

REGINALD LAW

Experiences as a Prisoner of War in the Far East, 1940-194

Interviewed by

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Oral History Archives

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Reginald Law, Campbellton, New Brunswick, 28 May 1989

Charles G. Roland, MD:

I thank you for coming and I will ask you if you'd please tell me your birthdate, and birth place, and tell me a bit of background information.

Reginald Law:

I was born on April the 13th, 1920. I was born in a little place called Flatlands, New Brunswick. I went to Grade 8 in school. I went to work at a young age -- 15. I worked in the river drive -- I guided fisherman, I was a fisherman's guide till I joined the army at 20.

CGR.:

Excuse me, what is the river drive?

RL.:

Well that was the logging drive, I worked on the logging drive of the Restigouche River and then I was guide for the salmon club, river guide, you know, for the Americans. And then I joined the army. I left home in 1940, and was stationed in Quebec.

CGR:

Now, did you join the Royal Rifles immediately?

RL:

I joined the Royal Rifles of Canada in Matapedia, Quebec.

CGR:

So you went to Valcartier, St. Johns, Sussex and all of that.

RL:

I went to Valcartier, St. Johns, Sussex, Newfoundland, and up till I went to Hong Kong in 1941. I went over there on the Prince Robert and landed in Hong Kong in....

CGR:

So you were one of the small groups that went on the Prince Robert, you weren't on the Awateah.

RL:

I was on C Company on the small boat, the Prince Robert.

CGR:

Who was your company commander?

RL:

Major Bishop.

CGR:

OK. Very good. Well tell me a bit about your impressions of Hong Kong. It must have been very strange to you as a young man of 20, 21.

RL:

I couldn't just get over the people, the amount of people on the street. If you walked on the street and the amount of people that was on that street -- it seemed to me everybody was in each other's pocket. That's not saying we were, but it seemed, you know, because I came from a small place and....Well I was in Montreal before I went over and Quebec due to the army, but never expected to see that.

We knew we were in trouble when we got there. You know, young, and free and single, worried about home and they worried about us.

CGR:

What did you do? You had what, a little less than three weeks before the war actually began?

RL:

Well, we went on what we called army schemes. We went on a scheme, we trained, we trained there. We had very very good instructors, young men like I said, but they were all qualified people, they were qualified officers. But we didn't have equipment that we should have. Apparently our boat was torpedoed or something, with our equipment on. We never had the equipment that we were supposed to have.

CGR:

Yes, your motor transport and so on.

RL:

Our motor transport and that. But it didn't, you see as a young man and not too familiar with a large country, it seems we were in the wrong place. I may be wrong in saying this but I think we were in the wrong place. I can't see any value of being there. It looked like we were sent there to get us out of the road, because we were a garrison outfit, we had these stations every place. They said we weren't trained, but we were well trained for what we used to doing.

CGR:

Aside from the training and the schemes and so on, in this three weeks before the war started, did you see something of Hong Kong, did you go out to the bars?

RL:

Well, I'll tell you what I did. I had a friend of mine I

went out to visit an awful lot. You see, I didn't drink. I'm not saying I didn't take a drink at a later date, but at that present time, I went out to visit the scenery, me and an elderly gentlemen. He died in, Jim Firlotte [E30016 James Firlotte, Rfn, RRC], he died in Hong Kong, in Yokohama, Japan, and he was a great friend of mine.

CGR:

What was his last name?

RL:

James Firlotte. He was older than I was and I'd say he'd would be about 38 or 39 at that time. And he and I went visiting a lot with different fellows, younger ones. We'd go along, I don't believe if he drank it was very little. So this was where they made cotton and made clothes, and ivory factories. Well one impression I had was of these fish that we see in these 5 and 10 cent stores today, Co-op's and that, where these fish hatcheries were, I was awful impressed with that. But really it was experience, I guess, at that time, you know, a young fellow. And we enjoyed it, I guess. We wouldn't have a mattress, we seemed to be lacking a lot of things, our beds weren't too good and you know, but it really was a bad situation.

CGR:

OK. Well tell me a bit then about the war, the three week war that you were in.

RL:

Well, I have to say I never thought, I have to talk about this, that I would work as an orderly. I was taken prisoner of war. And I was quite a big boy -- I weighted 197 at that time,

and young, and I said something one day to a Jap, give us a little push that first day. I was at Stanley Mountain, and I said something and I was worked over quite bit.

But after that time I went to work as an orderly and I think it was an experience that oh, I wished I could have, I worked as an orderly in the hospital, and I medicated myself with good doctors. But we had like, you know, peanut oil, hot water, and we had a lot of boils, dysentery, and diphtheria. And to see the men dying, I think, was the biggest effect on me of anything. I thought that affected me awful because where I came from I never saw things like this. It was about sometimes six men a day died, you know. And good friends, and tonight you'd go and fix a fellow up and the next morning he may be dead. And it was, I think, the lack, the feeling sorry for the doctors, the lack of -
- what could they do?

CGR:

Yes. Who did you, which doctors did you have the most to do with?

RL:

Well, Major Crawford. One doctor in particular I worked with, Dr. Reid. He died. He was a young man, he would be a young man, he was just out of medical school. I remember him telling me one day, he said, "Reg, you never get this in medical school." You know, the things that you'd see. We had a lot of boils, bunions and things on us, and bugs, and you know our conditions were very bad. We slept on what they called a, the English people called it a biscuit, it was on these steel beds

and they were kind of a straw filled, they were just a.....

CGR:

Cushion, sort of.

RL:

Yes, cushion of theirs. And I don't know, it was...Over at the North Point prison camp, I think, that was just awful. I worked at Yokohama and I, I worked in the hospital until I went on the draft to Japan. I can't tell you the dates exactly.

CGR:

No, no. Did you start as an orderly at North Point?

RL:

I started in Lye Mun Gap as an orderly.

CGR:

I see, while the fighting was still going on.

RL:

No, no, after I was taken that day, it was Stanley Mountain rather. I went in the hospital to help out, and I was interested in it, and I went. We used to do our own undertaking work.

CGR:

Tell me about that, would you? Can you tell me a bit about how that was done?

RL:

Well that was, you know, it was very hard. You know, you were fixing a man up, plugging him up with, you know, we'd use his toothbrush, and what material we had to get him ready for burial. What made it so hard, they were young men and our friends too.

CGR:

Sure, sure.

RL:

I had worked with a chap, Mr. Kelly [E30520 Frederick J. Kelly, Rfn. RRC], here from Campbellton, and he was a great morale booster, he kind of kept you, his morale was a little different attitude, and he'd kind of keep you tuned up with....But this is very very hard. I thought North Point camp was awful, and Lye Mun, you know, after we got down into Yokohama or North Point itself, because that was, I think, where we lost....I found that the hardest part, to see the men so sick. It was just gruesome.

CGR:

When you went to Sham Shui Po, you were an orderly all this time?

RL:

I was an orderly, yes, in there till I left to go to Japan.

CGR:

And in the Jubilee building, when that was used as a hospital, were you assigned to a particular floor, a particular ward?

RL:

No, I didn't go in the Jubilee building, but I know what you mean there.

CGR:

Oh, you weren't in the Jubilee building.

RL:

Oh no, I know what you mean, I worked in the wards there and we had the huts, I don't know if any of them showed you a picture

of the huts or not, that we had for hospitals, in that particular area. It was nothing; we just had, like I said, that we had to give the people hot water, hot water with a bit of peanut oil. I remember one incident a man from Ontario, Jerry Pembleton, had an awful bad earache, oh he had an awful earache, and I remember, I don't know where I got that from somebody, but put some warm oil in his ear and I remember warming this oil up and putting it in a spoon, and putting it....And I hurt him so bad, I'll never forget it, it was hotter than we thought, you'd heat it on a candle, you know. But it stopped the earache. But there was a great bunch of boys we had. All the orderlies we had, some didn't stay, some got out of it, they were nervous and scared. But you stayed with it.

CGR:

Tell me about some of the orderlies, would you, some of the people that you worked with.

RL:

Well I have to say there was a Freddie Kelly [Frederick J. Kelly, Rfn., E30520, RRC], for instance, and Charlie Chesser [Charlie Chesser, Rfn., E30040, RRC], some English boys, I forget and Barraclaff[?], and Corporal Barraclaff? he was from London, England. And he was quite a humorous guy. He'd kind of bring in a little harmony. You know, it's a story, it's one story of this one night when we were moving a body over to fix him up and somebody would make a sound, and they decided -- there was a fellow by the name of Smith, I think it was, this Freddy Kelly said to the corpse, "Now shut your mouth and keep quiet, we're doing the best we can." And this Smith fellow took off and he

said, "They're crazy, them guys." [laughter] I remember that so well, you know.

CGR:

He didn't think it was very funny.

RL:

No, he didn't think it was very funny. Some of the very tough thing I went through: when we went to Japan, I went out to the Yokohama hospital to, I wasn't as an orderly there but I did stop there. I went out there to help a soldier, I can't tell you the disease, but his was just about this size, everything was....

CGR:

His scrotum was all swollen.

RL:

Yes, yes, it was. He had to be operated on with no anesthetic or nothing -- it was just awful there. And I remember, there was lights out, there was blackouts, and this Charlie Chesser used to come out, bring out lunches from the main camp out to the hospital in Yokohama, Japan. That was quite an experience too, because you were nervous. The same with this Freddie Kelly, he was a humorous guy, really is. I mentioned his name because he is a very good friend.

I imagine you know what a blackout bulb is -- a black bulb with a little white bottom. And this little nurse, and the nurses were dressed, all the nurses were dressed something like our student nurses of that day, blue and white, you know. I remember this little girl getting up on the stand to put a bulb in, and this Freddy Kelly got up -- and we were so thin, and the

women was not on your mind, I don't think they were too many, to be honest with you -- and he got up and patted her on the hips and he said, "Reggie what do you think of that?" And I was in charge then; if they [Japanese guards or doctors] would have come in, it would have been a real disaster. But it was just little things like that, I think, that gives you a lift.

CGR:

Was this a Japanese nurse?

RL:

A Japanese nurse, oh yes, there was no Canadian nurses.

CGR:

No, I didn't think so, but I wanted to be sure.

RL:

No, no, a Japanese nurse.

CGR:

What did she do when he patted her?

RL:

Not a thing, not a thing, just come in and put the bulb in. But he just did as not as a, the chair is up, because this Larry Wilson [Lawrence J. Wilson, Rfn., B38366, RRC] was awful sick. I had never saw that man, from the time I left there, the war was over, till here a few years ago in Gaspé at a reunion, and by golly he died here, just here, he was from Mattawa. He was a nice boy, gee he suffered though, God he suffered.

CGR:

Now, this hospital, this was a POW hospital?

RL:

No, no, no, this was a civilian hospital.

CGR:

Civilian hospital.

RL:

A civilian hospital.

CGR:

And there were Japanese doctors, and Japanese nurses, but some POWs were....

RL:

Oh yes, Japanese doctors, Japanese nurses. Well, we went out there on our special cases. We went out there, now for instance I went out there with him.

CGR:

Ah, I see, from the camp.

RL:

From the camp.

CGR:

OK. I understand, yes.

RL:

We were sent out there from the camp. Now, there was many operations performed there by the Japanese doctors but we also had a lot of qualified doctors in our camp. You know, even doctors --I forget their name -- they were American doctors, and also they were Majors, Colonels, Captains, and they were, I would say they were all qualified men that I had dealt with -- Dr. Crawford, Dr. Gray, Dr. Banfill, and many like that I have to say that -- Reid.

CGR:

Now, of course they weren't in Japan.

RL:

No, no, no, Dr. Reid did go to Japan. He stayed right with us, he was in Yokohama, Japan.

CGR:

Reid did go to Japan. Were you in the same draft with him?

RL:

That's right. I felt awful sorry for that man. I felt awful sorry because, I remember, our dysentery was so bad. I don't know, as a doctor you'd know this better than me, I just can't say what I want to say. One night one of our chaps his diarrhea, dysentery, he'd go maybe 30 or 40 times a day. We had this all the time -- and his rectum came right out like in a big balloon, am I saying that right?

CGR:

Yes, yes. We call it a prolapse.

RL:

Yes, right, a prolapse. And I got such a scare, I'd never saw it before, and I got awful nervous and I went to get Dr. Reid. And he felt bad too. A young doctor, I guess maybe it might have been his first experience, I don't know. There was some hot water and he got this in, and you know things like that. I've never told that before, you know. That happened in Yokohama, Japan.

CGR:

How long were you in Yokohama, approximately?

RL:

Oh geez I'd hate to make a mistake.

CGR:

Oh, it doesn't matter.

RL:

I would say a year or something, you know.

CGR:

And then where did you go after that?

RL:

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I ended up, I went to Sendai area in Japan. That's where I finished working. The mine caved in, I had got cut across the wrist and I got, my back was hurt and I have scars there from the lamp, the acid for your light there. That was a hard camp.

Put a little humor in this too. When we went to this camp in the Sendai area, and they gave us a talking to before we went to the mines. We did have some men that had experience in the mine, Nova Scotia coal mines and Ontario coal mines. And this Japanese fellow got up to speak to us and he was telling us through this interpreter, not a very friendly man, and he got up to speak to us, not to be scared and not to be nervous and he told us he said, "Look at me, I worked in the mines 30 years and look at me." I bet you he didn't weight 110 pounds. He had a small little neck. We nicknamed him "The Picture of Health"! [laughter] I'll always remember that.

CGR:

It didn't have quite the effect he had in mind.

RL:

No, no.

CGR:

So you were in Sendai when the war ended, were you?

RL:

That's where I left was Sendai. I come out of the mines -- three days, I just couldn't go, for I weighed 97 pounds. I weighed 97 pounds. I'll never forget that. I weighted 197 when I went in. But I went out, I met a supervisor, they went by white bands and yellow bands on their hats. Now some says, maybe I'm wrong by saying this, but there was some good fellows, like any race.

CGR:

Sure.

RL:

And I remember I was very weak and there was hardly any blood coming out, just like water coming out, there was not enough blood left in me, I was not very strong. And he came and brought me up out of the coal mine and I remember them bathing that and they put bandages on. So I said to him -- I talked pretty good Japanese then -- and I said some day I can do a favor to repay this. But we also knew that there was a meeting, a rumor that there was something going on that we winning.

So after the planes started, when the planes started dropping stuff down to us.

CGR:

Supplies and.....

RL:

I thought of this Jap and I thought I'd like to do him something. So I gathered some stuff in a bag of all these matches and cigarettes and chocolate bars, and a lot of things,

and I wanted someone to come with me. I knew where this camp where he was hiding out, and I had an awful nerve, I had more nerve then than I have now; I wasn't very big but I took a lot of scares, you know. I got a chap, originally from Cambellton, not here now, he's in the Moncton area, came with me. I went in the camp and I had this bag of stuff for him, and he embraced me and I remember telling him, "I'm going to repay you for what you did, but I wouldn't want this would ever happen again." And in that room there was all the bad fellows that abused us so bad and "Gypsy" and "Kamloops" [Inouye], and fellows that I knew. It was quite a feat I did but I'm not sorry for it now. I believe he saved my life.

CGR:

Was there any retribution against these people? Were they beaten up or injured or....?

RL:

Well we'd go for a walk downtown, and there was a few fellows took exception to them, and maybe give them a push or something, but I think we handled ourselves very good. In some camps maybe different, I thought we handled ourselves pretty good. Our company commander while though he was over in Hong Kong, but my golly we respected him, -- Major Bishop, Wells Bishop. And our Colonel Price and them people, they were respected men in my books. I mean a lot of people object to my saying this but I could say they were first class. I think most of them would say they are because we though of these people too. Now, but, like Dr. Reid would say be careful. And then we had

NCOs there that would try. And the only thing we maybe did wrong was maybe we eat too much, if you know what I mean. I've been off work, since I worked for Canadian National Railways I've been off since I was 52 years old because of sickness.

CGR:

Tell me about conditions in Sendai, in the mines. What was it like down there?

RL:

It's just hard to explain. Dark and damp, and it was not, safety was, because I went to a Nova Scotia mine after the war, went down just for a quick look, and there was no safety at all [at Sendai]. It's a wonder we all ever come out of it. You had to produce so much coal a day -- I found that awful hard just by night shift, you know. And then when you come out you'd get in a, they had a kind of a bath, natural hot water that come right out of the ground, and we'd get into that wooden tub, it would be oh, the size of that, we'd all get in, a bunch of us get in that, and that's where we'd try and bath. And you know there was no soap, and when you're trying to bath and you get that coal off of you, you know, and not shaved. It was just hard to, it was just really so hard to tell you, explain that to you.

CGR:

What did you wear to work?

RL:

Well, a G-string and a pair of sandals if you had them, or bare feet, this was awful, I think this was the reason we're having so much trouble with our feet today. G-strings, we had no clothes.

CGR:

Is that what they called the fundashi?

RL:

Yes, just a, you know, like a baby's diaper.

CGR:

Did you work side by side with the Japanese?

RL:

Well, they did not, the workers, but we had supervisors over us.

CGR:

Ah, but not workers.

RL:

No, no, no, there was workers in the mine, but I mean, like in for instance, if you and I was in that, say I was in charge of the ship going in there out of all European people with me, we all, we had Dutchmen, we had Japanese, we had Punjabis, we had the Sikhs, and we had, you know, navy, army.

CGR:

Any women working in the mines?

RL:

Not in the mines. They said there was women there but not in my area. I did see one, maybe one down there but it wasn't from working, it was bookkeeper or something to do with the Japanese.

CGR:

Let me go back to Sham Shui Po if I can. Now you were there through the big diphtheria epidemic which must have been

especially bad.

RL:

Yes, it was awful.

CGR:

Can you tell me a bit about that?

RL:

Well, I'm trying to think. We had a stuff, kind of a purplish color, to gargle with.

CGR:

Potassium permanganate maybe?

RL:

No. I'll tell you what it would remind you of, of an unsweetened Kool-Aid. And does that help you any? It would be like an unsweetened kool-aide. We'd swab their throats with a little bit of, we'd make a swab and swab the throat. And I remember in Yokohama, going to work there, hardly breath myself, and one orderly would do it to me and I would do it to him. Quinine -- am I right by saying quinine for diphtheria? Quinine drug was....

CGR:

Usually they used that for malaria.

RL:

Or malaria, pardon me. Quinine, we had a bit of that but the disease were so bad I don't really believe we know what all the diseases would be, you know. I'd like to say something but I'd rather you turn that off.

CGR:

It would have been all right to say it on here but that's

fine if you would rather not, it isn't on and.....

RL:

I'd tell you, a lot of us asked when we go to a meeting, some of the women will tell me, ask me, because their husbands apparently told them, but I have never said it in this way to my wife. I never, you know, because I had pictures that my wife has never looked at -- because someone told her what they were like and she never looked at them. One of my daughters married -- she would never look at them. One of them is a nurse, she looked at it and she couldn't get over it. But this diphtheria and malaria in that prison camp -- that diphtheria was awful hard. I just don't know how you could handle that. If an epidemic ever broke out; of course we'd have more drugs here, I suppose, but you people come down with these you could wipe out a community, I think.

CGR:

Now, when you were an orderly in say Sham Shui Po, did you live in the hospital, did you sleep in them?

RL:

We had our backs, like one place there, we had a hut, at North Point prison camp we had a hut with an open hospital that would be in a bombed-out building. They were laying on the floor. I remember I was sick, I was a patient there, and the rats were all over, oh God they were awful, the rats. But now in Yokohama, Japan where the hospital on the end, in Yokohama, Japan we had our ward like on the end of our huts. So like in 3D [Sendai] I was working in 3D and we'd go to that end, you know

what I mean? Except when I went to the civilian hospital now.

CGR:

Were you ever in the civilian hospital as a patient?

RL:

No, not in the civilian hospital as a patient. I went out to have, I went out but didn't stay, I went out there -- oh, geez! I had a toothache and I remember them prying it. There was never another pair of forceps, it was just a prod and reached in and oh, I'll never forget I had that done there.

CGR:

Did they get the tooth out?

RL:

Yes, but I never stayed there now.

CGR:

Yes, I understand.

RL:

But I worked there a short time.

CGR:

Tell me about your health, your own health.

RL:

Now?

CGR:

No, I mean then. Did you get a lot of these diseases?

RL:

Well yes, I had beriberi, I had diphtheria, I had malaria, I had dysentery an awful awful lot, I had....

CGR:

Did you have "happy feet"?

RL:

Oh my gosh, feet as big this. Do you know that we all still have that. I don't think there is a man that hasn't got bad feet, it just gets awful. I have trouble with mine. The other night, for instance, we went somewhere and I had to take off my shoes, and I was red, blood red from here down. The doctor doesn't really know what's causing it. They thought I had gout.

CGR:

It would be unusual gout, but....

RL:

Oh yes, it was ache and pain something awful.

CGR:

Have you still got the same, the shooting zone?

RL:

Oh, the shooting pain zone, oh yes, my feet will move in bed there like that. Yes it is, yes.

What I mean, I'm disappointed in that more or less. I'm disappointed in the way that my life -- I lost a good job to sickness. You know, I worked on the railroad, I enjoyed my work, but at 52 I went all to pieces. I had to retire and it's hard to put it in the proper, what you feel like, you know. I was punished for being sick because the railway, the DVA marked me 100% disabled and sent that to the CNR and they in turn put me out because I was a liability.

CGR:

I see, yes. That would be pretty distressing. Now, you say you diphtheria?

RL:

I had diphtheria, yes.

CGR:

Tell me what it's like to have diphtheria? What do you remember from the way you felt?

RL:

Well, you want to die. It seems to me your throat was so big, seems to me it was swollen so big. It was just like when you took an attack of malaria, you know, your just boiling, and then when you had that....I'm trying to think, I can't say the word, the name of that stuff that they used to swab our throats with there. I don't know if I'm saying the right name, the throat was sore inside something awful. The feeling, I just wanted to die. I had a brother-in-law and he used to say to me, "My God I wish I was dead." And the men that did die, I found that they were in bad shape, just really bad shape.

CGR:

Do you remember if before you went overseas, had you ever had an inoculation for diphtheria, that you know of?

RL:

I did have lots of inoculations but I wouldn't know that I, I couldn't say that, you know, be honest, I couldn't say that.

CGR:

That's fine. Some people know and other people don't.

RL:

I don't really know. I had lots of inoculations like now, kids get that before they go to school, but I don't remember really, I could say that.

CGR:

Well they weren't doing routine diphtheria inoculations in the 1930s. They hadn't started yet. Some people got it and some didn't, and so on.

RL:

No, I don't think, I may have had it but not to my knowledge.

CGR:

Let me put this off just for a moment.

RL:

I often thought of it laying in the hospital, in the Halifax hospital, they sent me to the Halifax hospital after a couple of months that I had sickness. I was laying there and I was.....

CGR:

This was just this year, or last year.

RL:

This year, yes, around five months ago. Anyway there was a gentlemen at the foot of my bed, there was four of us in a room, a Reverend Robinson, and there was an executive of some company, and there was a diamond cutter there. We all had different, I had a heart, and the diamond cutter had a heart, and the Reverend, and I think they had maybe leukemia, I believe, and I was seeing the attention they were getting and it crossed my mind about prison camp.

I thought about when they'd come up and they'd say, "Give me something, do something for me." And there was absolutely nothing you could do. And I thought how painful that must have

been for a doctor. I know how painful it was for me as an orderly, just a flunky, but how painful it must have been for a doctor. I think of that often. I remember Dr. Reid, they'd operate on these boils on the back and by God they'd be like that, and you'd cut an "X" and they'd pack that with a gauze or something. We'd get a cloth material and they'd boil it and sterilize it. Hot water was a big item there. Hot water was a big item in the prison camp. And they'd pack that to absorb the fluid. Am I saying that right? And that's what I did that many many of time, I did that, and had it done to me. And I thought of these when looking in the hospital, and even the attention we were getting compared to....Because one fellow said to me, "It must have been awful in them places." I said, "I'm just thinking how lucky we are to get the attention we're getting, you know. The doctors was around, with all them nurses, all qualified people, and going and getting this treatment. Like when the time of the diphtheria epidemic that was just terrible. I often think of that. And then this business here, this was painful. I'm telling you it was a painful operation.

CGR:

Oh, I'm sure.

RL:

It was a sad thing, I know. A lot of us were so young, you know, 20, 21, and some younger than this. I had a brother-in-law, his feet were so big and you could put it in ice water, it was awful cold at this 3D [Sendai] camp and there was no snow but it would freeze scummy ice. I remember we had the awfulest time of make them not put their feet in that, because apparently that

was one of worst things you could do. But we'd have to stop them from doing it. But they'd just shove it in there real quick and take it out and the pain would go away for a various time, you know. It was so cold there because we would take our blankets and make a bag and with straw blanket and you'd fold them over to make them. Two fellows would crawl in, you know, you kept each other warm. How thin you were! Geez, I'm going back, I often wondered, I just think going about this far, because I often wonder how we ever got this far. You know, we go to these reunions and joke about it. We don't talk war though at the reunions. But our wives know each other from all over. For instance one fellow from Winnipeg, I mean it's just to see him, he's badly crippled up now and it's just to see him there and it gives you a lift, eh.

CGR:

I did think of another question. The Japanese hospital in Yokohama, the civilian hospital, did you form any judgments about the kind of care they were giving? Did they seem to be good nurses?

RL:

Not to us. Oh yes, but the doctors were kind to us, they weren't nice to us. The Japanese weren't nice to us. Anybody says that they're wrong. They weren't nice to us. The nurses would be like they had a job to do and it seems to me they were, it seems to me they had a job, they knew they had a job to do and they were treating you right. But there was absolutely nothing they could do for the patient that we had there, I don't think.

Because medicine was sent down from there, what medicine there was. Now, for instance, this one particular guy I mentioned, that man suffered like nobody's business. He just really suffered something awful because they had to operate. They had to open one side, it was just awful.

But the hospital itself, looking back at that now, it was a very nice building, it was a very big huge building. But there was like, it seemed to me there was mental patients in there mixed with the medical patients, if I remember, because they had our room locked all the time. You'd open like this here, it was locked all the time, and there was a guard sitting outside the guard, a Japanese guard. I mean I wasn't free. You know there was no way I could walk out and go and see you. Go over and say, "Hey, doctor, I want to speak to you." I couldn't do that, you know. Because we were well guarded. The guards changed regular, oh no. But the nurses, I have to say, I thought they were doing their jobs. But I thought the doctors weren't up to it. We were different, we were big, I suppose, and they were small people.

I met a Japanese when I come home. My son lives in Toronto and he come home the other year and before he come home, he said, "Dad, I have a very good friend, he'd like to come to Cambellton, but he's a Japanese boy." I said, "My God, bring him down." There's nothing the matter to me. He came down to Cambellton here, Dennis Amoy, my what a fine boy. He's a journalist. And he came down to spend two weeks with us here. His father had lost everything he had, he's from BC. He had a fruit farm. His father was born in Canada, and his grandfather was born in Canada, but when the war broke out they took everything from him.

But anyway Dennis talked to me one night, he talked to me often, he said, he just couldn't understand, and his father can't do anything. He lost all his property that took, that was in the family for years and never got a thing back out of it. And anyway one night he said, "Could I use the phone?" My daughter had a phone in her room and I said, "Just go in there and call." He said, "I want to make a call." So he made it and come out and said, "Look I have to go back to Toronto right away." My goodness I had a trip planned with my brothers to take him up on the Restigouche River on the boat and all that. He said, "No I have to go, I'm needed at the office." So we took him to the plane, the next day got on the plane and away.

When Wayne went back, my son to Toronto, do you know why he left. He told me that, he said, "Wayne, I had to leave. I was scared to death your Dad was going to dream of Pearl Harbor and he'd have to kill me!" And that is something I have never thought of!

But anyway he sent me a book to read, a book he had written, No Reason Why, you know, telling about how they lost their property. And to this day I think it was how they lost their property. I don't know whether it is right or wrong, I guess, I don't know. They lost everything and never got a thing back. He couldn't understand and I can't understand why if he was a Canadian citizen, born here in Canada, and you know the father too. I don't know, but it's a bad deal; they got \$20,000 this year or something, where we couldn't get ours back there. But I don't know, that's the way it is.

CGR:

It's a difficult business, isn't it?

RL:

Yes it is. But getting back to that, I can't tell you too much. I'm forgetting a lot of the things.

CGR:

Well you've been very helpful. I've thought of one other question, if you're all right. This is a question that I have asked many people and it has to do with what I would call coping. And the thing that always is very strange to me, is that you can have two people who seem identical -- they're eating the same food, have the same treatment and so on, and one of them doesn't come back and the other one does. Now, you probably have seen this in your own experience.

RL:

I know exactly what you are talking about.

CGR:

Can you tell me what you think about all of this?

RL:

Well, I'm going to give you an example. I know some elderly men that were over there. I hope I am saying this to help you. I find, in prison camp, the older the man, the better he took it. It seems to me his bones were more developed. And coping with this here, some men even to this day, I've been on the executive for many many years, and I go to meetings and there are some men that have never jarred a bit. Me, I'm different than anyone else in my family. I'm a different man and in my family was a difference. I've an awful temper, of which I control reasonably

well. Coping with the hardships, we were a hard-working family, that's not so bad, but I know of miners, those that worked in coal mines and gold mines, that couldn't take it as good as some city fellows. And yet I've known city fellows that you would vice verse that. And I often wondered about that.

I remember this LeBlanc fellow, his father was in insurance and he never did anything in his life, and another boy there, and they worked in the mines a lot. And by God they toughed that just as good as the fellows as....So I had to explain how some could take it much better than others. Now, this Kelly, I mentioned his name, was a small man, a very small man. He was the toughest little piece of furniture I've ever seen in my life. He could adapt to this. He was, I don't know, he was thin too, he was very very thin, you know. But there was yet big men, miners, that were as chicken as could be. Am I.....?

CGR:

Yes, oh yes, certainly.

RL:

I remember one fellow, incident, the night we were taken prisoner of war, talked to him in Toronto here a few years ago, he's not from Toronto, and he broke down. I remember carrying him up over the fence and I'm sitting down talking to him. And my God he was a fisherman and a lumberman and older than me, old enough guy, but. And yet again he had a brother, it was the same family, he was not bothered at all.

CGR:

How about yourself, did you ever get to the stage where you

thought I'm not going to make it?

RL:

Oh yes, oh yes, there were lots of times I didn't care if I ever made it. Oh yes there was times I remember in North Point prison camp, in that little place I showed you, I laid along side of three men, I couldn't cared less if I survived. I have seen days since that, though too that I didn't care if I could get by or not. I just said that I had a great wife and three great children has helped me more than any. But I said, it's tiresome, it's a trying time. I know this winter, for instance there, I was two and a half months I couldn't even drive my car, I wasn't allowed to drive my car, and I was kind of discouraged.

CGR:

Yes, I'm sure you were.

RL:

You know, and the doctor he just told me the other day, he said, "You can go some place but you can't take your car." And I feel bad about this. After all I'm 69 years old and here I am, it took me all me life to get where I am, and I'm grounded, you know. It's for my own good. I'm a great listener though, and my doctor told me not to do that, and I'm not going to do that. You know, and I guess maybe that got me this far in life.

CGR:

Well, I hope this will be temporary.

RL:

Well yes, I think he's gone away there on a holiday, and when he comes back I'm hoping he will. I'm taking so much medication, that's why I didn't have a pop or I don't take no

nothing because I'm taking a lot of medication. But I feel great. I'm amazed I'm like this because I am a nervous guy. I don't mean to be but I am. But I hope I was of some help.

CGR:

Definitely. I'll put this off now, but thank you very much.

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