old Grace Hospital -- no, not Grace Hospital -- Grace Division of the Toronto Western Hospital, and it was on the northwest corner of College and Huron Street. The Salvation Army hospital was called Grace Hospital, but this was the Grace Division of the Toronto Western Hospital. It had been declared unfit for a hospital, so they made a nurses' residence out of it for floor-duty nurses at Western Hospital. And then they decided that it was fit for a military hospital. So that's where I began.

Now, exactly three weeks after that they were going to open up Chorley Park, which had been the Lieutenant-Governor's residence, the official residence until Premier [Mitch] Hepburn closed it down to save expenses. Well, there were three others who were sent up and the oldest one of the group was set up as Sister-in-Charge. (You know we were called sisters.) And so the four of us went up there to open up Chorley Park. Have you ever been in Chorley Park?

I will never forget that morning when we walked in there --

great marble floor, and then this marble staircase leading up like that. And all I could think of was "I dreamt I dwelled in marble halls."

It was being held by Second Field Ambulance at that time, until they'd get their own staff up there. And we set in to make beds. That was the 18th of December we went up there, and before Christmas we had patients. Now they were convalescent patients and instead of letting them lie around on their beds and reading magazines until they were ready to go back on light duty, they sent them up there and left other hospital for the more active patients. And we had a great time up at Chorley Park.

Then in the new year their own staff began to gather and so one after another we were sent back to Toronto Military, and I went back the end of March, '41. And I was at Toronto Military then until I was sent overseas on the 19th of October, 1941.

CGR:

Now when you went overseas, did you go as part of a medical unit?

KGC:

Well you know that business of going to Hong Kong was first of all, 12th of October, 1941. You see, by this time we had been Nursing Sisters in the Army 6 months or more and we were getting very restless, we wanted to get moving, after all we joined to go overseas and we wanted to get moving. And so they sent about 10 or 11 from Toronto Military up to Camp Borden and they brought an equal amount down to Toronto Military. Well that's a kind of "Moving." And it was that Sunday afternoon, you see, those who were going to Borden got off at 1 o'clock and went up and we went

-- no, they must have sent them up 3 o'clock, that was it. And we came back at 3 o'clock and worked through until the end of the day.

So it was that Sunday afternoon and there were about three or four of us up at the Mess on St. George Street having supper, and I got called to the phone, and this voice said, "Sister, it's Captain Hardy calling," (he was the registrar). And he said, "There's a message here from Ottawa that you are for duty in a semi-tropical climate?" And he said, "Oh, I really don't know. This is all I've got, all the information I was given." And he said, "There's one thing I can tell you: you will not go alone, but how many more Nursing Sisters, I don't know, and you won't go where there aren't Canadian troops." [Intended meaning is that Canadian Nursing Sisters would be sent to places where there were Canadian troops.]

CGR:

Where there aren't?

KGC:

Where there are not Canadian troops. And I said, "Okay then, where is the semi-tropical climate where there are Canadian troops?" And he said, "Well, there's some down in Jamaica." (You know, who wants to go to Jamaica.) and he said, "I'll give you five minutes to think it over." Then he said he'd call me back. So I went to the table and I told the girls what it was and they said, "Are you sure that's not Junior getting one back on you?" (Junior MacKenzie was the pay sergeant and he was just a nice big boy, you know, that liked to play tricks, and he owed me one because he was going around after the black-out practice

we had and he told us what he was doing and what other people had been doing and so he said, "Where were you?" And I said, "Oh, I was in the dark," and that just finished Junior. So they figured Junior was trying to get one back on me.

I went back to the phone and I said, "Is Captain Hardy there?" And the operator said, "No, Sister, he's at home in Oakville but he phoned you from there about 5 minutes ago." So the girls said, "Kay, just for once take a chance and do something before you have to find out all the details." So I took the chance and I went back and called Captain Hardy and said I'd go. And I said, "When do I go?" and he said, "We don't know." And I thought, well okay. So anyway on Monday morning, of course, with this knowledge around, well okay. So anyway on Monday morning, of course, with this knowledge around, I had to change -- I'd just taken over the ward the day before, and then I had to hand it over to somebody else, and handing over inventory is quite a business.

I heard nothing more till the following Friday morning about 11 o'clock and there was a call for me to go down to that Matron's office. Well this wasn't too unusual, I may say, especially that Matron. So I went down and here was the Colonel, the O.C. was with her and I thought, "Boy, I've really done something this time." But anyway, they had word that I was to be in Vancouver the following Thursday morning. Now you didn't fly in those days, you went by train, and we figured out that Sunday night was the latest I could leave in order to be there. But I remember my heart just dropped when they said Vancouver. I thought you don't go to England [or Jamaica] by way of Vancouver.

But I had said I would go and it was too late then to, you know, change my mind. So I said okay.

It was very secret. I wasn't to talk to anybody. I just felt like little Red Riding Hood, "take these goodies to your grandmother, but don't stop to talk to strangers." So by Sunday night I had everything that I was supposed to have ready, went down to the train, and I was the only one going; there wasn't anyone else there to be on that train.

Tuesday morning there was a Nursing Sister that got on at Winnipeg and when I saw her -- well, the girls were out on the station platform and they were all pointing up that way, so I looked and there was another Nursing Sister. Well, by Monday night I had been offered a job in Winnipeg with the Children's Aid Society. There were times when I wished I had taken it! And so I went and talked to May [Waters] and it was obvious that she had been given the same instructions I had. I often wish we had a tape recording of that conversation, because neither one of us was giving a thing, but we finally figured out we're on the same junket.

And then men officers began getting on, but they were talking quite openly. They obviously hadn't been given the same instructions we had. Well, we got to Vancouver on Thursday morning as ordered and we had to report into Military Headquarters at 10:00 am and 4:00 pm every day. "Go and get yourself a room in the hotel and report here 10:00 am and 4:00 pm every day." So we did that on Friday and on Saturday morning we were told to go out and buy all the summer clothes we could find, and by this time it was the 23rd, 24th of October in 1941. You

know, you didn't buy summer clothes except in July and August. And the people in the shops looked at us as if we were absolutely mad. And then in the afternoon, when we went, [to Military H.Q.] they said that our new lodgings were ready and we could go either on Sunday or Monday morning, but once we went we would not be coming back to the city. So of course we knew it was a ship we were going to. So we waited until Monday morning and went.

There was a 54-bed hospital on the ship which we had to set up, and we had patients in that hospital. We didn't realize the ship had sailed. We were occupied with our work and were on our way. We had no orderlies, but the second day out (what do you call those people that hide on a ship and surface afterwards?).

CGR:

Stowaways.

KGC:

A stowaway surfaced. His name was Perry and he was from Texas and he talked like that. But he was a medical orderly. He wanted to get overseas, so he just walked onto the ship with the others. The Brigadier decided to put him to work in the hospital, and he worked nights. The Brigadier wouldn't let either of us do night duty; it didn't matter how sick a patient was we couldn't do night duty. So Perry did and he was great. And when we got to Honolulu a week later, the following Sunday, they were going to send him back and we pleaded with them to leave Perry where he was because we needed him, and we did too.. So he made the trip over with us, but they let him put his feet on the pier and then they sent him back to Canada.

So anyway, we arrived then in Hong Kong; committed the most

terrible crime right then by arriving at 8 o'clock on a Sunday morning, because Hong Kong is very quiet on Sunday morning. And the British Matron came down and just whisked the two of us away and up to the nurses' residence in a taxi. Have you ever been to Hong kong?

CGR:

No.

KGC:

Well, I'm going to tell you their taxis are quite something -- dart in and out, you know, they stop and they start. So we got up there and we were the only two "Sisters from the Dominions," and we certainly, I think, both wished we were back in Winnipeg and Toronto, respectively.

CGR:

Excuse me. What is the other woman's last name?

KGC:

Waters, May Waters.

And so that was Sunday, and on Tuesday morning we were put on duty in the hospital.

CGR:

This was what, mid-November?

KGC:

We arrived on the 16th of November. So we went on duty on the 18th. Apparently all hospitals in the tropics were like that: they were long and narrow, like the old Bathurst Street Building at the Western Hospital -- you know, long, and had three floors. But these hospitals have no inside corridors. There's a

balcony all around each floor and you come out on a balcony to walk from one ward to another. No elevators, just three flights of stairs, one at each end, and then half-way along the floor.

The first afternoon, I remember, I was told to go up to (I don't know what ward it was) where all the malaria patients were, and I heard that so-and-so is in blankets and somebody else is out of blankets, and this is all it was -- in and out of blankets. Of course, it was when they perspired so they took them out of those gray blankets that they had been wrapped in when they first come in. And they hung blankets, these soaking wet blankets with perspiration along the railing, and I wanted to know where the laundry was. "Oh, we don't wash them. They just hang them out and they dry and go along to somebody else who's going to perspire." I was just shocked at that! I really was. However, we didn't have too long, we didn't get any malaria patients during the fighting. But it was exactly three weeks after we arrived that the Japs struck.

We didn't know our way around that hospital, properly. So, anyway, things moved awfully fast after that Monday morning.

CGR:

How did the war start for you? Where were you...? [See also Appendix at end on this topic.]

KGC:

We had heard this loud bang and it was a bomb, and we were told that the Japanese had struck. And then we were on duty, as usual, and I was up on the third floor, I remember, and then there was another bang and this was it. We just couldn't believe it. We were going over there not to a theatre of war, not where

there was going to be a war. But they were sending these two regiments over to just supplement the British troops that were there. And two Nursing Sisters would be a reasonable complement for the hospital staff for sending 2,000 healthy men. So they didn't expect any illnesses that wouldn't happen to anybody else, certainly not injuries. And so I thought, you just couldn't believe that it was war. And they said Honolulu had got it too, and of course we had stopped in Honolulu for a day on our way over, and we knew it was an awful long way from Honolulu to Hong Kong, but to think that they had got it...

So then the one thing we had to start doing was -- their beds, you see, had metal head-boards, head railing, and the same at the foot, but the head was higher than the foot. (Now they had a metal bar that fastened onto the head of the bed and down to the foot, and that was for protection, as it turned out later. About the second day, we had to get rid of all the patients from the top two floors because there were snipers. Well, there'd been a shell go through too. So we transferred the patients out and the mattresses were moved down to the main floor and that bar was to hold a mattress, which was folded in half, while we were working with the patients. But when there was an air raid, the first thing you did was to spread that mattress out, so that there was a mattress covering each patient.

CGR:

Forming a sort of a little tent-shaped space.

KGC:

Yes, exactly. Then the order was that during an air raid all the nursing staff would get under the beds of the very sick

patients. Well, I did it at first, but then I thought, you know, it would be bad enough to have two floors come down on you, but I don't think I want two floors and a bed and a patient on top of me too. So I moved out into the space between the two beds, and the next thing we knew there was an order posted that all nursing staff -- all was underlined about 10 times -- will get under the beds.

I fell asleep under a patient's bed one day during a raid, because we were on duty from 6:00 in the morning till 6:00 at night and didn't get much sleep at night, I can tell you, because we all slept in the shelters under the hospital after we had been removed from our residence -- they were starting to bomb up there. And I often thought of being in a morgue when we were down there. There were these shelves, cement shelves and they would hold two single mattresses on each one, and there were two people sleeping on -- no, it must have been three single mattresses -- and there were two people sleeping on each single mattress. And you know you liked to get your helmet off and sometimes your helmet would crash into the next person's helmet and then, of course, you were awakened. And there was shelling going on, and so you really didn't get too much sleep. Everybody slept down there. But you had to be up and on duty at 6:00 just the same, so it wasn't hard to go to sleep under a bed during the day when you got the chance.

They opened up a number of smaller auxiliary hospitals around the Island. One was at St. Albert's. It was a monastery, and we sent bedding and staff, nursing staff, from our hospital out there, and the same thing out at Stanley. They used the

auditorium of the school -- St. Stephen's Boys School was out there and they used that building. But we furnished the staff. And it was at those auxiliary hospitals where the atrocities took place against the staff. Out at St. Stephen's it was bad.

There was one Nursing Sister, Molly Gordon, and six VADs went out. Molly and three of the VADs came back, but the other three, after all the mistreatment and everything, they were beheaded and their bodies stacked outside. But the Nursing Sister and three of the VADs came back. I heard from Molly herself about what had gone on. I will never, never forget the look in her eyes! And I don't wonder. Molly wasn't young, she must have been in her late 40's, just a little woman, and they really....And of course the men got it out there too. The injured were on mattresses on the floor and the Japs came in -- now I didn't see it but everybody tells the same story -- the Red Cross on the roof and a machine gun on the doorstep. Well you can't expect anybody to observe any kind of regulations.

CGR:

You mean a British machine gun? Yes. Right.

KGC:

And there was Colonel Black -- poor old Colonel Black. He was the chief medical officer -- he was in the doorway, and I was told he had a gun, a revolver. Of course, the Japs came and saw the machine gun and they saw him with the gun and they just, you know, slashed him and then his assistant, Capt. Whitney, they were both British, came to the aid of Col. Black and he got it too. And then the Japs just charged in after these patients that were on the mattresses on the floor, putting their bayonets

through them.

CGR:

Was this the same place where the women were that you mentioned, before they came back?

KGC:

Yes. They were the nursing staff.

CGR:

And they were raped?

KGC:

Yes. The Japs took a lot of the men's bodies, the ones they had killed, and dragged them across the corridor and into a small room, and put the bodies in there. Then they dragged mattresses in and put them on top of the bodies. And then they went at the nurses. And we all had to wear Red Cross arm bands because we figured the Japs would recognize us as being medical and hospital. They were wide thick canvas sort of things. They took those off and wiped their faces with them and then they stripped them and they went after the nurses. And Molly said it wasn't just one Jap per person, she said it was just a series of Japs on you. And what they were really afraid of was that these women would be infected, because it was something like venereal disease but not the two old favorites that we knew of over here -- gonorrhoea and syphilis -- it's something that the Orientals have and apparently it's difficult for Occidentals to ward off or get rid of that infection.

CGR:

Would this be lymphogranuloma venereum? Does that sound familiar?

KGC:

I never heard, I just knew it was like a venereal disease but it was native to the Orientals.

CGR:

And do you know, did any of these women have trouble with....?

KGC:

I know that Molly Gordon did not, but I've never seen any of the others since -- any of the other three -- since 1943.

CGR:

They were all British, Occidental? They weren't Chinese?

KGC:

No. There was one of them and I think she was Eurasian. but they were European. Eventually, in a day or so, they got them back. I think they were put on some kind of a vehicle and covered up with stuff and told not to utter a sound, and they got them back, back to Bowen Road Hospital.

CGR:

Excuse me. This is the Japanese who did this?

KGC:

Oh no, no. Canadians did it. Bowen Road Hospital and the British Military Hospital were one and the same thing. It was on Bowen Road, and that's how they used to locate it, localize it.

CGR:

And this would have been what -- December 20, 21? I mean, just before the surrender?

KGC:

The surrender came on....

CGR:

I mean when the actual atrocities were carried out.

KGC:

It was either the 24th or 25th, and the surrender became official on Christmas afternoon, 3 or 4 o'clock. May and I had both been put on night duty the night before, Christmas Eve. And we knew what had gone on in St. Albert's and at the Jockey Club - - I'm not sure whether we knew about St. Stephen's or not -- but we knew that it wasn't good when the Japs came in, anyway. Of course the wards were blacked out and every time you heard footsteps you just wondered -- is that it? You had an orderly -- I had the big admitting ward, May covered the rest of the wards on the main floor -- and I had one orderly and one V.A.D. with me on the ward. However, we got through the night, no harm.

Christmas morning there was a church service and we stood there with out helmets on and respirators, and the Padre, the British army Padre told us -- there was a message, supposedly, from Winston Churchill -- that "all was going well, keep up the good work, the eyes of the world are on you!" That, at half past seven in the morning! And then we went to the shelters to try and sleep. And then I heard a voice -- as it turned out, these men came into the shelter and one of them was a Medical Officer and an Australian, and he said -- I heard this voice say, "I'm going to get the hell out of here before the Japs come in.? No, "before they come in." And I said, "Before who come in?" And he said, "The Japs." And I said, "What are they...?" And he said, "We've surrendered." And I said, "Who said so?" He said, "The

governor. Is that all right with you?"

CGR:

You didn't go back to sleep?

KGC:

No. And in a couple of minutes there was a message, a messenger came down from the Matron to tell the two of us to get up and get dressed and come upstairs. So that was the end of the fighting.

CGR:

How would morale have been up till that time?

KGC:

Oh, quite good. Now I'll just tell you -- talk about morale. You now the Army paid on the 15th of each month and then toward the end of the month. On the morning of the 15th, which was a week after the fighting had begun, Colonel Hennessey, who was our senior Administrative Officer, and our Pay Officer, came up to the hospital and came along where I was, and I remember standing out on the balcony watching the bombing, buildings being bombed up on the peak -- that's when I learned (light travels faster than sound), because you'd see where it struck and then you'd hear the sound. That's right, light still travels faster. And we watched this down there and they wanted to know if I wanted my pay, my middle of the month pay. And I said, "Oh, no. I really haven't any use for it here." I said, "We'll wait until after." Now that's just how naive we were. But it was after then that you began to hear about the Brigadier being killed, our Brigade Major was killed, Colonel Hennessey and that Pay Captain were both killed up in one of those buildings on the peak where

we had watched the bombing.

So then it began to get just -- well, you just began to wonder what on earth goes on, and we were new over there, you know, so strange, we knew nothing. But you know, there has to be something funny in everything. Christmas afternoon there was a wedding. One of the VADs and a wounded officer that we had, they were engaged and they were going to be married in due course; but they decided in view of the surrender that they might just as well get married now. And poor young Drummond Hunter, he had been in the hospital with a slight injury and they were moving him and a Canadian officer, Jim Gilbert, out to Queen Mary Hospital because we had to have those beds for more seriously injured people. And the ambulance they were in was shot at and it rolled over, and they were both brought back more seriously injured than they had been before. Poor Drummond, he was a great big tall skinny chap, and his spine was injured, so here he was in a cast from up here [upper chest] right down to his toes. And he had just had a new cast put on that day, on Christmas, and he was lying there on top of the bed and the Padre and the Matron and the Sister in charge of that ward and another VAD. witnessed, and the Padre got to the place where he was going to say, "I now pronounce you man and wife." Well, just down beneath our balcony was an anti aircraft emplacement and the British sergeant in there refused to accept the fact that Hong Kong had surrendered. So he fired off a couple of blasts, to show his disapproval. Well, the Japs sent a plane over and it was just swooping down -- oh, I can still hear the sound of them as the swooped down. So, the Padre says, "I now pronounce you man and wife -- get under

the bed everybody!" So everybody got under the bed except the poor groom and he was left stranded -- helpless -- on top of the bed. Oh, me. Anyhow, that was one bright spot that day. There wasn't any Christmas dinner and I doubt if we had any appetite for it even if there had been.

CGR:

I'm sure there weren't too many bright spots.

KGC:

No.

CGR:

Well, what happened then?

KGC:

Well, I went back on night duty at 6 o'clock and then told me that there was a Canadian down in the operating room having an arm amputated. He had been bayoneted repeatedly at St. Stephen's. Eventually we heard footsteps, and every time you heard footsteps, you just wondered, well, is this it? So in they bring the stretcher and it's this young kid -- freckles across his nose, a lock of hair down over his forehead. He should have been out in the streets playing marbles, not away over there. He looked about 14; but anyway, I saw the arm off and I thought, "What on earth am I going to tell you when you come out of the anesthetic?" To tell a kid that age that he doesn't have a left arm any more. So anyway, we put him into bed and I hovered around and after a while he began to stir. I went over to him, and I'll never forget the way he looked up at me -- and I didn't know the story then, you see -- and he just looked up to me and he said, "Oh, it's you Sister." And I said, "Well, yes it is

me," and, "oh, that's good." And so he said, "How am I doing?" And I said, "You're just doing fine." And he kind of moved and he said, "You mean what's left of me is doing fine." I thought, "God bless you!" And I said, "That's right." And he said, "They had to take it off, eh?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "I kind of figured that way, you know." And he turned on his side and went to sleep.

So, anyway, he was one of those that the Japs went after, on the mattress on the floor, and he had tried to get away of course, and they went after him. So he said, "I decided it was just better to play dead." So he played dead and they left him alone. But his original injury had been to his right scapula which was out through the skin. So I had two jobs there, to try and heal up that stump and get the scapula back under. He was a good kid though.

But I used to try and scrounge -- food was scarce, even then -- and I used to try and scrounge things to get extra nourishment for him. I had him for a patient again up on the third floor -- that's where I learned to scrounge -- and he wouldn't take anything extra I had for him out in the ward where the other patients were. He just wouldn't take it. But I said, "This is like medicine, you've got to have it." And so I said, "Come on in here," and I took him into an office, they called it a bunk, opened up the big cupboard door and put him behind the door, and boy he just wolfed that extra -- whatever it was -- he just wolfed it down. But he would not let the other fellows see him getting anything extra.

CGR:

Remember his name?

KGC:

Oh yes. I always heard him called and I always called him "Bud Sweet." But I just found out the end of September [1982] -- I happened to be down in Ottawa, I had been to Cornwall to the Dieppe Veterans and POWs annual reunion. Then I drove back to Ottawa for a few days with Cliff Chadderton who is the Secretary-General of the National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada, of which I am chairman, and so he said that he was going to have a hearing before some of the members of the Canadian Pension Commission. He said, "Maybe you'd like to come and sit in on them and just hear what goes on in those things." So I said, "Okay, which day?" And he said, "Well, I'll call you and tell you." So he phoned me that night to tell me, "Strangely enough, Kay one of your Hong Kong boys." And I said, "Who is he, maybe I know him?" And he said, "Royce Sweet." And I said, "Royce Sweet? Does he come from New Brunswick, Bathurst, New Brunswick?" And he said, "Yes, Do you know him?" And I said, "Well, if they call him "Bud," yes I know him." He said, "That's the boy." I said, "With the left arm off."

And so I sat in on the hearing; I finally ended up getting sworn in as a witness because, in the last specialist report they talked about the stump of the right arm, and I knew only too well it was his left arm. We found back in some of his other records that it was the left arm. I felt that they really didn't understand the origin, the circumstances of the injuries. Of course I think that about a lot of those Hong Kong boys. Unless

you were there and saw how the Japanese treated people -- mistreated them -- you just couldn't believe what these men put up with for almost four years.

And so anyway, I went to bat for Sweet. You know you did call the men by their last names and I used to be calling him Sweet and they'd say, "Who is this fellow that you're calling "Sweet." And I said, "That's his last name." So I switched then and called him "Bud," like everybody else did.

Then for a short time we still had loaves of bread, but one slice per person per day, perhaps. And I used to slice this bread as best I could; I came from a large family where it was very important that everything was even and equal. I heard the boys complaining one day, they didn't know where the end crusts had gone, and they suddenly asked me what I was doing with the end crusts. So I had to admit that although I sliced them very thin, I had eaten them, and that was just a dreadful crime. It's just dreadful what hunger does to people. And so then they wanted me to use a ruler so I would be sure to slice the bread exactly the same thickness.

CGR:

Serious business.

KGC:

Oh, very serious. Oh, snitching rations was just dreadful.

Well, when we moved down from our residence, which was after they started shelling the Island, which was the 12th of December, they were shelling our area of it, we were told just to put some things in a small bag that would do us for a few days. This time when we moved out to the shelters (I never did learn the

different names for shelters, but these looked like a little hut thing outside -- we were protected from the harbor side, you know, from the mainland where the Japs were shelling from. But they were like an inverted "U", and there was a wooden bench around the inside and then I remember there were cinders on the floor.)

CGR:

Were they concrete?

KGC:

Yes. So we slept on cinders at night. And we thought it was for a few nights; you know, you can put up with anything for a little while. But then after the 19th -- that's when the Japs came on the island -- then we had to move into the shelters under the hospital, on the slabs. So there was all our stuff up in our residence.

Of course, once the Japs too over they put barbed wire around and we were forbidden to go, we were forbidden to go up to our Quarters because they [the guards] were using them for their Quarters. One morning I came off night duty (the 3rd of January, I remember), and I thought, "I'm going to go up there before the Japs come up at 8 o'clock, and grab some of my stuff." So up I went, all by myself (but there were others who knew where I had gone). And so I went into my room, there had been a shell come through there, but there was my trunk and my dunnage bag, and I dragged those two out and then I went to May's room to see what was left of hers and her dunnage bag had been slashed open but the trunk was there. By this time, Corporal Thompson from the RAMC, not the Canadian Medical Corps, and one of the Q.A.'s

British Nursing Sisters, came up to rescue me. And we grabbed as much stuff as we could -- carry our dunnage bag on this arm and one hand on the end of the trunk and the next person had their hand on the end of the trunk -- real coolie style. And we came down -- well by this time, apparently, they were afraid of the Japs coming up and we had been warned that looters would be shot on sight. Instead of coming along the road of a little gully, through shrubs and everything. We got the stuff up onto the balcony just in time to stand there and watch the Japs go up. But I had my stuff and that's what I went after. It just made me mad to see those creatures taking everything.

CGR:

When they took over the hospital that you were in, it would have been what, the evening of the 25th or the 26th?

KGC:

Five o'clock -- no, they came up the next day, they came up on Boxing Day and declared it a POW. camp.

CGR:

Were they "correct?" Were there atrocities there?

KGC:

Oh no, no. We were to be next apparently. If Hong Kong had not surrendered, it was our turn to get it. But the Jap Officers drove up, in the car and they sent word for the O.C., Colonel Shackleton to come out and see them. We Canadians were not aware of this class business. But for a British Colonel to be sent for by the Japanese and told to come out and see him -- well, I got kind of a bang out of that because Shackleton was a miserable old wretch and I kind of enjoyed this. They declared the place a

prisoner-of-war camp and they would be putting up barbed wire and we were not to go beyond the immediate environment.

CGR:

But you carried on your work?

KGC:

Oh we carried on our work. We had a Jap, Sergeant Seto, in charge of the hospital. No medical officer, Sergeant Seto. But we had guards wandering around the hospital -- even into where we were sleeping; by this time we had moved out of shelters and up into a small ward. They'd wander around night and day, stop and watch you do dressings or whatever you were doing. What really bothered us was, always with their bayonets, always, and they'd stand with the handle-end (as I call it, I know that's not the right word for it), but the bayonet end, the blade end up. And they'd stand there and as they watch you, they'd run their fingers up the blade make that sucking sound. I thought, "Oh, will you not do that!" It was just a horrible sound. I don't know whether they were enjoying the sight or what. And then sometimes you'd wake up at night and there'd be one of the guards standing in the doorway. There were a group of us in one room so we didn't worry too much about it.

But we eventually got patients moved back up to the top two floors. There were a group of us in one room so we didn't worry too much about it.

But we eventually got patients moved back up to the top two floors. There were several holes in the roof of the third floor and the water would drip through. I think it was in February or early March that the rainy season begins over there.

I remember seeing a picture, it was called Sadie Thompson at one time and Rain the next time. I remember seeing that tropical rain and I didn't believe it. It just doesn't rain that hard. But boy, I learned.

CGR:

You thought that was Hollywood rain.

KGC:

We were very, very short of medical supplies -- drugs, dressings, everything. But I thought we were very short of them before the war even started.

CGR:

By comparison with what you were used to?

KGC:

With what we were accustomed to. And now mind you, I was depression-trained in a hospital that was always hard up, as most of them were in the '30's. So I wasn't accustomed to waste or to a whole lot of extras, luxuries, and so that's why I felt that this was really pretty poor. They had four tongue depressors, four wooden tongue depressors, and one metal one for a whole ward. All of our boys had a sort of flu, and this was before hostilities began. The Medical Officer was going around looking at their throats and then he'd put the tongue depressor down and I'd take it and break it. And after I'd broken three, the orderly, the British Army orderly said, "Sister, you don't break those." And I said, "Well, what do I do with them?" And he said, "Put them there." and I said, "And then what?" I had visions of them being sued. And he said, "Oh, we wash them," and

I think he said, "We boil them and use them again." "Is that all you have?" He said, "That's a ward allotment." I don't know how long they're supposed to last. Well that almost made me sick to my stomach, but I soon got used to cooking in the sterilizers and so on. But they really were ill equipped, I felt, so it wasn't just the war.

So when they found amebiasis -- I forget, there was one specific drug they were supposed to get -- but we didn't have enough. They got it once a day instead of three or four times a day. And then it got that the casts couldn't be changed as often as they should and they were "high." I remember a lad, Sharpe. We moved their beds out onto the balcony because the beds were jammed so tight you had to move them apart to get beside them and do the dressing or anything like that. And so we put some of the smelly ones out on the balcony. The Japs accused us of being cruel to our patients and made us move them back in. Now the windows were all gone, the glass was gone out of the windows; it was no cooler on the balcony than it was inside, I can tell you, but it wasn't quite so smelly when these people were out on the balcony. So they had to go back in. They were very embarrassed, of course, but we just didn't have enough supplies to change those casts when they needed it.

CGR:

Did they get maggotty?

KGC:

No. We only had one maggotty boy and he was picked up out on the hills, I think it was 5 days later when the MOs went out looking for bodies (preferably alive). And then found this young

man, Leslie Canivet, and he'd been injured here in his jaw and it was just alive with maggots. But when they got the maggots off, the wound was as clean as a knife, just beautiful. And he was another of these young kids, you know, fair haired, fair skinned, blue-eyed and you'd go along in the morning when you went around the wards, you wanted to say, "Good morning, sonny." He was a nice boy too. But that's when I first learned about maggots. The very thought of them, of course. But when I saw that wound it was just beautiful.

CGR:

They make us all shudder, but I guess the Russians are still playing around with ways to use them specifically in treating wounds.

KGC:

When the Japs closed down the Naval Hospital, we got their staff, the Nursing Sisters and any of the patients that couldn't go to prison camps (this was after the surrender). And there's this one young lad, Quinn, Telegrapher Quinn, Telegrapher Quinn, 18 years old, and what a state he was in! He had his left leg off right and a horrible pressure sore at the base of his spine, you could get a wipe on a forcep, put it in through the pressure sore, bring it out through the amputation site. He was addicted to morphine by this time and we didn't have much morphine -- I don't know whether we had any by the time Quinn got there. He had a bed with a Balkan frame on it; I strung him up in a hammock, which I thought was quite appropriate for a Navy boy to be strung up, and to try and keep his back off the mattress. Oh, it used to take me an hour and a half, two hours, every morning

for his basic care and he would scream and swear. I didn't blame the kid, you know, I wasn't too sure how I would act if I were in the same state he was in. But it did bother two young Navy boys, they were called Able-Bodied Seamen, which I believe is the lowest form in which the Navy walks. Gray and Ward, kids again, you know, skinny, and it bothered them the way he would speak to Sisters. And so anyway one morning he'd been particularly abusive, and when I finished with him and I went out to the bunk to get rid of the bath and dressing materials these two followed after me and they stood very strictly at attention, saluted me and said, "Sister, on behalf of the Royal Navy, we wish to apologize for Quinn." Well, really, I could have cried. You know, this is the kind of thing that popped up with these boys. Then, some weeks after, early one morning Quinn mercifully died. I never heard the cause but it was merciful for him and for everybody else because he was upsetting the other people.

So anyway, he was buried that afternoon. All our funerals were at 5 o'clock in the afternoon because we had no means of keeping [the bodies]. We had one Padre, a Church of England Padre, British, and he conducted the services. The Japs always attended, clank, clank with their big heavy boots, and a great big wreath about this big. I used to think if they would give us that money to buy food with instead of these wreaths!

Anyway, Quinn was buried and the next morning I hardly knew what to do with all the time I had. I heard the boys talking about what was going to become of Quinn's soul because Quinn was a Roman Catholic, and he'd been buried by a Protestant. They were suggesting different things when finally Sergeant Stone, who

ws Cockney, said -- "It's all right, chaps," he said, "Quinn can stay where he is until the British get Hong Kong back, and they'll bring up a priest and he'll stand in front of the grave and say 'Quinn, as you were!'" That settled it, there was no more talk about Quinn. As I say, this is the kind of thing, when you talk about morale, that kept everybody going. They were a great group.

But anyway, this went on until August 10th of 1942. In the meantime, down at the guardhouse where the guards that were on duty stayed, they used to nip off the Chinese that were caught going too high up the hillside to cut wood, cut trees down, and the Japs would go get them and haul them down there. And then we watched every method of torture. Now, we wonder why we did it, but I don't know why we did it. I think probably wondering, is this what's going to be in store for us if they catch us. And it helped you to obey the rules, I can tell you! And when you were told not to go beyond, you didn't go beyond. But we just watched that and we figured that if this is the way they treated the Chinese, they wouldn't make any difference what nationality people were, and that our Canadians, and British, and Australians, New Zealanders -- not Australians, they were New Zealanders there -- would get at the hands of the Japanese.

So anyway, the 10th of August, 1942 was a Monday morning. We had heard, on the Friday before, that the Japs were going to take all the female nursing staff out of the hospital and ship us out to the civilian interment camp at Stanley. They weren't going to tell us, they were just going to come in Monday morning and swoop us up and take us. But we had Major Boxer, Charles

Boxer, who had been with British Army Intelligence and -- he'd been in Japan -- understood Japanese, spoke Japanese, and somehow he got the leak and told us about it. We were not going to be allowed to take any hospital property. Now you see, a pillow is hospital property, which we couldn't take, but there was nothing wrong with cutting a pillow in two and stitching up the raw sides and we had two cushions; you see, we could do that. You couldn't take a hospital sheet, but if you cut one in two, you know, from top to bottom, and have two narrow strips of white linen -- and this is the kind of thing we did. We took out some dressing basins and that's what we used to get our chow in after we moved to Stanley. We had been doing dirty old dressings and (what else was it we took out there?), oh yes, I think we took a knife and a fork and a spoon. If we'd only known we could have left the knife and fork behind and just taken the spoon.

Sure enough on Monday morning at 10 o'clock the Japs arrived; we were all taken with what we could carry, and we were put onto trucks, just like cattle going to market, and off we went to Stanley. Well, of course, while we were in Bowen Road Hospital, we did have Canadian patients. Out there, there were 2,400 people, we didn't know anybody there and....

CGR:

Excuse me. Just before we get into that, can I just go back to this business about torturing the Chinese. Did there seem to be nominally at least, any purpose to the torture? Were they trying to get information or was this just done for pleasure?

KGC:

Punishment. [for going higher up the hillside than was

permitted, to cut down trees for fuel.]

CGR:

Punishment. And would this be done, would they then let them go, or would this be a prelude to murdering them?

KGC;

If they were still alive.

CGR:

If they were still alive. What kinds of things? I don't want to get too gory, but....

KGC:

Well, one thing they used to do was to tar the soles of their feet and hang them up by their wrists and light a fire under their feet. Put lighted cigarettes in both nostrils. (Some of our patients would have given anything for those cigarettes.) The other thing was the water treatment. Of course they knocked them around, you know; they would get pails of water and they'd slosh it at them and knock them down, and then they'd pour the water. And they would keep at this water bit until you could see their abdomens distend and then they'd get up and jump on them, on their abdomens. And they would beat them with what were called typhoon bars. Now you know that's a typhoon area over there, and to get ready for a typhoon they would close the shutters and then you'd put up these typhoon bars across. There were about that wide and about that thick.

CGR:

About three inches by one inch?

KGC:

I think they were thicker than one inch. I knew the

expression 2 X 4, but after that style. But long, because they had to go right across these double windows, you see, and keep the shutters from blowing open. And I've seen two Japs onto one poor Chinaman, each Jap with a typhoon bar, just battering him. They'd knock him down and then they'd pick him up and wham him again. Just dreadful! But one of our officers, who got talking sometimes to the [Japanese] Officer of the Guard -- once in a while we had an Officer's Guard, some of them had been educated in the U.S., spoke perfectly good English -- and Mac used to talk to them sometimes and he asked them why did the Japanese treat the Chinese like that? He was told that, "You think what we do to the Chinese is bad, you should see what the Chinese do to us when they catch us." So it's punishment and retaliation.

Then we heard -- now I didn't see -- I used to hear about them putting bamboo slivers down their nails to get them to talk. Out in Stanley, early July '43, the Japs thought that there was a mass plot to escape. Now out in Stanley they had their stoolies, you know, we had two on our corridor, and they heard about this mass plot to escape and they wanted a man named Anderson. He was one of them. They didn't know which Anderson so they took all six Andersons that were in the camp. That's the way things were done.

CGR:

There's a certain grim efficiency to it.

KGC:

And when they were about to behead people, you know, before the beat -- if they'd just go ahead and shoot, or behead, or whatever they were going to do, but it was the battering they got

beforehand. They knew, I mean there was always a radio in camp, and they got hold of this one man, he was an Englishman -- a European, I should say -- and they told him to start digging for the radio. Well, of course, he started to dig, but not in the right place, and they let him dig and it was a boiling hot day, and then they beat him up a little bit and pointed to where he was to dig, and of course there was the radio. Well, when they did that, when they brought people in from town that they'd caught, for what reasons I don't know, they'd bring them in behind the prison walls and make them dig a grave and then beat them up a bit, make them kneel down and then they lopped off their heads and tumbled them into the graves. I just can't believe that human beings -- but then they weren't really human beings, they were savages. There were some soldiers fighting there during the war and they said they were Formosans, they'd never seen white people before, and I'm sure a lot of Japanese had never seen white people either.

CGR:

Yes. Trouble is that's not a very adequate explanation because the Germans would make Jews dig graves and then shoot them and they at least had seen white people before. There's just no explanation.

KGC:

Some of our own Canadian boys told me, when they came back from the Italian and European theatres, they said, "Sister, if it'll make you feel any better, you should have seen what we did to some of the Germans and some of the Italians." So you see, I guess that's war, that's the only....Now it is so hard to believe

that those things were done, one person to another.

CGR:

Well, I distracted you -- you were just starting to talk about having been moved to Stanley, the [Civilian] internment camp. What was life like there?

KGC:

Well, we went out there and, because we were nurses and had looked after soldiers, the Japanese were giving us preferential treatment, they said. But they took us up to this same St. Stephen's College where the awful things had gone on in the auditorium. We were put in the Residence, the Chinese boys' residence, you see. It was a two and a half storey building, and on the ground floor were some of the Hong Kong police, who were Europeans but they had been on the police force there, and their "wonks" as we called them (you know, it's awful the names you pick up), but they were their women -- some of them were married, some of them weren't -- but they were Chinese, they did all the work, they looked after the men, you see -- they scrounged for food, they scrounged for firewood, twigs, and whatnot; we did too.

CGR:

And what did you call them"

KGC:

Wonks. That's what they were called and that's what we called them -- awful! Boy, you talk about racial slurs. But anyway -- well of course they called us bloody colonials, the English people did, especially the Matron.

So that was on the ground floor, some of these Hong Kong

police and Public Utilities men, and we were put up on the second and third floor. And this long corridor with, it looked like a rabbit-warren with just doorways, no doors. There were walls between -- there'd be two rooms and they would just have a partial partition between them, and then the next one would be a whole wall right to the ceiling. There wasn't a thing in the room, and these rooms had been fought through during hostilities. In fact, there was, you know, a bit of blood up on the wall and the plaster was off, the glass was out of the window -- there was nothing in them, not a thing except the bare floor. So we hadn't any beds, we hadn't any mattresses; the first few nights we slept on the floor. We heard there were men shaved that hadn't shaved for weeks, months, when they heard there were women coming in! And of course they were all very curious to see these three colonials. So anyway....

CGR:

Now who were the three?

KGC:

May Waters and myself; there was a Canadian girl, she had graduated from the Vancouver General and went over to Shanghai early, years before, to do Public Health. While she was there, she met an Englishman who was a captain on the China coast and they were married and lived in Hong Kong. Now, all European women and children were ordered to get out of Hong Kong before hostilities began. When we got there, there were ships in the harbor for them, but a lot of them didn't take those ships. But any European women who did stay, had to promise to help out in hospitals in case of hostilities. And so this Pearl Needham, she

came up to the Military hospital to help out and because she was also a colonial, she was put in with the two of us. They all referred to our room as the log cabin.

So anyway, Pearl and May (you see, there were to be three to a room), Pearl and May stayed and watched our little bit of luggage and this great, bit, tall Scot -- Kinloch -- took me up to show me where our room was and then I could come back and get the other two. So he took me to this room, Room 9 in Block 10, and I took a look in and he said, "Well, here's your room." I just started to laugh. And he said, "Well, I'm afraid I don't see what's funny." I said, "Well, you know, during my training I had a month in Public Health and I was out with a Victoria Order Nurse, a district nurse, I called her...." and this was in 1932 or '33 and the depression was on, and our area was west of Bathurst and south of Dundas Street, and that was quite an area. And we got into some places where they didn't have very much. I felt so sorry for those people in the homes we went to.

But anyway, Kinloch went and gathered up four army biscuits. They're something like a chesterfield cushion but they're thinner and they're much harder, and he gave us four of those. And then -- he went to his pals, you see, and got this stuff for us -- and a round basin, must have been enamel because they didn't have plastic then, and they brought up some cement blocks, they have holes in them. Over there they called them "mimilows" because of a scandal. But they were cement blocks, and they stacked them over by the window, and they came back with some planks -- and this took a couple of days, you know, we didn't get it right away -- and they made us a shelf under the window. And then they came

with a door and they put it on the wall and made a shelf for us. I was told where that shelf came from, but I never told anybody else. It had been a door on a cubicle that had no door, therefore the toilets -- which were, Chinese-style, were in the floor, instead of something you sat on, -- and they couldn't use the one cubicle as a lavatory because there was no door on it, so they used it for anything and everything. And all that time, nobody there ever knew where that door came from. I wouldn't dare tell.

So for the first couple of nights, about two or three nights, we slept on the floor on these army biscuits. Well, I was taller than the other two, I was tall in those days, just about 5'8", so I was given two and each of them had one. The insects would be flying through those windows, great big flying cockroaches. Then they supplied a couple of canvas beds, canvas cots. May got a canvas bed and Peal a canvas stretcher. I still slept on the floor because it was better than the canvas beds. But then didn't our trunks arrive a couple of weeks after, so I put my trunk and Pearl's end to end, put the army biscuits on them, and that made a good bed. Now it wasn't the softest bed I've ever slept on, but believe me my back didn't ache like the other two did on the canvas. And also it was much easier to get up in the morning from that bed. So that's the way we were and that's the way we lived -- we ate and slept and lived in that one room. It was about 9 X 12, three women.

CGR:

Now while you were there, you weren't nursing at all?

KGC:

Not at first. They had a little hospital in the camp -- oh, incidentally, there were 2,400 civilians, men and women and children, about 400 children of school age whose mothers hadn't removed them from Hong Kong.

We washed our clothes, we washed our hair, we took our bird-baths, we washed the floor -- all in this one basin. There was one thing the three of us in that room were all basically clean, so you could get along under conditions like that.

But the food, of course, was conspicuous by its absence. The Japs ration lorry (see, I did pick up some of their expressions) would come along in the afternoon, about 2 o'clock. And as they came to each compound or building, they'd toss off what was for that building, just throw it on the ground: the meat, or the fish, or whatever, and the men from the kitchen would collect it.

CGR:

Now this is uncooked, this is a chunk of meat or....?

KGC:

Yes. And the men from the kitchen -- they were residents in our building, all from the ground floor. They were constant. We didn't have the great changes in kitchen staff that some of the buildings did. And for doing this they got an extra half portion of food. They'd get after that meat and clean off the fat, the bone, and the other undesirables that were in it, and then get it ready. We had supper at, I think it was five or five-thirty, and they would save bits and pieces and make soup out of it.

We always had to have stews, to make it go around. They

used to average it, out that each person got about 3/4 of an ounce of flesh, per day; we got it in meat form (so-called) at 4 o'clock and then made into soup the next morning. We each got 8 ounces of rice per day; we got four ounces at the 5 o'clock meal, and the other four ounces in the morning with the soup. And we had a couple of spoonsful of -- and I don't mean large servings spoons -- of greens. Now what these greens were was something else again, but it always had been put through the grinder, food chopper, but it would remind you of pureed spinach, which I thoroughly disliked. I always did and I didn't like it any better there.

When the food was ready, they'd ring the bell and everybody would go rushing down with whatever you had to put it in. It didn't have to be a very large container, mind you. You just said which room, although those men soon got to know which room we were in; they knew how many servings to put in each. And there were a number of us that couldn't eat curry. And they got to know that, and they would give you two servings with curry and one without. But they used to use curry to try and hide the other flavors.

We had to wait until they boiled the water, large quantities of water, so that we could go and get it and make tea. Now, each person got four ounces of flour per day. But you couldn't do anything with four ounces of flour, so one of the men (he lived on our floor), but he had been a baker in the Army and we all agreed that he could take the whole lot of flour -- we would not collect the flour, he would take it and make bread out of it, and each of us used to get a little loaf about his big and that was

for 24 hours. And I used to say, just a hot-dog bun, really. And he would bake that in the morning after breakfast.

I think it was one bell for hot water, two for show, and three for bread, but you knew by the bell. This bell was an old gong and a piece of metal, you see, and they'd just bang on that and you new whether to take the teapot with you.

Now I didn't like rice, I never did eat rice even when it was made into good rice pudding. So I used to draw my rice at the end of the week, my 56 ounces of rice, dry. I'd wash it, and you had to put it through about 8 or 10 changes of water because it was so filthy when it was delivered. And this same basin that we washed in, I would take it upstairs at night while there was still some water and rinse it and then leave it standing in water overnight, and hope it was going to be a good day next day. Then in the morning, early, I would take my basin of rice and away up to the third floor to the washroom and drain that off, and rinse it once more and then go down. And I'd saved a pillowcase -- it was a tablecloth (that's right) off my little table in my room in the residence, and I had that and I'd take it and the rice and I'd go down on the front of our building where there had been a tennis court, I think, some flat stones anyway, and spread this out and then spread the rice out to dry, but you had to stay down there so that nobody stole it.

You couldn't leave anything out of your hands. Now, about two weeks before that, I would have booked the rice grinder. And this was a real old, oh, from away back, it was a round stone, about that big around [12" diameter] and about that thick [4"]. And then on top of that was another, not quite so big, and a hole

down the center of that and then a handle on it. And you'd sit, two hours of grinding, a teaspoon of rice at a time, and then turn the handle twice. And there was no use putting more down, and there was no use turning it faster, because you'd just have to do it a second time. But by the end of that time I would have a carton of rice flour, and sometimes we'd make gruel out of it, and sometimes we would use it for making so-called pancakes, no flavoring or anything, you know, but "pancakes." Something to swallow, that was the main thing. So I used to do that with my rice. If I wanted any to go into the so-called soup, why I could always get some from the others. I also could trade cooked rice and get a slice of bread from somebody else for it.

But it was the fish stew, curried fish stew, served in an aluminum basin that we used to do dressings in, that really -- I just couldn't bring it into the room, I used to leave it out on the floor. If it was my turn to get it, I'd bring it up and leave it on the floor outside and I'd say to the other two, "Look, your supper's out there, if you want it, you go and get it." But I said, "I'm not bringing that stuff in the room."

In the morning when we had the fish soup, I always called it fish-eye soup, because invariably there'd be an eye looking at you when you got your bowl of soup.

You know, what used to frighten me was when I'd get back, was I going to be unbearable about food, or would I have sunk so low and couldn't get back up? However, I think I've got back up. I didn't eat rice for 25 years. The boys liked this idea, you see -- "Kay never ate rice, she still doesn't eat rice." Well, when you go to a friend's homes and have a casserole and there's

rice, you really have to sort of eat, so I did without it for 25 years and then I started eating it. They all know now that I do eat rice.

I know, we were going to talk about the nursing in the camp. There was this small civilian hospital, at least a small hospital run by the civilian nurses. When we moved out there, the British Matron, was going to take her Service Sisters in there and we were going to operate that hospital. And the Matron of the civilian nurses just informed her that she was not. They'd been doing very nicely and they were going to continue to do very nicely without us (well, without the Matron). They were different to May and me, I must say that. That was in August. The following April, they asked if we would help them out on the night duty, because night duty was coming around pretty often, they weren't getting any extra rations. So two of us would go down at a time and we'd work from 8 -- one of us would work from 8 at night until 2 in the morning. Then she'd go off duty and go to bed and the other one would come on at 2 o'clock and work through till 8 in the morning. we had no trouble with them at all. They just didn't want those QAs in there [Queen Alexandra was so horrified at Florence Nightingale's reports of conditions and lack of properly trained nurses, she started the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing World (British). For short, the term QAIMMS. was used and it's members were referred to a QAs. The British Navy Nursing Sisters were Queen Alexandra's Royal Nursing Service.]

I think we did two weeks the first time, and then it was about five or six weeks before it was our turn again, and then we

did another stint and then by that time we were leaving to come home, in September of 1943.

CGR:

What was health like in the camp? Was there a lot of illness?

KGC:

Health? With some, but I think, you know, life in the tropics or semi-tropics, I don't think it's a very healthy life anyway. And of course, I went out there just full of vim and vigor. People who were the fattest lost the most weight, whereas those of us who weren't fat to begin with...now I weighed about 134 lb. when I went there. And we didn't have proper scales, but once when I really felt I was pretty skinny, I got weighed on a scale that the Chinese use, they use picules as a measure of weight. One of the boys figured it out for me that that would come to about 111 lb. So at 5'7-3/4" I didn't have much fat anyway.

CGR:

You were not overweight, no.

KGC:

I felt sorry for the people over there because, you know, they drank a tremendous amount and to be suddenly deprived of that! I'm sure that's what much of their weight was, their excess weight. I really felt sorry for them. You know, it's one thing to cut off the drink by your own wish, but to have it just chopped like that. And there was just no way of getting it. But I surely gained weight on the way home on the Grypsholm -- 20 lb. in six weeks. I got home and my cheeks were puffed out -- I

looked like a chipmunk, when they go to gather up the acorns.

CGR:

What about Red Cross packages?

KGC:

In November 1942, we got our first and only Red Cross food parcel. There was one each. After watching all the Canadian parcels being packed up here at Chorley Park, we had to know exactly what was in them because this was part of showing the public around when they came to visit Chorley Park. Mr. [Norman] Urquhart, was in charge of the packing of those parcels, and he had those ladies really organized on the assembly line. They stood in their own place and the box came along, and each one had a certain item to put in, in a certain place. They started work at ten and they didn't speak, no chattering, no smoking. I think he used to give them a break about half-way through the morning, anyway. But they packed so many that the British Red Cross wouldn't believe that they were packing the number of parcels they said. They sent several representatives over to see how this was being done. But it was just organization, which is the answer to a lot of things, isn't it?

So anyway, our parcels came from Britain, and had steak and kidney pie in them, and margarine instead of butter, which was in the Canadian ones. And then there were some small quantities of bulk supplies, not too much. We got cocoa, tea, cans of M and V; now that means meat and vegetables. But the Nursing Sisters that were over the other side and weren't hungry, they called it "Muck and vomit." And I said, "Gee, you people weren't hungry." On Christmas day, 1942, each of us splurged and we each ate a tin of

M and V, and we thought that was the best, that made up for the year before when we didn't have any Christmas dinner. It's just like good stew, which I like.

But the margarine was rancid. There was one box each and then one box between four, that's right. This hunger again! We asked the little, the tiniest lady in the room next to us, if she would like to be the fourth on our box. Isn't that awful, really, the things you do.

I think we must have got canned milk too, because I remember making some fudge, if you can imagine, with evaporated milk and cocoa, and white sugar. It was good fudge. At least I thought it was. That was all we got in the way of food parcels.

But there was a store there, operating once in a while. The Japs would bring in food stuffs which I imagine they had taken from the "godowns," the warehouses. But the prices, the price of things was just dreadful! Everybody didn't have money, however little, but now we have to go away back to March of 1942. The Japanese announced that they were going to pay the Officers, they would pay them at corresponding rates to their Officers' rates. Now, they said they would pay the two nurses that had the two stars on their shoulders, but not the others because the QAs hadn't gotten around to getting their pips up yet: They just had a red stripe on the shoulder. Well, the Matron said, "But they would; her Sisters were Officers too." The Japs wouldn't know what rank they were because they didn't have stars on their shoulders.

CGR:

This is you and May?

KGC:

May, yes. So Matron got mad and said that if they wouldn't pay her Sisters, well they weren't going to pay us either, which was very foolish because we could have bought small amounts, bought some things that we could have shared. But, no, she wasn't going to have anyone paid if her Sisters weren't paid -- they finally slapped her face, she'd argued with them too much. They didn't know how much to pay the Padres either, because they don't have Padres in the Japanese army. Padres had their three pips up, but they don't know about Padres. Our Canadian officers established a fund and they gave three Padres and May and myself 25 military yen a month. And a military yen has no real value, but we used to be able to get a bit of stuff with it. That's why May and I had money. The Japanese honored that arrangement and they sent it to us while we were out in Stanley too. There were other girls who had money sent to them by officers that they knew, British officers. And that's the only way we managed, because it would have just been dreadful.

But 1/4 lb. of margarine cost equivalent of 3-something in Canadian money. And I remember toilet paper was between three and four dollars a roll, and that roll of toilet paper, when we could afford it, would sit up there on the edge of that shelf and you took one sheet if that was all you needed, or you took two squares, but you didn't take any more, you doled it out like that. The funny thing was, that when we were coming home, as we went up the side of the Jap ship, the first thing, we were each handed a roll of toilet paper, orange toilet paper -- after it

being so scarce and so expensive, and here was a whole roll all to ourselves.

But in that bit I wrote ["Behind Japanese Barbed Wire -- a Canadian Nursing Sister in Hong Kong," Royal Canadian Military Institute Year Book, pp 11-13, 1979] you'll read about how I made a hot-plate -- you get an empty jam pail, which wasn't ours I assure you, and cut out the top and then I got some plaster off the wall (the wall was damaged anyway so I wasn't hurting it) and scraped around till I got fairly round and fitting in the tin. Then I did a little bit of trading -- oh, once in a while we could get cigarettes, you see. Well, I didn't smoke so I got tremendous value out of my ration of cigarettes.

I got some wire and you just hoped it wasn't piano wire or something. We called it the black market, but apparently that isn't a very nice word to say now. Anyway, then I got this internee who had been an electrical engineer, and he coiled it, so he got a couple of cigarettes for that. Well, then after awhile, I'd offer him some more cigarettes -- mind you one or two cigarettes, you didn't dole them out like that -- and we got a cord, an electrical cord, and then more cigarettes and a plug, and eventually we got a hot-plate that worked. But the thing was that half the time we didn't have the electricity, because the rooms with odd numbers would get the electricity for two hours, and then be cut, and then the even numbers would get it for two hours. So if you were cooking something that needed to be cooked for more than two hours, you had to borrow time, you see, from your neighbors somewhere, and then you would pay back that time to them sometime. But it was all right.

Then up on the third floor in the washroom where the door was missing -- that's what we did with that toilet -- we had a chatti, which was a little Chinese stove, it's like a jardiniere or a flower pot, or something, and you built a little fire in it and we had (somebody must have had a frying pan), and we'd cook on top of it -- that's what stood on that toilet in the doorless cubicle. And we would make pancakes, or stuff like that. But you had to go out on the hillside and gather twigs for fuel.

Well, then Mr. Plumb he was the former hangman there -- he discovered that if we would save our ashes from the chatti and he would collect them and soak them in water and then boil it, and then he would come around and anybody who had contributed ashes, he would give you back this solution (you had to have a container for it), and it was a good soap substitute. And then we found out that when we could no longer get any baking soda, you know, for rising, a teaspoon or two of that solution was good.

There was a little comfort package, supposedly came from the Japanese Red Cross, and there's a toothbrush and tooth powder (forget what else, but it was precious little anyway), but the tooth powder burned our mouths so we used to use that if we wanted to bleach something -- your shoes, it was good for bleaching shoes or if your pillowcase was discolored. There were just so many things, you know. Talk about improvising! And yet as you begin to read about people in some of these undeveloped countries, the way they manage, we were just copying them, really.

CGR:

Were there any adequate supplies at all for the hospital in this internment camp?

KGC:

It wasn't bad. They had brought them from the Queen Mary Hospital. But everybody was hungry, that was the main thing.

When we first got out to Stanley, the day after we arrived, Father Murphy, who was a Canadian priest from the Scarborough Foreign Mission, if you please. He had been out in Hong Kong, and there were eight French-Canadian nuns with him, and they had been out in the Stanley area during the fighting there and of course they were herded into Stanley camp, and so he came over to see us and he said, "I understand you are Canadians." And he said, "I'm Canadian. I don't know whether you belong to my flock or not, but," he said, "that doesn't matter." He said, "It's just the fact that we're Canadians and we must try and help one another." The one thing he warned us was to get busy, keep busy, because it was the people who were idle that got into trouble. And he was so right!

He said, "Now some of the nuns that are with me are teachers." If you wanted to continue with schooling, he said, "If you want to learn to speak French, or carry on with French you have learned...." So we decided we wanted the French. So we went over to see Sister St. Stephen. She wanted to work back, you see, to get a common ground, just to see how far on we were or had been in French. Now May and Pearl were both 8 years older than I was, so therefore they'd been out of school that much longer and had that much more chance to forget what they had learned. So poor Sister St. Stephen, she went back, and back,

and back, and she was repeating for me (not that my French was very good, mind you), but May and Pearl got discouraged and just quit. I kept going over to her and I had to go over and see her every afternoon. Once a week I had to write her a story in French. My vocabulary was fine; you know, it's easy to remember words, but oh the verbs! She would laugh, rock back and forth and laugh and I thought, "Well, if I give her a good laugh once a week, well then, you know, that's some repayment for it."

But anyway, after a little while, she asked me if I would like to do something for her. Sure I would, and she said, "Would you coach a little 8 year old girl in French?" And I thought, "Oh boy, I must really be getting there," and I said, "Well, if you think I can." "Yes." I guess she read my mind because she said, "Well now, it's not that you know so much French, but little Moira knows even less." So that put me back where I belonged.

Anyway, Moira came over to see me after school that first day. Apparently she was crying every morning before she went to school and just hated going to school. Her mother had died in camp, but her father was there and she had a very nice aunt. But she just cried and cried every time it was time to go to school. So, I don't know how I got it, but I said to her, "Why are you crying in the morning?" Well, she didn't understand something in French, everybody else knew it, but she didn't. And I said, "Well, what is it you don't know?" And do you know, it was so simple. She didn't know why some words had "le" in front of them and some of them had "la," and some had "un," and some had "une." Now it was just as simple as that. So I explained to her that

you remembered those two words when you learned the long word, you learned the little word that went with it. Well, no more crying and she came every day after school and a couple of times she brought a friend with her, but they weren't really interested in studying but Moira was. Sometimes she'd ask me something I didn't know and I'd say, "Well, did you ask Sister (whatever her name)? "No." And I said, "Well, you know you should really ask her in school because she's your teacher." So I said, "We'll talk about it tomorrow." In the meantime, I would scoot up and ask the Sister, because I just couldn't let Moira know that I didn't know. Well, she came to see me every day until we left to go home. She did all right. She lived and went back with her father and aunt -- I think her father married the aunt, she was the mother's sister. And then Moira was married and all ended happily.

CGR:

Good. How did you come to go home?

KGC:

Well, in July of 1943 -- oh, we heard rumors all the time you know. I can remember telling the boys in the first few weeks after the surrender, I used to say, "Home by the first of July," and they thought I knew something. They believed me. Anyway, in July of 1943, after all these rumors -- the Canadians are going home; we're all going home; the nurses are going home -- someone came up (I remember I was playing bridge) and told us all out of breath, "The Canadians are going home in September!", and May and I just went on playing. However, that one came true.

The Americans were planning their second civilian

repatriation of all their civilians left in Far East. They had one in July, 1942, and they brought out some. Now, they had been trying to get them out for some time, but the Japanese wouldn't provide a proper ship. The Canadian government arranged with the American government to bring out their Canadian civilians, who were in the Far East. there were some up in Japan, and there were some in Peking and Shanghai, Canton, Hong Kong. And I think that was the last place that there were Canadians. Because we were in a civilian internment camp, we two with the two stars on our shoulders, were included as Canadian civilians.

We had been told by our senior medical officer, John Crawford, that if we got a chance to go home, then we were to go home because he'd been working for that. And also he said, "You know you might be a little bit of use when you get back because you're not doing anything here." And so we accepted that. Now Father Murphy, I spoke to Father Murphy about the Canadians, the blind and the amputees, the permanently unfit, and he tried; he went to the Japanese several times and finally they as much as told him in so many words, "Stop this or nobody will go." So he called off his beseeching.

Sure enough, along came the 23rd of September, 1943. We couldn't bring any papers -- oh, we only got mail once and that was in June of '43. I got three letters and they were all over a year old. We couldn't bring out any books or papers or photographs or anything like that, even things we had taken with us when we went there, we couldn't bring them home. And we were searched, of course. When word first got around the camp, around Stanley, that Canadians were going, every time you were out

walking, you'd have somebody say, "When you get out, would you write to so and so." And they would give me these great addresses in Britain, and Australia was just as bad, and when I'd go back to my room I'd write this down and who it was that had asked me. Then every time I would meet any of those people in the camp, I would repeat this name and address she or he had given me to write to when I got home. But I had quite a list. And I had the Brigade casualty list too, written but also memorized.

So when we were down by the shore and were waiting, always in alphabetical order, to be searched before we went on ship, I suddenly remembered about these lists of names. You know, you were warned what would happen to you if you were caught with anything that you shouldn't have, and as I say, we had seen enough -- that helped you to obey the rules. And so I took out the pages from that book and just ripped them into shreds and threw them. So when we finally got on the Teia Maru and were handed this roll of toilet paper, the first thing I did was I went in and I sat down and wrote out all those names and addresses again on this orange toilet paper.

You couldn't write letters on that ship; for one thing there was no paper. But when I got on the Grypsholm, then I began writing letters. I mailed some from South Africa when we stopped there; I mailed some more from Rio de Janeiro when we stopped there. And then the rest I mailed from home. Anybody I didn't hear from in a month or so, then I wrote again because I knew that mail was being lost.

CGR:

What was the name of the Japanese ship?

KGC:

The Japanese ship was the Teia Maru and maru of course means ship.

Well, you see, in these repatriations, each country had to put up a ship that is suitable, acceptable by the International Red Cross. It's the International Red Cross, incidentally, that runs these exchanges. And the Japs wouldn't put up a decent ship. They had put up several but the Red Cross wouldn't accept them. And when they put up this third one, it wasn't acceptable, but they felt they should take it because the Japs might say, "Never mind then. No more."

It had been a cruise ship for 400 people, and there were 1530 on altogether, after Hong Kong, we went over to the Philippines and picked up some people, and down to Saigon and Singapore. The other thing is, the exchange had to take place on neutral territory. Now, in September 1943, what country was neutral that had territories scattered around the world? But it was Portugal. So we went to a little place called Goa which was about 200 miles south from Bombay. And the two ships leave simultaneously.

Now the Grypsholm left New York loaded with 1530 Japanese civilian internees and they met the Teia Maru at Goa. There was a war on then around the Mediterranean sea and that route couldn't be used, so the Grypsholm had to come away around by South Africa, and up, and of course, that took them longer to get there than it did this Jap ship we were on, and we dawdled. It

was awful on that ship. It was dirty, the food was dirty because we didn't prepare our own food -- bouts of food poisoning like you wouldn't believe. I had one of them so I know. And that was from pork that we took on ate Singapore.

Anyway, we were finally exchanged and there we are, lined up again in alphabetical order, and everybody was having to sign something. They were just signing and I took a look at what I was signing and they were very annoyed because I was holding up the queue. But we were promising to repay the American government \$575.00, \$525 for passage and \$50 for gratuities for the crew! You'd be surprised how many people were very surprised then, when they got home, to find that they couldn't get their bank accounts unfrozen until they had repaid the American government. We didn't have to because we were Canadian government property.

But oh my, the Grypsholm was just heaven after that Jap ship. On the Jap ship there were 69 unattached females, as they called us, on straw palliasses on the floor in alphabetical order up on top deck. And the lights had to burn all night on those exchange ships. Every ship in the world knew where the Grypsholm the Teia Maru were.

CGR:

Including, you hoped, the submarines.

KGC:

However, when we went across the Pacific in the first place, without trouble, I'm more convinced than ever that I was born to be hanged, because it was awful. The lifeboats, the equipment didn't work -- this is on the Canadian ship that took us over.

Even if we had got into them, they wouldn't have done any good because they couldn't be lowered. Our escort, the Prince Robert, -- no, we had to wait every morning for it -- quite a business.

It took us 10 weeks altogether to get home, 10 weeks exactly from the day we left Hong Kong till we got ashore at New York; and then we were put into buses, with armed guards on them, but American armed guards this time. They took us to a station where there was a special train for us, and once we were all on the train, then they gave out the mail that had arrived. We arrived at old Bonaventure Station in Montreal next morning.

CGR:

Home in time for Christmas.

KGC:

Well, we arrived in Montreal on the 2nd of December, but May and I stayed overnight to try and contact some of the families of the Hong Kong veterans and tell them what we knew about which ones that were alive. The only way we knew -- we hadn't seen any of them for 18 months, you see -- but Christmas of '42 we had got cards from some. Then 1943 they shipped some of them up to Japan and we didn't know who got lost going up there. So then I started to write letters after I got back.

So that's about the sum and substance of it.

CGR:

Right. Well, that's very interesting. Thank you. Anything you've thought, you've remembered that you didn't say earlier on that you want to stick in?

KGC:

on page 14, where you ask me where I was at the beginning of

hostilities in Hong Kong:

On Saturday evening, December 6, May and I went with two of our Canadian officers to a dinner and dance at the "The Grips" -- a popular spot at the prestigious Hong Kong Hotel, especially on Saturday night. There was a large crowd of Canadian and British Army and Navy officers there and it was a very merry occasion.

However, as the evening wore on, we could hear more and more officers being paged and instructed to return to their headquarters or to their ships. It reminded me of Byron's poem "Waterloo" that we had studied in school:

"There was a sound of revelry by night
 And Belgium's capital had gathered then
 Her beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
 The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
 A thousand hearts beat happily...."

And later we would recall part of another verse:

".....who would guess
 If ever more should meet, those mutual eyes,
 Since upon night so sweet such
 awful morn could rise."

One point I have continued to make is that we Canadians do not appreciate Canada or freedom and all that it means.

As well as restraints on where we could walk and when; what time to be in our rooms and the lights out; now to be allowed to receive or send letters on anything like a regular basis; we were denied proper or sufficient food; and from Christmas Day, 1941, were forbidden to sing our National Anthem except on one occasion, July 1, 1943.

Worse than the physical factors was that dreadful "not knowing" -- not knowing howling we would be kept there, or where else might we be sent; what would prison life do to our health,

physical and mental; and would we survive at all to return home.

A sense of humor was a great asset although at times it was not too easy to put it into practice.

Learning to play bridge and spending hours at it each day was an excellent antidote for me. While engrossed in the game I could become quite oblivious to my surroundings and it was great mental exercise.

In the early months at Stanley camp I enjoyed playing softball but the organizers insisted that I pitch, catch or play first base. As a result of our faulty diet, my vision was deteriorating which made it too difficult for me to see the ball coming.

Quoits (deck tennis) became impossible because of insufficient food to provide the required energy.

Also because of my poor vision I could not read more than a page or two before the print blurred to an impossible degree; similarly with hand sewing (which was the only method there was).

The daily supplies provided by the Japanese in the name of food wrought havoc with internees' gastro-intestinal tracts. Lack of bulk produced constipation -- bowel movements as infrequently as once in ten days was a common situation -- while the questionable condition of the food often resulted in severe and prolonged diarrhea.

Hunger, of course, was always a problem. Many times it was impossible to get to sleep at night or one was wakened by the "hunger pains." Since there was no cupboard to go to for milk or food, one had to find other means of relief. Somehow I discovered that by rubbing my tongue back and forth over the

edges of my teeth, extra saliva formed and by swallowing enough of this it relieved the gnawing feeling in my stomach and I would then get to sleep.

INDEX

Abdomens, 39
Acorns, 51
Addicted, 35
Admitting, 22
Africa, 61, 62
Aircraft, 25
Albert's, St., 19, 22
Alexandra Hospital, Queen, 50
Aluminum, 49
Ambulance, 10, 24
Amebiasis, 33
American, 59, 63, 64
Amputated, 25
Amputation, 35
Amputees, 60
Anderson, Dr. James, 40
Anesthetic, 26
Anthem, 65
Antidote, 65
Appendix, 16
Army, 7, 8, 9, 10, 22, 23, 33, 37, 44, 45, 47, 54, 64
Ashes, 56
Atrocities, 19, 22, 31
Auditorium, 19, 41
Aunt, 5, 58, 59
Australia, 60
Australian, 23
Australians, 37

Baking, 56
Balkan, 35
Bamboo, 40
Baptist, 2
Bathurst, 16, 27, 44
Bayonet, 31
Bayoneted, 25
Bayonets, 20, 31
Beds, 10, 17, 18, 24, 33, 42, 45
Bed-making, 7
Behead, 40
Beheaded, 19
Biscuits, 44, 45
Black-out, 12
Blankets, 16
Blind, 60
Blood, 42
Bodies, 19, 20, 34, 36
Boiled, 47
Bombay, 62
Bombing, 23, 24
Bonaventure Station, Montreal, 64
Bone, 46

Books, 4, 60
 Borden, Camp, 10, 11
 Bowel, 66
 Bowen Road Military Hospital, 21, 22, 38
 Boxer, Maj. Charles, 37
 Boxing, 30
 Brantford, Ontario, 3
 Bread, 28, 47, 49
 Brigade, 24, 61
 Britain, 6, 52, 60
 British, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 30, 31, 33, 36, 37, 49, 50,
 52, 54, 64
 Brother, 2, 5
 Brunswick, New, 27
 Burned, 56
 Butter, 52

Camp, 7, 8, 10, 30, 31, 37, 40, 41, 45, 49, 50, 56, 57, 58, 60, 66
 Camps, 34
 Canada, 15, 27, 65
 Canadian, 11, 24, 25, 27, 30, 38, 41, 43, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59,
 60, 63, 64
 Canadians, 22, 31, 37, 57, 59, 60, 65
 Canivet, Leslie, 34
 Canton, 59
 Casserole, 49
 Casualty, 61
 Catholic, 36
 Cattle, 38
 Chadderton, Cliff, 27
 Chaos, 4
 Chatti, 55, 56
 Chesterfield, 44
 Children, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 43, 45
 China, 43
 Chinaman, 39
 Chinese, 21, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 51, 55
 Chipmunk, 51
 Chivalry, 65
 Chorley Park Hospital, 9, 10, 51
 Christmas, 3, 10, 22, 24, 25, 52, 64, 65
 Christmas-time, 3
 Church, 2, 22, 36
 Churchill, Winston, 22
 Cigarettes, 38, 55
 Classroom, 2
 Cockroaches, 45
 Cocoa, 52, 53
 College, 3, 9, 41
 Collingwood, 7, 8
 Constipation, 66
 Convalescent, 10
 Cooked, 48, 55
 Cooking, 33, 55
 Coolie, 30

Cornwall, Ontario, 27
Crawford, Maj. John N.B., RCAMC, 60
Crime, 15, 28
Crippled, 7
Cross, Red, 19, 20, 51, 52, 56, 62
Curry, 47

Dance, 64
Dead, 26
Depression, 44
Depression-trained, 32
Depressors, Tongue, 33
Diarrhea, 66
Died, 35, 58
Dieppe, 27
Diet, 66
Diphtheria, 5
Disabilities, 7
Disease, 20, 21
Drugs, 32
Dundas, 44

Eat, 47, 49
Educated, 39
Education, 1, 2
Electricity, 55
Elevators, 16
England, 8, 13, 36
English, 39, 42
Englishman, 40, 43
Entertain, 8
Epidemic, 7
Escape, 40
Eurasian, 21
European, 21, 40, 41, 43
Exams, 3
Exchanges, 62
Eyes, 19, 22, 65

Family, 28
Father, 1, 5, 56, 58, 59, 60
Females, 63
Fever, 5
Filthy, 47
Fingers, 31
Firewood, 42
Fish, 46, 49
Flour, 47, 48
Flu, 33
Food, 26, 36, 42, 45, 46, 49, 51, 53, 62, 65, 66
Forcep, 35
Formosans, 41
French, 57, 58
French-Canadian, 56
Funerals, 36

Garbage, 6
 Germans, 41
 Girls, 3, 11, 12, 13, 54
 Goa, 62
 Godowns, 53
 Gonorrhoea, 21
 Government, 59, 63
 Graduated, 6, 43
 Grandmother, 13
 Gratuities, 63
 Graves, 40, 41
 Gray, Capt. Gordon, RCAMC, 16, 35
Grypsholm, SS, 51, 61, 62, 63
 Guardhouse, 36
 Guards, 29, 31, 32, 36, 63, 64

 Handicapped, 7
 Hanged, 63
 Hangman, 56
 Harbor, 29, 43
 Headquarters, 13, 65
 Health, 43, 50, 65
 Healthy, 17, 50
 Hennessey, Col., 23, 24
 Hepburn, Mitch, 9
 Hollywood, 32
 Hong Kong, 10, 15, 17, 25, 27, 28, 31, 36, 41, 42, 43, 45, 54, 56, 59, 62, 63, 64
 Honolulu, 14, 17
 Hospital, 4, 5, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 37, 38, 43, 45, 49, 56
 Hostilities, 33, 42, 43, 64
 Hotel, 14, 64
 Humor, 65
 Hunger, 28, 52, 66
 Hungry, 52, 56
 Hunter, Drummond, 24
 Huron, 9

 Ill, 33
 Illness, 50
 Illnesses, 17
 Immune, 5
 Infected, 20
 Infection, 21
 Injured, 19, 24, 34
 Injuries, 17, 28
 Injury, 24, 26
 Insects, 45
 Internee, 55
 Internees, 62, 66
 Internment, 41, 56, 60
 Ireland, 1, 5
 Italians, 41

Jamaica, 11, 13
Janeiro, Rio, 61
Japan, 37, 59, 64
Japanese, 17, 21, 28, 31, 37, 39, 41, 53, 54, 56, 59, 60, 61, 62, 66
Japs, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 45, 53, 62
Jews, 41
Jockey, 22

Kidney, 52
Killed, 20, 24
Kinloch, 43, 44
Kitchen, 46
Kong, Hong, 10, 15, 17, 25, 27, 28, 31, 36, 41, 42, 43, 45, 54, 56, 59, 62, 63, 64

Lavatory, 44
Lifeboats, 63
Linen, 37
Looters, 30
Lorry, 45
Lying, 24
Lymphogranuloma, 21

MacKenzie, Sgt. Junior, 12
Magazines, 10
Maggots, 34
Mail, 60, 61, 64
Malaria, 16
Manitoulin, 1
Margarine, 52, 54
Market, 38, 55
Married, 24, 42, 43, 59
Maru, 61, 62, 63
Matron, 12, 15, 23, 24, 42, 49, 50, 53
Mattresses, 17, 18, 19, 20, 42
Meat, 46, 52
Medical, 10, 14, 20, 23, 30, 31, 32, 33, 60
Medicine, 1, 27
Mediterranean, 62
Mental, 65, 66
Messenger, 23
Milk, 52, 53, 66
Mistreated, 28
Mistreatment, 19
Monastery, 19
Montreal, 64
Morale, 23, 36
Morgue, 18
Morphine, 35
MOs, 34
Mother, 1, 3, 58
Movies, 8

Murphy, 56, 60

Naive, 24

Nationality, 37

Navy, 35, 50, 64

Needham, 43

Nostrils, 38

Nourishment, 26

Nuns, 56, 57

Nurse, 4, 5, 7, 44

Nurses, 6, 9, 15, 20, 41, 49, 50, 53, 59

Nursing, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 30, 34, 37, 45, 49, 50,
52, 54

Oakville, Ontario, 12

Occidental, 21

Officers, 13, 31, 39, 53, 54, 64, 65

Operate, 49

Operating, 25, 53

Orderlies, 14

Orderly, 14, 22, 33

Orientals, 21

Ottawa, 11, 27

Overseas, 10, 14

Overweight, 51

Pacific, 63

Padre, 22, 24, 25, 36

Padres, 53, 54

Palliasses, 63

Pancakes, 48, 55

Parcels, Red Cross, 51, 52, 53

Patient, 7, 14, 18, 26

Patients, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 27, 32, 33, 34, 38

Peking, 59

Pension, 27

Perspiration, 16

Philippines, 62

Photographs, 60

Piano, 55

Picules, 51

Plumbing, 5

Poem, 65

Poisoning, 62

Police, 41, 42

Polio, 7

Pork, 62

Portugal, 62

POW, 30

POWs, 27

Priest, 36, 56

Prison, 34, 40, 65

Prisoner-of-War, 1, 31

Pudding, 47

Punishment, 38, 39

QAIMMS, 50
QAs, 50, 53
Quinn, 35, 36
Quoits, 66

Rabbit-warren, 42
Racial, 42
Radio, 40
Raid, 17, 18
RAMC, 30
Raped, 20
Ration, 45, 55
Rations, 29, 50
Records, 28
Red Cross, 13, 19, 20, 51, 52, 53, 56, 62
Registrar, 11
Repatriation, 59
Repatriations, 61
Respirators, 22
Retaliation, 39
Reunion, 27
Revolver, 20
Rice, 46, 47, 48, 49
RNAO, 9
Rotarian, 8
Rules, 7, 36, 61
Rumors, 59
Russians, 34

Saigon, 62
Saliva, 66
Scales, 51
Scandal, 44
Scapula, 26
Scarborough, 56
School, 2, 3, 19, 45, 57, 58, 65
Scot, 43
Seamen, 35
Secretary-General, 27
Semi-tropics, 50
Shackleton, Col., 31
Shanghai, 43, 59
Sharpe, 8, 33
Shelters, 18, 22, 29, 31
Ship, 14, 37, 54, 59, 61, 62, 63
Ships, 43, 62, 63, 65
Shot, 24, 30
Shoulders, 53, 60
Sick, 6, 14, 18, 33
Singapore, 62
Sister, 5, 11, 12, 13, 19, 24, 26, 33, 35, 41, 54, 57, 58, 59
Sisters, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 30, 34, 35, 49, 50, 52, 53
Sister-in-Charge, 9
Slurs, 42

Snipers, 17
Soap, 56
Softball, 66
Soup, 46, 48, 49
Specialist, 28
Spinach, 46
Spine, 24, 35
Splints, 7
Stanley, 19, 37, 38, 40, 41, 54, 56, 57, 60, 66
Stephen's, St., 19, 22, 25, 41
Sterilizers, 33
Stomach, 33, 66
Stoolies, 40
Stowaway, 14
Stretcher, 25, 45
Submarines, 63
Sudbury, 1, 2, 3
Surrender, 22, 24, 34, 59
Surrendered, 23, 25, 31
Survive, 65
Sweet, Royce "Bud," 27, 28, 65
Syphilis, 21

Taxis, 15
Tea, 47, 52
Teacher, 2, 3, 58
Teachers, 57
Teapot, 47
Teeth, 66
Telegrapher, 35
Tennis, 48, 66
Texas, 14
Theatre, 17
Thompson, 30, 32
Toilet, 54, 55, 61
Toilets, 44
Toronto, 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 15
Torture, 36, 38
Treatment, 38, 41
Troops, 11, 17
Tropics, 16, 50
Typhoid, 5
Typhoon, 39

Urquhart, 52

VADs, 19, 24
Vancouver, 12, 13, 43
Venereal, 20, 21
Veterans, 27, 64
Victoria, 43
Volunteer, 7
Vomit, 52

Ward, 12, 16, 21, 22, 24, 27, 31, 33, 35

Wards, 22, 34
Warehouses, 53
Water, 32, 38, 39, 47, 48, 56
Waterloo, 65
Waters, Miss May, 13, 15, 43
Wedding, 24
Weight, 50, 51
Wheelchair, 8
Wife, 8, 25
Winnipeg, 13, 15
Winter, 2
Witness, 28
Witnessed, 24
Woman, 19
Women, 20, 21, 42, 43, 45, 65
Wounded, 24
Wounds, 34

Yen, 54

Zealanders, New, 37