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Experiences as a Prisoner of War in the Far East, 1941-1945

Interviewed by

Charles G. Roland, M.D.

10 February 1989

Oral History Archives

Hannah Chair for the History of Medicine

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Charles G. Roland, MD:

We are on now, so please just go ahead.

Ken Pifher:

I was from the Paris, Ontario, area, born and raised on the farm and school, Paris area.

C.G.R.:

Now, your birth date was what?

K.P.:

My birth date is April the 24th, 1921. And farmed also -- didn't like farming, and started to work in Paris. Later on I joined the Dufferin and Haldimand Rifles. I was with them until 1941.

C.G.R.:

Excuse me, did you join them at the beginning of the war or were you in the militia?

K.P.:

I joined in 1940. Did guard duty in the Niagara Peninsula, which furthered, let's see, which was the change that, the change of the regiment, really. I got a hernia and ended up in [forgot name].....

C.G.R.:

Military hospital?

K.P.:

Yes.

C.G.R.:

Yes, I'm trying to think of it too. I should know and I can't come up with it. Anyway we can add that in later.

K.P.:

Anyway, Sister [Kay] Christie was in this military hospital; I, at that time, just knew of her being a nursing sister. When I come out of the hospital I had to go to Chorley Park [Hospital] because of an ulcer that formed on my incision; which was actually the opening of Chorley Park Hospital, Convalescent Hospital. I was there until August.

C.G.R.:

Now, this was '41?

K.P.:

1941. And I had to go to 11 ITC in Camp Borden for infantry training, which was a holding area; at that time they come along and asked for 150 volunteers for the Royal Rifles, which is how I got to HK. We, at that time, of course, didn't know exactly where we were going until later of course. In September everything started to get together. We came from Camp Borden down to the Horse Palace in Toronto, and the train then picked us up and we joined the Regiment north of, I think it was CNR. I'm not sure whether it was Capriole or not. Of course we started west to go east [laughter]. And in November, of course, we landed in Hong Kong.

C.G.R.:

You went over on the Awatea?

K.P.:

I went over on the Awatea. We had a very short stay in garrison in Sham Shui Po, which was later on where the POW camp was. I was in Headquarters Company and stationed at Tai Tam Headquarters. I was at Upper Tai Tam for a period of time when

the Japanese came in, but was sent to Lower Tai Tam, where I remained until we were forced back towards Stanley Fortress. I was lucky to get out of the Upper Tai Tam area because they attacked in that particular area and there was quite a loss of men, personnel. But we retreated through a nullah, which is a opening for water that fed the reservoirs.

I was stationed then back close to Stanley village. There I was with the Headquarters, as I say, and in transport; we were there to set up supplies for part of the regiment, part of the headquarters company, and also for their, you know, their personnel, with the other companies. Which didn't do us much good because we were then, you know, forced back again to Stanley Village, right at Stanley Village. The Japanese then came through and went at the hospital, attacked the hospital.

C.G.R.:

Where, at St. Stephen's?

K.P.:

Where Les Canivet was wounded. But I was taken from there, which was very fortunate, back up to the Stanley Fortress and so I missed that skirmish completely. So it was actually through transport that I had very little to do with, really, the actual fighting. I was not wounded, and as I say the skirmish was practically over before I really had any part of it, except for the minor skirmishes that took place in pockets. But I ended up in Stanley Fortress and was there until they then, you know, were going to...this was it, we were all supposed to get together and move out and line up and take up positions for the final, what

they classified the final battle. Which never came about because the Governor of the Island surrendered the Island. And we were then POWs Christmas Day 1941.

I'm trying to think...January...We were there a very short time and then we all marched from there down to North Point Camp. Conditions there were not too bad at first, because they had a fair supply and they built up rations. But later on we were moved out in September and had to go over to Sham Shui Po, where that particular stay, that was the end of it, that we stayed there from then -- well, I stayed there until right through to the end of the war.

C.G.R.:

You didn't get drafted off to Japan?

K.P.:

No. Diphtheria started in camp in the later part of January and the number that was coming down with diphtheria was terrible. We were doing working parties up to from 14 to 28 days straight.

They came and asked for volunteers to go to the Jubilee Building because of the diphtheria epidemic, and I and Carlyle Savage went together. We went together; we talked it over and decided that we would, we would go and be an orderly, which is really using the term loosely, because the medication that was there was nil, practically. So you could only keep people as comfortable as possible. But both I and Carlyle Savage did this for a reason. Really it was to get out of working parties. We thought it would be easier. We talked about getting the diphtheria. We thought, well, if we hadn't had it then, we were in the vicinity of the epidemic. So anyway, we decided that we

would take a chance and this is how I got to become an orderly in the Jubilee Building.

C.G.R.:

Had you had any background at all in doing this kind of work?

K.P.:

No I had no background of medical experience at all.

C.G.R.:

Of first-aid training?

K.P.:

No, I didn't have any first-aid training at all.

We were there to, more or less, just keep the personnel comfortable as best we could. Anyway, we were there and they started to take drafts to Japan. Now the first couple of drafts were mostly English. Then the diphtheria started to ease up and they started to take Canadians on drafts to Japan. I missed the first draft because of working at the hospital. When the first draft left, of Canadians and other personnel, the second draft, I was on working parties. I started out on working parties again and they picked the people in camp for the second draft, when I was on the working party. The third draft I was on the working party and they picked the, pardon me I was in camp and they picked the people on the working parties. So I missed all the drafts going to Japan.

C.G.R.:

How did that seem to you at the time? Were you disappointed? I mean, did you want to go to Japan?

K.P.:

No. I had made up my mind that I would never volunteer for anything again. I would take what came and under those circumstances that's exactly my philosophy. If I had to go, I would have gone. On the fourth draft that took place, Captain Banfill came along and picked orderlies out of the draft, from the draft. I was one of several that was, I shouldn't say several, I think there was four total, and I was one of the four that was picked to stay back. We had what they call the lines hospital. After diphtheria took place, naturally, the lines hospital still was there, it had to be. I had problems. I had beriberi, and I had pellagra. The beriberi was wet, it wasn't the painful, you know, the type that you swell -- legs, stomach and so on. I ended up in the lines hospital again because of eye problems. I had a very severe conjunctivitis, I couldn't stand light. But I was capable of working in the hospital so I ended up back as an orderly again while recuperating from the eye problem. Later on, that got better, in a 6-month period, and I started back out on working parties again. So it was that way, really, until we realized that the war was over.

There are things that took place in the prison camp, naturally, that was....These people in diphtheria hospital that were lice-ridden, and of course their clothes had to be de-liced. They had big soys that they put them in, these soys, with water and more or less steamed them. Then they were taken out and washed and dried and brought back to them to be covered with lice again.

The medication in the hospital, you may as well say, was

nil. They had eye wash. They had potassium permanganate, the disinfectant type of thing. There was carbolic acid, that was a disinfectant. And there was a certain medication -- scabies, they had this sulfur treatment which we had to, you know, wash bodies down, wash people, personnel down, to get rid of the scabies. But other than that I can truthfully say that that is, as far as I was concerned, about the only medication that we had as orderlies that would be considered, you know, as a medication.

The food was rice, a few greens -- very little of it. This was one of the things that an orderly has to do also, was make sure that the patients were fed. But you felt very, very sorry for these people because you never expected them to survive, because a lot of them had so many different diseases while lying there, that you didn't expect them to live. This was a very degrading thing as far as the orderlies were concerned, because you were handicapped, as I say, as an orderly because of the medication, the lack of medication.

Other than that, why I would say that was just about the extent of my life. I was very very fortunate, you know. I went through it, really, on my feet. I never, I think it was one day that I was flat on my back with dysentery, but dysentery didn't bother me that much. I might have even been a carrier, I don't know, but I can only recall a couple days or a day period that I was in the hospital for dysentery. So I really went through on my feet, I wasn't that sick -- luckily -- because, my gosh, when I think of the number that were there and the number that died and also the number who survived under those conditions.

In August 1945, we realized that there was an easing up of the treatment by the Japanese. It was approximately a week and a half to two weeks that we realized that the war was over and the planes came over the camp and dropped pamphlets and then we really did know that it was over.

From there the Prince Robert came in, the Canadian cruiser, and we went down and got food from there and brought it back to the camp, ate from the ship. There was one chap by the name of Don Humphreys that was on the ship, who was told to look me up, and who did. I went down and visited him. Do you want to hear a little incident?

C.G.R.:

Sure.

K.P.:

Well, Don gave me $20 Canadian money to go out and get him some souvenirs. I said, "Don, I'll never be able to do it." I said, "I've been cooped up for three years, seven months." I said, "I can't go downtown to a lot of these Chinese places now. They wouldn't even sell me stuff." "Well," he said, "see what you can do." So on my way back, these big huge warehouses that were on the docks, were on the dock area, I saw some Chinese with big packs on their backs, coming from some of these, what they called godowns. So I thought, well, they're looting. So the friend of mine and we thought, well, we'll go and see where they're getting this stuff.

We went up to one of these godowns, and it was on the second floor that I met an awful lot of my POW friends. They were picking up stuff from one of these rooms. It was the ceremonial

dressing of the Chinese, and these were all in big steamer trunks. So I thought well, how nice; I could get my friend some souvenirs. So I found an old pillowcase. Really, it was a pouch that was for carrying clothing. I filled it up with different ceremonial dress and pajama-type things -- very very colorful -- silks, and I took several of these back to my friend on the Prince Robert. I gave him his $20 back and he said, "Just what I wanted!" He gave also some to his friend.

We started back and I was going to get some more. I thought well maybe I should get some to take back with me. We went back to the same location, and we were in and we were getting some things, and all of a sudden the British troops came in and said that we were all under arrest for looting. It just happened that one of our sergeants, Sergeant Brady, spoke up for us, and said that, well, these Japanese took everything we had, why can't we have some of our own back? So the officer was good enough to say, "Well, take what you've got and go, but do not come back." So we silently crept out of the godowns and back to camp.

It was a few days after that we went from there to Fifth Replacement Depot in Manila, just outside of Manila. We were there for, I was there for a week and a half, and then my chance came to go back home and I got on a ship called the Admiral Hughes. We were supposed to stop at San Francisco and go by train from there up to Gordon Head, BC, but about the halfway point the orders came through, and from there we went directly to British Columbia. We were in Gordon Head, BC, for another week and a half. Then they gave us tickets for the train to go back

to our homes, or our destination, which was, at that time, Union Station in Toronto. I took a 2-day stopover in Vancouver because I had a first cousin there, and visited there for the two days, and then got on the train and came back to Toronto. Where I then was met by some of my friends and then back home to Paris, Ontario, where my family lived.

C.G.R.:

OK, very good.

K.P.:

So I don't know whether that's going to be any good to you or not.

C.G.R.:

Well, that's interesting. I wonder if we could go back? Could I ask you some specific questions?

K.P.:

Yes, yes.

C.G.R.:

When you were doing your first stint of being an orderly, how did you react to this? Were you glad you'd made the decision? Did you wish you'd stayed working at Tai Tam or...?

K.P.:

No, no. When I made up my mind that I was going over Jubilee Building to be an orderly, I knew that I was getting out of a very very evil place that I didn't like -- and that was working parties; get away from working parties. We at times had to, how can I phrase it, we had to put up with bombings, not from the Japanese but from the Americans. Which was at Kai Tak Airport and several other places, where we had some near misses.

The Japanese were, the regular Japanese, these are the people that we had to work under on working parties, and they were cruel taskmasters. We didn't understand the language. We had an interpreter but he couldn't be at all places at the same time. So, sometimes we were kicked around and slapped around, which wasn't very nice. The work, of course, was very hard. We in fact dug in the mountains, [making] tunnels for storing ammunition, and also we certainly helped build the Kai Tak Airport. We helped move a mountain.

All this, of course, you started out at dawn and worked till dusk. It was, in a lot of cases, black when you got home, dark when you got home. This went on and on an on and on, and so this was one of the main reasons, really, that I did take on the task as an orderly. But I didn't mind the work as an orderly when we got established.

C.G.R.:

Are there any particular patients that stick in your mind that you looked after, that you could tell me about?

K.P.:

Well, I looked after so many. Don Jamieson was a case that I thought was quite unusual. He was a very sick man. He is one of the chaps that we took his clothes, I took his clothes from him, and he had a battle-dress uniform, trousers and top, and it was absolutely just laden, just crawling with lice. So you can imagine what this was doing to his body. The man <u>couldn't</u> get up. So we, as I say, got rid of the lice as best we could, washed his clothes and brought them back. Of course this was in

the winter time; although it never froze, but it was around 42 degree mark, and there wasn't any heat in the buildings. Plus, he had dysentery and he had pellagra. So he was very very sick. But he did pull through, which is an unusual thing. But there was many many people like this, but you had to be, you were hardened to this type of existence because death was nothing.

C.G.R.:

I wonder if you could just tell me something about he Jubilee Building itself? What did it look like? How big was it, things like that?

K.P.:

Well, the Jubilee Building was the married quarters for the British troops, originally.

C.G.R.:

As a part of Sham Shui Po barracks.

K.P.:

As a part of Sham Shui Po barracks. The Japanese took it over when they realized that they had to separate the diphtheria patients or people from the main camp. This is how I took it. So it consisted of a masonry building, and it was, I believe, four floors. The place had been pretty well gutted by the time that we got back and used it as a hospital, a diphtheria hospital. The back area, the back area of the main building was the lavatory part of each floor. This is where the boys that had, the personnel that had the wet [dry] beriberi, used to sit on the tubs and used to soak their feet in the cold water to ease the pain. Although that's about the only running water there was in the Jubilee Building; except in the camp they had running

water out at the front of each of the rows of huts. Also lavatories that was away from the main barracks. All cold water, but you could go and, for bathing facilities, they had showers there. But that's about the basic, I would say, that was in camp.

C.G.R.:

So the rooms that you used for wards, would they have been ordinary living rooms?

K.P.:

The rooms that were used for the wards were the living rooms for the barracks people, the troops, the married personnel, the British married personnel.

C.G.R.:

So they really wouldn't have been very large rooms? Do you have any recollections of size?

K.P.:

No. I would say that the rooms, the average room would be, there were mess rooms that were much larger, of course, but they were few and far between. That usually housed the worst patients. But an awful lot of the patients were in some of the separate rooms, which were smaller and I would say that maybe 15 X 15. And some of them were much smaller than that, of course, at the back, which were the kitchens were, they were smaller. But they were all masonry. Floors, everything had to be carried, of course, from floor to floor.

Some of the means which was we used for a while, for heating water we used to take two tin cans, cut the bottoms out and put

one inside of another with a spacer around of wood, and attach one lead wire from one can and one lead wire from another can, and then hook it over top of the two live wires that were, electric live wires, and this means was for heating the water. I can recall one time when Joe Furey, these were galvanized pails, and Joe of course tried to pick the pail up with the thing in contact with the water and then couldn't let of the pail. Luckily the water wasn't boiling, because he fell over and, of course, he was soaked. And that broke the connection between the, the connection for the electricity. Anyway the Japanese, of course, when they found out this was going on they would raid the camp several times, and you'd never know when they were going to raid it; and take all these out. And then in a 3-month period or 2-month period you'd go back and make them all up again, and start all over again. Toasters were made by this means. Soft annealed wire in coils, make it up in coils, and put it across a piece of asbestos board that we tore out of the ceilings in the camp, in the barracks, and the same leads you could hook them up the very same way. So that was a means of making a toaster. But they didn't last too long because the Japanese were right on us for that sort of thing.

C.G.R.:

Tell me about some of the medical officers. Did you have much to do with any of them? Who did you have most to do with?

K.P.:

Well, actually, Captain Banfill, both Captain Banfill and Major Crawford we saw quite often, especially as orderlies, because indirectly we got our orders from them, too. And through

Ray Squires, Ray Squires was pretty well in charge of the group, and pretty well all orderlies, really. But, it was a chap by the name of Phil Doddridge was [shut off tape].

I was pretty fortunate, and I don't know whether it was because of the upbringing that I was healthy or young, but I was very fortunate I went through it, as I say, on my feet. But, of course, an awful lot of them didn't. An awful lot of them didn't, just gave up because they they just didn't have the will to live.

C.G.R.:

Well this is the next thing I was going to ask about. This whole question of coping and how different people coped. Do you have any feeling about that? Did you ever have the feeling you weren't going to come back?

K.P.:

No. I never, I truthfully never had a feeling that I wouldn't get out of it. Mind you, there were times when you would get certainly disheartened, but no, I've always had that feeling. There was always a rumor would come along, and you lived on rumors. Chiang Kai-check's army was coming down from Peking, and he was so many miles north of Canton, and he'd be in in a couple of weeks' time. And then, periodically, there would be a bit of news come through because of BBC news from a radio in camp. Which they found, people were beaten up because of that. A Dutch officer had one and he was beaten up. They confiscated the....But they always seemed to get a little bit of information here and there. On one occasion I had to go out to what they

called the New Territories, and this was I'd say 15, maybe 15 miles out from Hong Kong, Sham Shui Po. And this was an old Chinese general's property. Of course the Japanese had a big thing on this, the what do you call it...grow-your-own, anyway. So we went out there and had to till the ground to grow sweet potatoes, and also cucumbers, stilted (on stilts). And while there, we were out there for approximately two weeks, and while there, there was a truck pulled in and there was a group of Chinese, and also two nuns, who we had a chance just to briefly ask them how things were going? They could speak English, and they said, "It was going very well." So that was another thing that raised our spirits. But this was in, of course, the later part of '43.

So we came back from there. Several places we had to work was a place called Lai Chi Kok that we had to work loading gasoline, 45-gallon drums of gasoline. Also handling the empties off of the junks. On one occasion we were out and we were unloading some of these empties and looked up and staring at our face was a P38 plane! And there was a mad rush for a brick dwelling, which we all got in. We no sooner got in and he strafed the tanks, the big huge storage tanks of this oil refinery. We were taken from there, just after that.

Back in camp we could look out over the mountains, and back of the mountains was sort of a bay, and all of a sudden we could see this big stream of smoke going up. This was the Lai Chi Kok oil refinery that was bombed and destroyed. We never did get back to see what damage was done, but we were kind of pleased that that took place. The very same thing happened at, that was

the Texaco oil refinery that was blasted that time, but the Lai Chi Kok oil refinery was just across the bay from us, and that created some fantastic excitement. The big planes, you could see them way up in the sky, and on this occasion they came over and there was only approximately, we figured maybe five planes and they dropped a couple of bombs and they didn't hit anything. The Japanese at this time they raced around, they started camouflaging all the big tanks. We could see across the water and watched, not well, but we could see them doing it.

Approximately a couple of weeks after, all we suddenly could hear a drone in the sky. We don't know how many planes there were, but some of these planes you could look up and see the first dropping of the bombs leaving the planes. It looked so funny, you know, it looked so easy, and they'd drop. But anyway they got all the tanks, they blasted. It shattered some of our huts too, with the blast. Some of the windows were blown in. But we did see the aftermath of that because we had to go over and help clean the mess up after. That was a very exciting time. Although it was scary at the time but after it was all over and you were in one piece you didn't mind. So that was another time, as I say, was....

[End of side 1.]

C.G.R.:

As I say, if I could just ask a few things? One of the questions I always like to ask about is, what about sex? Did the absence of sex, was that bothersome?

K.P.:

I would say this, that as far as sex was concerned, no. My feeling --it was gone, far from your mind. I'm not saying possibly right at first, but there was so many other things right at first took your mind. And the worrisome part of the first part of it is naturally, hey, what are these guys going to do to us? And worry. But then after a certain period of time took place, then lack of food, and you started to lose weight. Then really, as far as I was concerned, the feeling wasn't there. I'm not saying occasionally, but it still didn't, that part of it....I know some people who were gay, or tried gay, you know, but never bothered me.

C.G.R.:

Yes, I was going to ask about that too.

K.P.:

Oh no, no. That part of it, hey, we're living in a hut with a line of guys here and a line of guys there. I suppose there were some that....Well I know for a fact that there were some of it. Sure. In fact, the Portuguese, well these people are fine-looking people. There was plays put on. And Jimmy Fleming [B38364 Fleming, Robert J., Rfn., RRC] and myself, we dressed up as a couple of the chorus girls, you know. And they put on a darn good skit. And as I say, these two Portuguese people they, they, my gosh, if anybody could have gone for somebody [laughter], that was there. But no, that part of it never....

C.G.R.:

Was one of them Sonny Castro?

K.P.:

That's right. That's right.

C.G.R.:

I just missed meeting him. I was in Hong Kong.

K.P.:

Oh were you?

C.G.R.:

A year and a half ago. [tape off]

K.P.:

They are very fine-featured people. What was I going to say?

C.G.R.:

Well let's see, you were talking about dressing up.

K.P.:

Well, yes, that was, as I say, the occasion that they used to put on skits and stuff like that in the camp. We were, Jimmy Fleming and I were part of the chorus. But it was amazing. The funny part of it is, you get into places like this and there was always, and luckily, I'd like to say a lot, but a few of the people got their musical instruments back, and you know, always end up, they had a band. I mean a makeshift thing but boy, they were very good. No, as far as I was concerned that part of it never bothered me in the least.

C.G.R.:

How about weight loss? Did you lose a lot of weight?

K.P.:

Yes, I lost, I was down to 95. I was 95 when I came out, and the funny part of it is I went up to 154 in the camp, because of beriberi.

C.G.R.:

Because of the edema.

K.P.:

Yes. And so I'm fortunate that I never got the dry [beriberi].

C.G.R.:

With the "happy feet," or all the feet turned red.

K.P.:

That's right. And the ones, you know, didn't get the swelling, but got the pain, they were, a person could survive, I felt, with the wet because you could take the swelling, there was no pain. But the poor guys that had the dry beriberi, I call it the dry beriberi, they got the pain, of course. And this is what I'm saying, when they would go back in and get their feet in cold water. How they ever survived I don't know, that constant, constant, hour after hour in the cold water. I just don't know.

And ringworm. I had that. Gee, that was a miserable...And what they called "Hong Kong bag," that was another irritating type of thing. I had that. That was a terrible thing.

C.G.R.:

This was the scrotum....

K.P.:

That's right, just shriveled up to nothing. And cracked open, running sores.

C.G.R.:

Yes, that sounds pretty unpleasant.

K.P.:

Yes, and you know, just unbelievable.

C.G.R.:

How did pellagra affect you? You said you had pellagra.

K.P.:

Well, pellagra, I got the dry, black, all the way up the leg. Both legs. And it would scale, completely scale. Now, I didn't get any pain from this but it was miserable. I would assume that possibly the scrotum thing was that too. But where the ringworm came from I have no idea. But it was yards. And they used to use, where they got I don't know, but they used to use calomel iodine. And they used to put it on in the daytime, because you'd never sleep at night if you had it on at night, so you could move around in the daytime and sort of try to...constant, it was constant pain, but at least, the burning sensation. Burn, burning that's the only way I can put it.

But it's amazing, a lot of the stuff left me. The scrotum part of it left me. Beriberi never did. It would come and go. Well, these were really, the minor things, irritating things; they were there, you accepted them, you never, it's the drastic things. For instance the people who had dysentery, the people who were getting weaker and weaker and weaker because of that sort of thing. This was the type of thing as an orderly you saw.

I was on many burial parties. It got to the stage where, especially during the diphtheria epidemic, where, you know, there was four and five dying a day. You never knew when it was going to stop. As I say, I never got diphtheria. I must have been fairly healthy, or the diphtheria shots that I had as a kid must have really worked for me. And Carlyle Savage too, because he

never got it. Of course a few of these guys were carriers. Well, they had to separate the carriers. And yet diphtheria never bothered them. But, no one, you know, there wasn't any personnel that went through it with flying colors. It was an impossibility. It was just too drastic a thing. You were going to catch something -- it was impossible not to.

C.G.R.:

Were there many mental cases that you saw or were aware of?

K.P.:

A few. There was a couple that really went off the deep end and talked funny, and weren't with it. More like silent, completely silent. They would talk to themselves. I knew a couple of cases, but not too many in Sham Shui Po.

As I say, I stayed right through; I think, from talking to the boys who went to Japan, I think they had a rougher time than what we did in Hong Kong, the ones who stayed. I think they had to fight the weather. They had weather, well something like this. Whereas we never, you know, 42 degrees is way different than freezing. So I think that I can truthfully say I was fortunate that I stayed. And as I say, it was circumstances. I never, I never balked out of anything. If I said if I was going to go to Japan, I was going to Japan. But circumstances didn't turn out that way, which I think I was very fortunate.

C.G.R.:

That would be my impression, from the people I've interviewed and so on. Especially the people that went to Niigata. They had a bad time.

K.P.:

Yes, right. That's right. So I felt very fortunate that I stayed back.

C.G.R.:

Has this experience, do you think had any after affects for you?

K.P.:

Oh yes. Oh yes. I was in Sunnybrook Hospital many times; mentally. I went out of Hydro mentally. I had a nervous breakdown in 1976. I was merely 55 years of age when I went out of Hydro. Yes, it took its toll. No doubt about it. And yet I was very fortunate, you know, touch wood I figure I've good health. I've come back from what I used to be. I think it was nothing but strain, mental strain, that I just couldn't cope.

C.G.R.:

Do you think that was a long-term effect of the war experience?

K.P.:

Part of it. Yes, it certainly had a part of it. Certainly. Well, I've often said that any person that goes into a hospital with a, let's say a semi-mental condition, the first person they should ask is a person's wife. Because they don't -- you clam up when you -- you don't tell everything. Like I say, it's first of all not nice to, I didn't like to go out of Hydro the way I did. And so, somebody asks you, you're embarrassed. So it affects you. So you clam up. No doubt about it that it certainly left it's mark. But as I say, I'm still lucky, myself, very fortunate person.

C.G.R.:

What was Ray Squires like to work with?

K.P.:

Ray was a good person. Nice, very even-tempered, very, very nice person. It was very very seldom that Ray ever, well I don't recall any time he ever lost his temper. Or I don't recall any time that he had a bad word for anybody.

C.G.R.:

That's what I would have expected to hear you say having met him myself.

K.P.:

Yes, he was good. But getting back to this trip to Hong Kong. My wife and I went back in 1980. We got together in the Hyatt Regency, and we met Sonny. In fact that's the first time I've met him since prison camp. We just went out and had a few beers, but then when I came back, and of course just, what was it two years ago, two and a half years ago he died?

C.G.R.:

Something like that.

K.P.:

I was very, I was surprised.

C.G.R.:

Well, I was there in the fall of '87, and I believe he had died in the preceding year sometime.

K.P.:

I don't, I never heard why. No, it was quite the group.

C.G.R.:

Anything else you can think of that might fit in here?

K.P.:

Well, there's somethings has to be left unsaid, and which I wouldn't tell you. It's a long time ago -- bygones are bygones. There were times when...and there was many many of my personnel that could have possibly have said something. This had to do with people in general. But as I say, now it's gone. And time heals. But there was things that wasn't very nice, wasn't very nice. It wasn't the Japanese either. I don't know whether you've heard any inklings, but....

C.G.R.:

Yes, some bits and pieces.

K.P.:

There were some things.

C.G.R.:

I know there was at least one court martial after the war.

K.P.:

Oh yes. Right after the war Major [Cecil] Boone, of course, he was....

C.G.R.:

Yes, that's the one I was thinking of.

K.P.:

That I don't mind talking about at all. That character was, he should have been, they shouldn't allowed, he should never have gotten out. But anyway he was put under protective custody. And I was one of the guards that had to go and....No, I wasn't called back later. Captain Banfill was. He had to report. Of course, naturally, he would because in his position he would know an

awful lot, being a medical officer, of course. But, oh no, there was a few traitors, a few traitors. Those I don't mind talking of because....This was morale in the camp I'm talking about, not the same type of thing that....It's a long time ago.

C.G.R.:

Well, I'm very interested in anything you would tell me about morale. I hasten to say, I don't care about people's names or anything.

K.P.:

Well, no, this type of thing came under the jurisdiction of being a prisoner of war under the Japanese and still come under your own command. That's all I'm saying. Well, some things that weren't really nice, but....But how many years is it now? 1941....

C.G.R.:

About 44 years ago.

K.P.:

1943, '44, 1944 it ended. So there for it's....

C.G.R.:

'45, summer of '45.

K.P.:

Anybody ever ask me if I would have been alive today, even after I came out, I would have said, the chances would have been that I wouldn't be alive today.

C.G.R.:

Were you a smoker then?

K.P.:

Yes, I smoked, yes I did. I quit in the camp though. I

would never, like I know guys that sold their food for cigarettes.

C.G.R.:

That's exactly why I brought up the subject.

K.P.:

Yes, oh yes, there was several people who sold their food for cigarettes. There was one particular guy, we used to call him "Newfie." Naturally, he was from Newfoundland. I can't even tell you his name. That's the only name that I ever heard him -- like his name to be, everybody said, "Newfie." But he sold, how he survived I don't know, but I would say that on the average he had to have sold three meals, I mean, if he had three meals a week, he would be lucky. And he came out of it. He would rather have that cigarette than.....No, I quit, I quit in the prison camp because I couldn't see, I would never sell my food. You know, if you went on a working party you got 10 cent a day and one cigarette -- this was what your pay was. I couldn't see smoking, and it was hard on you. So I gave it up. I started back when I, I started smoking again when I come back. I guess I've been off cigarettes now for 17 years, maybe more than that. But I have a bronchial condition so I had to give it up anyway.

C.G.R.:

Have you read Will Allister's book?

K.P.:

Which, I've read several?

C.G.R.:

He wrote a novel called A Handful of Rice.

K.P.:

No, no I haven't read that. I've got a couple of them but they are more or less documentary type of history. I've got the Royal Rifles book.

C.G.R.:

I've never been able to get one of those. I guess they just printed enough for the group.

K.P.:

That sounds, yes, that's a good book, that's a good book. I'll tell you if you wanted to read it I would loan you the one I've got.

C.G.R.:

I'd be very grateful, yes, I'd like that very much.

K.P.:

All right, I'll let you have it and you can read it.

It truly is the history of the Royal Rifles. It's a good book, it surely is a good book.

C.G.R.:

Well, maybe that's a good place to stop, at least for now.

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