

EUGENE CORYELL JACOBS, MD  
*Experiences as a Prisoner-of-War, World War 2*

Interviewed by  
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Eugene C. Jacobs, MD:

This plastic surgery looked real attractive to me.

Charles G. Roland, MD:

Now this would have been about when?

ECJ:

This was 1929.

CGR:

When did you graduate from medical school?

ECJ:

1929. Then I went to an internship in Michigan, to Grand Rapids, because I knew a doctor there who I thought was excellent, and very friendly. I had known him a long time. He came to our summer home in Michigan. I got to watching [Dr.] Ferris Smith. He wouldn't let anybody in his [operating] room. He had his own crew of people, his doctors, half a dozen nurses, and technical people.

CGR:

His team.

ECJ:

His own team. His own wing in the hospital. About as close as anybody could get would be to peek in the operating room window. So I did that all my spare time on my internship.

Let me give you a little of his background. It would be interesting to you. He graduated about 1914 or something like that. And he knew what he wanted to do. He kept dogs in the basement of his fraternity house, which he operated on. After he graduated he wanted some more experience, and he didn't wait until we got in the war, in 1917; he went up to Canada and got in

their army and went immediately to the front lines in Europe and practiced some plastic surgery for four years, and when the war was over he knew more about it than anybody. At our hospital in Grand Rapids he was getting movie people from Hollywood. He was getting big shots from all over the country. People with cancer of the lip, or face, or something or other. Movie actresses with their breasts -- one was bigger than the other or lower or something. He was doing all kinds, very busy. I would love to watch him and then go in the room where the doctors change their clothes, and just listen to them talk. It was very exciting to me as a young doctor. I thought, well, that's what I would like to do. Practice some of my artistic talents (I'm probably leading way off the subject but it might be interesting to you).

About two weeks before my internship finished, one of the old-time doctors came in with an acute appendicitis case and I scrubbed in with him. [Then] he had something wrong at his office and he was very anxious to get out and so after he sewed up the peritoneum he says, "You close her up." Well, I was in my glory. So I used one of these artistic stitches, subcuticular stitch with a button on each end, and you couldn't see the scar - it was beautiful. Put her in bed and that afternoon the doctor came out, and I'd just seen her and she had no pain, she was feeling fine -- a young girl about 15 years old. I said, "Why don't you sit beside the bed and maybe you'll get well faster by keeping your activity while you feel good." About an hour later the doctor came in and, "Who the hell let you out of bed?" [laughter]. Then he got her in bed and opened the stitch, the sutures and so forth, "Who the hell sewed you up?" [laughter] I

thought boy, here I'm going to get shanghaied before I finish my internship! So early ambulation died a sudden death about 30 years before it was accepted.

CGR:

It had to wait to be reborn.

ECJ:

Right. So that's the way I started off. While I was going through my residency program I thought it would be nice to be in the army, so I put an application in for the reserve corps. They jumped on it right away. They liked that idea because Hitler was marching thorough France and all those things were going on in...

CGR:

So this would be into the 1930s by now. Mid '30s?

ECJ:

Mid '30s, yes.

So shortly I got a letter from the army and they asked me if I'd like to go on active duty at Walter Reed Hospital. Well, that's the best army hospital in the world. Here I began at the top and gradually worked down. When I arrived at the hospital they asked me what ward I'd like to go on and I said, "Well, I'd like to do plastic surgery." "Oh, we don't have a plastic surgeon in the hospital, or even in the army. In fact, we don't even have an opening on surgery. We'll put you up on gastrointestinal medicine [laughter]. As soon as we get an opening we'll call you over." Well, in 31 years I never got the call. So I was doing everything in the army.

CGR:

When did you start at Walter Reed?

ECJ:

1934.

CGR:

Maybe we could go back for a minute. Just to get some basic information. Can you tell me your full name, your birth date, your birth place?

ECJ:

Well, it's all on your papers there. Eugene C. Jacobs.

CGR:

Yes. What does the "C" stand for?

ECJ:

That's Coryell. Named after my mother's father, who was a Civil War veteran. C-o-r-y-e-l-l. One of the prerogatives he got as a Civil War veteran was to homestead property. He was a great big fellow -- six feet some -- and as husky as can be. Outdoor living back in those days, farmer and so forth. He couldn't stand the heat in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in the summer time, so he and some of his relatives rented a sailboat and sailed up to the northern part of Lake Huron and through Lake Michigan and right up to the....

CGR:

Georgian Bay?

ECJ:

Well, we were on the other side of Lake Huron from that. We were right opposite Georgian Bay, and actually we were only 15 miles from Canada at the mouth of the St. Mary's River. They found an island up there, it's called Coryell Island. That's

where the family has gathered every summer for about 100 years. Now I'm the senior citizen on Coryell Island. All my relatives have been dying off.

CGR:

When were you born?

ECJ:

1905.

CGR:

And the date?

ECJ:

May 10th, 1905.

CGR:

And where?

ECJ:

Schenectady, New York. My father graduated an electrical engineer at Ann Arbor. In those days the -- it's the General Electric Company now -- but in those days it was the Edison Institute. They gave a test to young engineers in many colleges and they would take these young engineers for a year, and train them, and keep the best ones. My father was taken on the test and worked for Thomas Edison and Charles Steinmetz, who were two great scientists and engineers. In fact, I look back now and think what's happened to electricity since they were trying to get -- their big problem was trying to get electricity from one town to another, 20 miles away and they had to alternate it to carry it through. All they had was direct current, from Ben Franklin's kite. So that's been kind of amazing. My father designed all the electrical equipment for the Panama Canal.

Opens the gates, runs the donkeys towing the boats through, all that stuff. So when [President Jimmy] Carter gave it away, a few years ago, we were quite unhappy. We thought that if he was going to give it away he should have given it to a friend instead of the Communists [laughter].

CGR:

Were you raised in Schenectady?

ECJ:

For about 12 years. My father was quite an inventor. He had over a hundred inventions to his name. He decided that one dollar for an invention wasn't enough when General Electric was making millions off of some of them. So he went out to Chicago and started his own electrical company, called Electrical Engineers Equipment Company. That went along fine until the depression and then they had trouble.

CGR:

That's different, yes. Maybe we should then leap ahead to around the beginning of the war and tell me what you were doing.

ECJ:

When I got in the army at Walter Reed they made me, after a few months, chief of the gastrointestinal section. That was very interesting and I learned a lot. About that time they decided I should go to the Army Medical School, which was in Washington. Then the Army Medical Field Service School, which was in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. So in the Army Medical School we learned tropical medicine for about six months. So I knew a little about the tropics before I got there. Then at Carlisle they taught us the practical part, field training, what is equivalent

to a MASH Hospital -- they didn't call them that then -- and I was assigned to 1st [Army] Medical Regiment, which was all horse-drawn, and we had to ride horseback! Which helped me out in later days when we go to the Philippines. We had no Pullman cars, just traveled during the war. So that was my army medical training.

When that was over, my home was Chicago at that time, and we could pick out stations, which was very nice. So I picked Chicago to be near home -- I had a little family, kids. I liked to be home. I was assigned as assistant chief of the army dispensary in Chicago and I was there for, oh, possibly two years. Then rather suddenly the commanding officer in a little hospital in Detroit (I can't think of the name of it), he was retiring and he was an old-timer, chin whiskers [laughter], in his 80s. All this time Europe was having its troubles, Germany had gone into Poland, and Czechoslovakia, and all that, and the army seemed a pretty good place to be, because if you get called up in war time you could go as a private. My dad thought it was better to go as an officer [laughter].

CGR:

Yes, indeed.

ECJ:

So I was in Detroit running the little 35-bed hospital for about six months. Then we had to go to foreign service. So I got my choice of foreign service. Which was very nice; you could pick your own place, and we'd -- my wife and I -- lived through the depression. While I was in Washington I saw a lot of the politics going on there. I actually was in on some of it because

I was the doctor for Roosevelt's personal regiment. Now you've probably seen them, they're the show pieces that they display every time somebody important comes to town, these old Revolutionary soldiers with their slow step. Well, I was doctor for them. I used to see Roosevelt at the horse parades, polo matches and things. Oh, he was a real cripple. So I did see a lot of politics while I was there and then when I was at this Fort Dearborn -- well, that doesn't seem quite right either.

CGR:

Well, Dearborn is Chicago, isn't it?

ECJ:

Yes, in Chicago, yes. Well maybe it [the name] will come to me. Anyway I got asked where I wanted to go to foreign duty. My wife and I had been too poor to even have a honeymoon, so we decided we'd pull to the end of the line, see what was there, and we volunteered for the Philippines. In a few months the orders came through; we went to New York City to get on the army transport.

While we were there the World's Fair was going on. So we saw the World's Fair in New York City. We got on the Republic, and in a few days we were down in the Panama Canal and on one side was a British luxury liner and on the other side was an Italian destroyer. They wouldn't let either of them through because they were at war [laughter]. Roosevelt took all our cameras away from us when we went through the Canal so we couldn't take pictures! So we saw how silly some of these activities during war are. Then we got around to San Francisco and saw the World's Fair there. Then got on the US Grant, another army

transport, and landed in Hawaii on 4th of July.

CGR:

Was that in 1940?

ECJ:

1940. We had a nice time in Hawaii. We had a lot of our old army friends stationed there and they showed us a good time. We were at all the places that were bombed later, and our ship went right by the aircraft carrier Lexington. Gee, we were as close as the other end of the [swimming] pool [a few feet away from where our interview took place], we could take pictures of that. Nobody to stop us.

We got to Guam. In Guam they were having the measles. Back in the history book, measles had nearly wiped out the population at one time. No! there was measles on our ship and they wouldn't let us come ashore, 'cause they didn't want to get an epidemic again. So we sat out in the harbor and a few days later we landed in the Philippines, in Manila. We had one of the aviators, there were about three or four of them, who had been the first to fly across the Pacific shortly after Lindberg went across the Atlantic, on our ship. They were going to be the top brass in the Air Corps in the Philippines. So the Philippine airplanes came out to meet us, to greet us. They were mostly Piper Cubs and a few antiques.

CGR:

Not very ferocious.

ECJ:

I got movies of them. People don't believe the things that had happened in all this time. Well, to make a long story short,

I was stationed at Sternberg Army Hospital in Manila for about a year, and was Chief of Medicine. Most of the patients were Filipino veterans, none of them could talk English. There was 57 dialects and I had to have an interpreter with me all the time to find out what was ailing them. I did learn, oh, 100 words of their language called Tugalic or something like that.

CGR:

Something like Tualog or...

ECJ:

Yes, you're getting close.

Anyway, it was a very interesting time and my wife and I really enjoyed it to the fullest. It was so hot there, on the plains of the Philippines, that we'd get up and our office work would start at seven in the morning, then we'd quit at one in the afternoon, come home and have lunch and take a siesta, and then later in the afternoon, if it was cool enough, we'd play tennis or golf or something. They had a nice officers' club. Everything was dandy. The servants were so cheap you could have a cook and a house boy and this and that. It was real nice living.

Then in July of '41, when Japan was acting up -- they'd already been in China since '37 and a lot of rather treacherous things going on. They'd catch these Chinese and torture them. The last thing in the world I wanted was to be captured by the Japanese.

But Roosevelt sent all the wives home in July of 1941, which was a good six months before the war, and he had sent the navy wives home in January of 1941, which was six months before. He was clearing the decks for action. Before the war, by a month or

two, the American navy decoded Japanese secrets messages and Roosevelt knew when the Jap fleet was within a couple days of Hawaii. He didn't let the army or navy know what was going on -- he and Marshall -- and as a result Pearl Harbor got caught with its pants down.

After the wives went home in the Philippines they sent me up to the summer capital of the Philippines, Bago, and I was the only doctor up there. I had a 35-bed hospital and two army nurses. When I got up there all the Americans -- we called them "sunshiners," they'd gone over there to make a living mining or lumbering or something -- they were all very anxious to meet the new doctor and to get on the good side so if they had trouble I'd take care of them. That was a pleasant place except my wife was back in the States and when I got through treating patients -- it was kind of a convalescent hospital for people that had been operated down in Manila or getting over some disease that was going to take them long; that was a very pleasant assignment -- they had an 18-hole golf course and I played that a couple of times every day, to keep busy.

Pearl Harbor came as quite a surprise to us -- I guess everybody. Five o'clock one morning I got a telephone call, "Pearl Harbor is being bombed, come to Headquarters at once." As soon as I could get dressed and shaved I went to Headquarters and there we sat until eight in the morning and they couldn't get any more information. They said, "Pearl Harbor was bombed and the damages were great," and finally told us to go back to our units and alert them as to what's going on and get our maps and war plans out and study them.

I got a quick breakfast at the Officer's Mess about 7:30. Usually it was very pleasant country up there in the mountains, we were about a mile high, and it was fun walking through the pine woods to the mess hall. So I usually walked back and forth. It's about a half a mile. But this morning with war on our hands I thought I'd better drive. I drove to Headquarters and the Mess Hall and got a quick breakfast, and everybody was panicky -- not knowing what was going to happen next. We who had been there in the Philippines knew the Japs had been preparing for this for 40 years. They'd been shipping scrap iron on every other Japanese boat that came in there, and things like that, getting coal and all kinds of stuff, so that we figured that they were getting ready for war.

Well, I got back to my office and got my maps and orders out and studied them. About that time my two nurses walked in, at 8 o'clock in the morning, and I said, "You know we are at war with Japan," and they said they didn't. Within five minutes bombs began dropping all over our camp. (That's in my stories [articles] that I gave you. I think I gave you the right ones here. Maybe I didn't). Telling about war experiences -- I've probably got -- many people told me that I'm the most interesting man they've ever met [laughter]. So I've got an unusual background; the fact that I survived the whole thing is a miracle. Probably ten miracles.

Well, the nurses and I were standing there and bombs began to fall. Being strictly amateur, we walked to the windows and watched these bombs falling all over the post, and dirt blown up

sky-high from the bombs. We just watched. There was nothing else to do. We didn't know enough to duck under the desk or something! But to make a long story short, we were 20 miles from Lingayen Bay, that's the big bay where the Japs landed, and we got bombed most every day for the next couple of weeks. In the first wave there were 26 bombers and they pretty near shellacked us. We were the first place bombed in the Philippines -- in fact in the Far East -- in World War Two. We did just what the Japs had planned [for us] to do -- we called Clark Field and said we were being bombed, get up here and chase these guys away. So in a matter of a half hour there were fighters up there going all through the skies -- found nothing. The Japs were smart enough to get away. They stayed there till noon and they all went back to Clark Field to gas up and get their lunch and that's when the Japs caught the whole bunch on the field, while they were in the lunch room [laughter]. Practically wiped out our air force in one move.

It was only a matter of a week till they landed at two places not too far away from us. Then on the 22nd of December -- we got bombed on the 8th of December (which actually was the 7th in Hawaii, the same day but it was different dates because the date-line was in-between) -- on the 22nd about 100 ships had assembled in Lingayen Bay, and were landing all up and down the coast. We had two companies at Camp John Hay (the place I was trying to think of and couldn't is named after an early Secretary of State, about [Teddy] Roosevelt's time), and we had two companies there. This was strictly a rest and recreation center. No military value at all. The only thing we had was one little

cannon for reveille in the morning, and a few rifles. But we sent our two companies down the only two roads to the bay, to greet Japanese, and of course they had to retreat right quick. The Japs followed them up very closely.

On the 23rd (which is my wedding anniversary), we got orders from MacArthur in Bataan to evacuate the camp and come to Bataan. Well, the Japs had both roads so we couldn't go down the roads, and all that was left was to go over the mountain trails, which was pretty slow going compared to their tanks and stuff going down in the valley. We got over to another road, it took us five days to get over the mountains. My shoes were worn out, the soles were gone from sliding down. My two nurses we had to leave behind. We left them in a American lumber camp with their [the lumbermen's] wives. They later had to turn in to the Japs and stay in Santo Tomas -- a civilian camp in Manila -- for the duration.

These things [articles] I'll give you will tell the whole story. I'm going through it really rapidly, to give you the background.

It took us five days to get over to the next road. That was the road that...do you know the Philippines at all?

CGR:

Oh, not from visiting. I know a bit about it.

ECJ:

Well, it's made up of old volcanoes, like so much of the island country is out there, and there's mountains on both sides of Luzon and a nice valley in between which is called Cagayan Valley. Well, we tried to get through to this road and once more

we had no transportation, we were on foot, and my soles of my shoes were gone so I couldn't foot it much more. When we got to the road there was a little hotel there, up in the mountains, and we stayed there overnight. There was a bus man -- an American married to a Filipino that owned the Red Line Bus Company, and they gave us a ride up north. I had about 20 medics with me, that had made the journey over the mountains. We tried to bum a ride down to Manila and get over to Bataan where the troops were. He was glad to take us but he had all his baggage on the truck and about five or six Filipino kids and wife. He could only take about 10 of us.

We were just coming out of the mountains when we met a Jap car coming up the mountains, and they had a Jap flag on the top of the car. So we knew who they were, and they suspected who we were. They went on up in the mountains and we stopped and looked around and we could see that the Japs had occupied the whole valley. There was no sense in going any further. I told the truck driver to turn around -- we'd go back up in the mountains. About the time he got turned around, here comes this Jap car back, without the flag on top. We were all standing around looking over the situation and really in very poor position to put up a fight if they had weapons. They stopped within 10 feet of me. I had a pistol; I was the only one that had any weapon at all, and I knew if I shot at them we'd all be mowed down. So instead of shooting at them I started directing traffic [laughter], and I waved them around our truck and they hurried down the road.

I told the truck driver to turn around and get back up to

the mountains. We decided to go down across a river and up into the mountains, and kind of just keep our eyes open to see how the wind was going to blow. We just barely got across the river when five tanks rolled up from down the valley and began firing machine guns at us. We were hiding down in the jungles; they didn't know where we were and they didn't stay around too long, and took off again. By this time I only had five Filipinos with me, and two Americans. We climbed up into the mountains and found a little shelter. We had to bum food off the natives, to exist for a few days. Then one day, I've forgotten how, we heard that there was a Filipino camp back up in the mountains, about 10 miles away, I guess.

CGR:

You mean an army camp?

ECJ:

No, no. It was an evacuation camp for Filipino citizens. They were deathly scared of the Japs. They hated them. Every place they could they'd leave their homes and go out and camp for the duration.

So by this time I had gunny sacks around my feet and they were right on the ground. It was pretty rough going. We got up in their camp, traveling at night because the Japs had the road in the day time. They were very good to us. It was the same Filipinos that we'd been riding on their bus. He was a bus operator. So we stayed with them several weeks, and they were able to get food. We were doing all right. We had some shelter, not much, it was little Filipino huts. We'd watch the Japs going up and down the road every day, patrolling it.

I've forgotten how we found out: I think a couple of these Filipinos came down and we were contacted down the road. Anyway we found that there was a guerrilla regiment, American guerrillas who'd formed from Camp John Hay, where I had been stationed, back up in the Cagayan Valley. We got up to the first town and there they had a Filipino patrol looking down the mountainside toward the valley where the Japs were. We stayed with them a couple of days till a vehicle came, and we gradually got back in a few days to the American guerrilla regiment. So I became a guerrilla surgeon of McArthur's 1st Guerrilla Regiment.

CGR:

This would have been what -- January by now, I suppose, of '42 or maybe....

ECJ:

Oh, January, about January of '42. It was December 22 [1941] we left Camp John Hay, the Japs were coming in. I'll give you several papers, it will have most of this information in it.

Well, anyway, I got back to Jones Isabella -- Jones was an American who went over as a missionary. I think it's the only American-name town in the whole Philippines. They are all funny names of their own making. Jones Isabella, this missionary, had been there and spent a couple of years with them and they got to like him and he liked them. One day he said his work was finished, he had to go back to the States. They said, "We don't want you to go back. We like you." As he made his plans to go back they chopped his head off so he'd stay with them. That was Jones Isabella. That became the headquarters for our guerrilla

regiment. That was quite a story in itself. I can furnish you with information on most of that.

Then, in April, Bataan fell. After Bataan fell they began sending Japs up after us. We'd had a couple of skirmishes with them. We raided one of the big towns where they had all the military -- a couple of air bases up in our area, we raided that and killed about 100 Japs and then got out. MacArthur thought that was great. He had somebody that was winning! Actually they were losing on Bataan and Corregidor, they were falling back every day. When Bataan fell the Japs had thousands of troops they could let loose and they began coming up our valley. They'd penetrate. We'd sit in the mountains and watch them. They'd penetrate and go up the 100 miles and then it would get dark and they'd go back again. They'd do that a little further each day. We were gradually getting cut off and we were down to three rounds of ammunition per soldier. We had to give up.

Well, they sent an American colonel whom I had known before the war (he was quartermaster and he packed me in Washington when I was there), up to get us to surrender. Of course, they were occupying the whole island then. Up to that time we'd had the Cagayan Valley, which is a real productive fresh valley, lots of farms, tobacco whatever they call them -- ranches or -- and mostly run by Spanish. They were very friendly. Spanish haciendas. In fact, we spent a great deal of time at the haciendas while we were fighting the guerrilla war. They were very good to us. I'll give you papers telling you about that.

When the Japs came into Camp John Hay in Bago I as in the group that were leading the evacuation from the camp, the troops.

The reason I volunteered to do that was because I knew I could feed my 20 corps men. But coming behind two companies of hungry Filipinos [laughter], I figured food might be kind of scarce. So I volunteered to lead us out to Camp John Hay. (I forget my train of thought here, trying to cover a lot of ground.)

CGR:

Well, I think you were just coming up to the point, perhaps, where you were forced to surrender and you said the colonel was sent up to negotiate with you.

ECJ:

Well anyway, we decided to surrender; most of our [Filipino] soldiers, they didn't want to surrender. We wanted to send them back home where they could join up again if something happened. So I think we surrendered two companies to make it look official. London was rather furious with our surrender -- we were 100 miles from the closest Japanese troops. The American that came up to get us had a pass from the Japanese. He was sent up to get us to surrender. It looked like there was no chance of doing anything, so we agreed to come in.

We rode for two or three days through the country in these little pony carts, to get where the Japanese were. Then, funny as it may sound, we got to a Japanese barracks and we had to knock on the door [laughter], and rouse them. We couldn't talk Japanese and they couldn't talk English. They didn't know what surrender was....

[End of Side 1]

They believed in fighting to the death. They weren't used to having people surrender. But they took us across the street and

put us in a little house. We got practically nothing to eat.

Then the next day they turned us loose to go about 50 miles to the next Japanese outpost. We had to go through the same process. I'd thrown away my weapons. I had a pistol and a rifle and I'd thrown them in the river and decided no Americans were going to get killed with my weapons. So we finally got down to a cavalry regiment. We were stationed there, where we spent a couple of weeks. We had all Americans, we were six officers [the Japanese] made us all do all their kitchen work for a couple of weeks. Preparing vegetables and digging holes to put the garbage in and so forth. We'd have to go out and line up with the Japs morning and night and welcome the sun coming up [laughter], in Japanese, of course. But compared to what was coming next that was pretty good.

Well, we finally got down to the big camp at Cabanatuan in the Philippines. That's here [pointing to map]. This is the Cagayan Valley where we had our guerrilla regiment. The Japanese held this valley and we held Bataan and Corregidor. So we actually had a lot more territory than they did but they were fighting a real war down there and we were just fighting hit and run, old Indian tactics, up in the valley. This place, Cabanatuan, is where we spent two years in prison camp.

CGR:

Yes, I'm familiar with that name, I must say.

ECJ:

You are. Well, I've got pictures in here of that, that I drew. I don't want to duplicate a lot of stuff.

CGR:

No. I agree, that's good.

ECJ:

Now tell me how far I got.

CGR:

You were preparing food for the Japanese.

ECJ:

Oh yes, and that was before we went into Cabanatuan prison camp. They drove us down in the truck. When we got about a mile from the prison camp we could smell this awful smell. It was death. I suppose you've heard of the Death March.

CGR:

Oh yes, yes. I've read several books about it. Including one quite recent one.

ECJ:

They got very little food on a 100-mile march, forced march. They were dying like flies. I think 17,000 deaths on this week's trip, something like that. It's very close. So when we got into camp things were in bad shape.

CGR:

When would this have been, about?

ECJ:

June of '41.

CGR:

'42.

ECJ:

'42. Yes, the war began in December.

CGR:

Yes. So about two months after Bataan surrendered.

ECJ:

Yes. We surrendered a couple of months after Bataan and Corregidor. When I got into camp I began to realize that things weren't getting better, they were getting worse. We lost 2,400 prisoners the first eight months, just from starvation and all the deficiency diseases. This tells the story pretty well. {Machine turned off.} Every deficiency disease there is (I won't call myself an authority on them, yet I seem to know things that scientists don't know).

CGR:

I'm sure that's true.

ECJ:

Being an internist in Sternberg Hospital in Manila, I knew the diseases they had around the area -- malaria, and dengue, and different things. One of the things that worried me the most was diabetes, 'cause I was wondering where we were going to get insulin and things from. When was it going to be available? But starvation in itself cured the diabetes. Nobody had diabetes while they were starving. They still don't know that today. They still have whole-page ads on what to do if you've got diabetes. Well, the secret is that the Americans and probably Canadians are all overeating. They're filling their tummies to their delight, and the pancreas can't handle it. But on starvation diets the pancreas has no trouble at all. It does a good job. So that's one of the things I learned and general medicine doesn't know it today. They never know it because people aren't starving themselves. They are all living it up.

Oh, we learned several things from prison camp. The Japs gave us practically no medicines. I found out, as a guerrilla, that certain trees in the Philippines, I didn't know what they had, but the natives would get the sap out of them and we'd give so much sap to the individual and their malaria is under control. We had very little medicine as guerrillas, really. The Filipino doctors were very good in helping us out once some guerrilla would get wounded or something; they would take them in their homes and treat them, hide all their rifles and equipment.

Filipinos were 100 percent on our side -- or we were on their side -- and they were very gracious, and some of the finest soldiers I've ever met. Their whole attitude was toward taking care of their superiors. They wouldn't do anything for themselves until their officer was -- has his tent, and food, and so forth. So we got along fine. I still have a great admiration for them but I think that President Marcos is trying to be a little king and he's held supreme power there for whatever number of years it is -- 17 or something like that. The Filipino is getting fed up with that. They don't like it. And yet, I bet if I went back there I'd be a king today. We got along fine.

In the first place, practically everybody from Bataan and Corregidor had been starving before they surrendered. The diet had been cut in half and then cut in half again. These poor Filipinos in trenches, out in front, they couldn't get to them to get them food. Many of them were on the verge of starvation before the surrender. So when they surrendered and they had the Death March, on which about 17,000 people died, they were in poor

shape. But the Japs, not believing in surrender, thought we'd already disgraced ourselves and they weren't about to do anything to change it. When prisoners would stop on the Death March to get a drink of water out of the ditch they would bayonet them or shoot them or whatever was handiest. They didn't believe in wasting their ammunition so they did mostly bayoneting and clubbing. That's where the 17,000 out of, oh, 100,000 died before they ever got to prison camp.

Prison camp wasn't any better. They died like flies, 40, 50 a day. They put us in two prison camps, O'Donnell was the first one and in a couple of months half of them were dead. Then they moved them all into Cabanatuan, and we had about 10,000 in the beginning and I think it got up to 12,000 at one time but they were constantly taking out work details, as they called them. They would take them out to build roads, build airports, any kind of menial labor they needed help on. So details were constantly coming and going and people were dying at the rate of 40 and 50 a day for the first six months. We lost 2,400 the first six months at the prison camp. I've got pictures in there of the cemetery that we had, where they'd bury 40 or 50 in the common grave.

CGR:

Yes.

ECJ:

That would be a daily procedure. This is the -- there'd be 40 or 50 of these following each other over, the chaplain out in front, with a couple of Jap guards, to go out every day. A lot of that is told in there so I'll try not to duplicate it.

CGR:

Were you involved in selection? What I'm thinking of is, when men were very sick -- did you have any say in that they didn't have to go out to work?

ECJ:

Yes. Actually, it was our idea because we were losing men so fast -- 40 or 50 a day. We asked the Japs, why didn't we start making a farm garden out there where we could raise some vegetables and things? They thought that was a good idea. So they had a big farm and at first they'd take out a hundred prisoners, and then, as weeks went by, this grew until they'd take a thousand prisoners out to be farmers all day. Well, they were very strict in their farming. They wouldn't let the prisoners kneel down and they'd have to farm all from standing up this way, and they'd only get about one break in the morning and one in the afternoon, fifteen minutes to change position.

CGR:

Why couldn't they kneel down?

ECJ:

That was their rule. They had a lot of funny rules. They were actually tortured. Japs had all means of torture. They divided all prisoners up into groups of 10, called blood brothers. If any one of the ten tried to escape or even get caught talking about escaping they would execute the other nine. We had several escape and get caught and brought back, and the Japs would parade them around the camp for two or three days and tie them to posts and probably didn't feed them all that time and then execute them. Behead them or bayonet them -- use them for

bayonet practice; they had raw recruits come in and just use the prisoners for bayonet practice. They were a bad group to be captured by. I think most of countries would be more humane than they were. It makes me a little mad the way they sell Toyotas and things in this country. We don't buy them but some people do. [My Toyota was parked in front of Dr. Jacobs' home. CGR]

They were doing pretty well beating us commercially before the war began. Most of their stuff was junk then. The little ten-cent, dime-store stuff that wasn't much good anyway.

CGR:

That's changed, hasn't it. Now it's very good stuff. They're all high tech.

ECJ:

Now they've got the best, cameras and television and so forth. They outmaneuvered us. I think they're going to beat us in the commercial war, and we'll have to fight them again.

But one of the reasons I was so slow in getting my book out [Blood Brothers, due October 1984] and doing these things was because I felt I was going against the grain all the time. The Japs and Russians -- or the Japs and Germans -- were our friends. Whereas Russia would have become our enemy and they'd been our allies -- theoretically. I don't think they were much of an ally in the war. But theoretically as long as we could give them, lend them some stuff, they were allies. Seems like the whole situation had turned around and I felt a little unpatriotic even writing this. But when the Japs asked for, I don't know what it was, eight or ten billion dollars to take care of the poor Japs that we put in concentration camps during the war, and kept them

from making a living and so forth, although we fed them. I don't think there was one Jap died like we did, of neglect. So I sent some of my papers to President Reagan and a few other congressmen that I thought were influential and said, "This is the way the Japs treated us. They didn't give us eight billion dollars or even any food to eat." So I hope I squashed that and saved the country eight billion dollars. (OK, turn it off now.)

CGR:

I started to ask you before about selection. I think we maybe got a little away from that. Some of the medical officers I've talked to, who have been in other camps in the Far East, said one of their big problems was that the Japanese would say, "All right, today we need a hundred men." They would say, "We'll just take that hundred over there." Half of those men were too sick, really, to go out but the medical officers had no real control over who went out and who didn't. Was that a problem with you?

ECJ:

Frequently we had to go ourselves and work on the farm. We had to go over and work on an airport near our camp. There we had... they give us little woven, kind of wicker baskets, open at both ends, and we'd have to carry stones from one place to another and build up places. We actually built the airport. It was human labor. One of the pleasantries that came from it later was when the American aviators were coming in towards the end of the war they came from one of the big fleets (navy ships, aircraft carriers) far out at sea. But in September '44, the first thing we saw that indicted the war was going the other way was about

1100 navy dive bombers. They flew over our camp and went over to Clark Field and emptied their stuff, and we could hear it from out camp from about 100 miles away. Boom, boom, boom! Then they came back over and they flew down low and waggled their wings at us and went on their way. Well, there was a big Jap bomber on this airport we built, right outside of camp, and he saw all these navy planes come in and he tried to get off the field, high-tailed it off, and they came in right on top of him and machine-gunned them or whatever they did and he just dove into the ground. There was a big fire. Well, it was a big day at the camp. We had a front seat.

CGR:

One of the things I always ask about is the subject of sex. Was sex of interest? Was it a problem?

ECJ:

Well, in a way. Of course, we'd had no wives for six months before the war began. Some of the soldiers and so forth used the Filipinos and seemed to be mutually satisfied! After prison camp, funny as it may sound, the homosexuals became active.

CGR:

I was gong to ask about that.

ECJ:

A couple of them were called "Queenies" [laughter]. They had their boyfriends that came around. We don't exactly know what went on -- they were very friendly.

CGR:

This was fairly openly going on, was it?

ECJ:

Yes, but I'll tell you, we were so weak from being starved to death that 99 percent had no interest in sex. They'd completely lost all desire for it. So it really wasn't a problem. Sex with the average Filipino -- they were great family people, and they didn't have people running around loose, going to whorehouses and things like we do here. Of course sex in those days wasn't the loose sex we know of today. We didn't think much about it.

I asked the psychiatrist, about the day we left the Philippines, I said, "How come, here we got 12,000 prisoners and nobody tried to commit suicide?" He said, "Well, everybody is thinking so much about surviving that suicide doesn't enter their mind." Sex was about the same way. When you're starving, you worry more about what you're going to eat tomorrow.

CGR:

That's a lot more fundamental.

ECJ:

Yes. That's more interesting than sex is. In fact you'd hate to spend the energy on sex. So I doubt if you turned 100 of these prisoners loose, whether sex would come into it at all. The interest was completely gone. When you are starving to death you don't...sex isn't too much of a problem. Although there were periods when some of them thought about survival and that type of thing, sex might have entered their mind a little.

But most of it was interest in surviving, and many of us in prison camps had gardens. We were able to buy some seeds in town and plant our own little gardens. But then it became a problem

to watch your garden until it matured because as soon as some of the other prisoners would see something that looked interesting, why they'd get out there first and get it.

For about six months after we were prisoners, the Japs called us "captives" and they wouldn't give us the privileges of prisoners-of-war. We were criminals awaiting trails, they called it. So we had no privileges at all and that's when they were dying so fast. But after we officially became prisoners of war they let us have a commissary. They paid us the same pay as their own people -- non-coms and officers, they get the same pay. I got about 50 yen a month. With that you could buy something, buy a can of condensed milk. You had to figure out pretty carefully how you wanted to spend your money.

Well, I saved up money for several months and bought a chicken. Then they had a pen, it wasn't very big, maybe a hundred chickens in it, that the people had bought from the commissary. They had a Master Sergeant run that thing and feed them. Every chicken had a tab on who it belonged to. My chicken laid two or three eggs and, looking toward the future, I hatched these eggs rather than eat them, so I could get some young chicks. About the middle of this period my chicken got some disease. It looked like it was going to die and I cut up a sulfathiazole tablet in about 10 pieces and forced it down its throat and the chicken got well and went on and laid about four eggs and we hatched them and raised some young chicks.

CGR:

So you were getting a real flock.

ECJ:

Well, it was a touchy business. You had to be very careful because all those hungry people were watching too. But it was interesting. I had a little garden plot, and you had to watch that because once something would get up so high, why, it looked interesting to the other prisoners. But I think the reason why I'm here today is because I did work these extra-curricular things, and even grew a papaya tree and got the papayas off it. You just had to be alert and make the most of every opportunity.

CGR:

What about diphtheria? Did you see diphtheria?

ECJ:

Yes, we had an epidemic of it about half way through prison camp. We were in there about three years, and about half way through. I don't know how it started, but we probably had about 100 cases of diphtheria. Since we had nothing to treat it with, some of them went on to the advanced stages and lost their voices, and smell, and different phases of it. Quite a few of them died, and we had essentially no records of them. In the early days they gave us what were crates of condensed milk they had captured from our troops on Bataan. They gave us those to feed to the real sick. The ones that were in bad shape. But we found very quickly that they ate our milk and then went on to die. So we had to check them all over and see which ones were going to die, and ignore them, and the ones that had a chance to live we'd try to save them. It was a triage type of thing and we learned a lot of things going through this thing. A lot of them I'm sure the doctors would criticize and maybe put you in jail for but....

CGR:

It must have been a tough kind of decision to make.

ECJ:

Oh, we had a lot of tough decisions to make -- who could make it and who couldn't.

CGR:

What kind of criteria did you use for that?

ECJ:

Well, in the first place, the middle-aged people between 30 and 45, we figured out had the best chance of living. The real youngsters, 18 to 20 years old, many of them gave up before the thing got bad, even. They were used to getting everything they wanted at home and all they had to do was ask for it. Here there was nobody to ask. They just gave up and died. So we had to kind of size up each individual in the hospital.

I was chief of medicine and we had up to 2000 patients in the hospital at one time. I tried to see every patient every day, which sometimes was impossible. We had practically no medicines to give them. About half way through camp we got three thousand tablets of quinine from one of those tropical islands that they'd captured down there that had quinine. I kept those under my bed and passed them out very sparingly. We couldn't cure anybody with malaria. We tried to just keep some of them alive, giving them one or two tables. It wasn't a very satisfactory type of medicine to practice but you had to do things the way that you figured out was the best for everybody. It was tough decisions.

CGR:

Did you...would you have conferences to decide this? I'm not talking about formal conferences, but would several of you discuss whether this was a treatable case or not or...?

ECJ:

They'd have one doctor for each ward. These hospital wards had been built for about 80 healthy civilians or military people. They crowded 120 into these barracks that (I think you have pictures of them) were made of bamboo and so forth. They had two decks and we tried to keep the ones with diarrhea on the bottom deck.

It was pretty tough decisions. Each ward officer, pretty much, made his own decisions. I tried to get to every ward, every day, so that I could help out. But we learned things as time went on. Things to do and things not to do, and I'm sure we were responsible for some of them dying and probably responsible for some of them living. But it was a tough kind of medicine to practice. I think it's too bad that our papers [journal articles] didn't get more publicity than they did because I think doctors could learn from them. There's going to be similar things happen in the future -- wars aren't over.

CGR:

No, I'm afraid not.

ECJ:

I've done lots of talking to groups -- medical groups and groups of civilians that were interested. But that is a very small percentage of people.

CGR:

What about Red Cross parcels, did you get any Red Cross parcels?

ECJ:

Each Christmas we got one or two, three Red Cross parcels.

CGR:

You mean per person?

ECJ:

Per person, yes. We wouldn't get them all together, maybe a week or two apart. They were 11 pounds and they included other things than food. I've forgotten what they did have in them but it wasn't all food. My wife got a shirt to me [laughter]. I guess through the Red Cross. But I needed it. After four years there the clothes were getting pretty filthy and shabby.

These Red Cross parcels would make your diet adequate for, oh, say a week. You could live it up and be a king for a week. Then you were back on the 800- to 1000-calorie diet. But the interesting thing was that, which I explained in that gynecomastia thing, was we didn't get gynecomastia from starvation, we got it when they started to refeed. Most people who had gardens or were making a little money and could buy through the commissary -- they'd get a little extra food and it was the refeeding that brought on the gynecomastia. I tried to analyze it as well as I could in a situation like that. I read up everything I could find after I got out, and the best I could figure out was the female and male hormones, in starvation, both become very depressed. You don't have much of anything. Then when you start to eat they both start to produce again. Apparently the female hormone comes on quicker than the male hormone so you get these

female symptoms. You get gynecomastia, which I've got now, from cancer of the prostate, I've been taking female hormones. So I'm an expert on female hormones [laughter].

We had about 600 cases of gynecomastia in prison camp, and they all came on after we started eating these Red Cross packages. Sometimes it would be three to six weeks after we'd eat pretty well before their breasts would get sore. Several of them got a pretty good size, and many of them would be on one side and not much on the other. One breast would be more sensitive than the other. Two or three of them secreted something that looked like milk, which was unusual. So I've got that pretty well written up in that gynecomastia story. The sex hormone story was rather interesting because we lost all sexual desire as you starve to death. As you eat, why, some of it comes back. Some of those things were kind of interesting with these queers that...[laughter].

CGR:

Did you lose a lot of weight?

ECJ:

I went down 80 pounds from 165.

CGR:

That's a lot of weight.

ECJ:

That's a lot of weight. I'm trying to think of general things I could tell you that might be interesting. I tried to keep track of everything I could. Not having any paper I got one nickel notebook and kept that as a diary, and later on I wrote these papers from information I had from memory. So I covered it

pretty well and I've tried to give the papers to all the federal museums and so forth so they could keep it, and they're glad to have it. The Library of Congress hasn't been interested yet. They want to wait until I'm all through writing stories and they can get the whole thing.

CGR:

How has your health been since the war? What I'm asking is, have you had any after-effects specifically that you can trace to the experience.

ECJ:

I am sure I have but...I was in Walter Reed Hospital from September [1945] when I got out to March 17 [1946] (St. Patrick's Day). Another patient and I went to duty right at Walter Reed and the medical personnel at the hospital were all very friendly, and interested in my stories and so forth. I think they tried hard to get me back to duty. But you know Walter Reed is spread over several miles and sometimes I could hardly make it from one ward to the next. I thought, many times, that I was sicker than the patient I was treating. But I gradually got stronger and from the day I went on active duty on March 17, 1946, until I retired in '65, I didn't miss a day of duty due to illness.

I had many interesting assignments and wrote lots of papers on various things. One of them was (one I would give you except I only got one), but my grandmother had a greenhouse. She was a Civil War veteran. Did I tell you about her? Her husband was the veteran. He died shortly after the war, before I was born. She earned her living by running a greenhouse. About once a month she'd get a great big brass pot, which I've got up in my

summer home, fill it with tobacco leaves and build a smudge under it, and all the bugs would come tumbling down off the plants. That was her way of -- I think she was a little ahead of the modern way, because she didn't have all the trouble the modern people are with the environmentalists and so forth. So with that background, when I got into medicine, I knew it was harmful but nobody there put out any statistics. Five out of ten are going to do this and that, and all through my army career I knew it was harmful but there was nothing to back it up. These tobacco people, Institute, are all a bunch of crooks. As long as people would smoke cigarettes they were happy, and they put out all these luxurious ads, beautiful girls laying in bathing suits and so forth, how good the taste was -- they lied through their teeth. Well it wasn't until my last station in the army, I was in the Secretary of the Army's office as a medial advisor, and director of the "Supreme Court of Disability," they called it, the Review Board. We'd have to go over all the questionable cases from all the army hospitals where they had physical evaluation boards. But they couldn't decide whether it was 20 or 30, 40 percent disability, so we'd get them and have to go over them.

Well, I hadn't been in this job more than two weeks when I noticed that every heart attack case was smoking one, two, three, four, five packs a day. Being a little scientifically oriented I got my red pencil out and began underlining two, three, four, five packs of cigarettes. When I collected two hundred consecutive cases and 99 percent of them had been smokers or were smokers, I thought, well gee, this deserves a report. Being in the Secretary of the Army's office, I wasn't under the Surgeon

General, I belonged to the Secretary of the Army, so he wasn't anybody to report it to. So I got chummy with the Public Health Surgeon General, who was a chain smoker himself. He wasn't very sympathetic with my thoughts. But I kept feeding him data as it came in and (would you be interested in several of these papers I wrote?)

CGR:

Yes very much so. I'd be interested in anything that you've written.

ECJ:

Well let me go get you a couple.

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