

J.OSCAR FITZALLEN H. ORR  
Experiences and recollections in connection  
with "B" and "C" War Crimes Trials of Japanese after WW2

Interviewed by  
Charles G. Roland, M.D.  
23 April 1985

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Charles G. Roland, MD:

Can I ask you, sir, what is your full name?

Oscar Orr:

My full name is, I have lots of initials, but my full name is Oscar Orr. And I have three other names but that was due to my mother and father having a little argument the night I was christened. I'm officially on the army list as J.O.F.H. Orr, but I go by the name of Oscar Orr.

C.G.R.:

J.O.F.H., that's impressive. That's a lot of initials.

O.O.:

That included my grandfather's name and my father's name and my mother's favorite brother. But I was intended to be only Oscar Fitzallen. That was my father's second name, Oscar. I'm the second, my son is Oscar Fitzallen, he's the third. So that's all of it.

C.G.R.:

What is your birthplace and birth date?

O.O.:

My birthplace is on that Indian reserve in that picture right there, called the Red Pheasant Reserve. I'm not an Indian but I'm what you call a non-treaty Indian [laughter]. My father was engaged as an instructor on that reserve and I was born in that house.

C.G.R.:

And where is that?

O.O.:

It's just south of Battleford, in the Northwest Territories. In those days it was called the Red Pheasant Reserve. It was a sort of an orphan tribe of Blood Stoney Indians. They called them Stoney Mosquitoes, but they were sort of orphans. They didn't belong to the Crees. They didn't belong to the Bloods, they didn't belong and they were adopted by one of the local tribes and I was born there.

C.G.R.:

And what was your birth date?

O.O.:

My birth date is 27th of July 1892, and I'll be 92 now.

C.G.R.:

Do you mind if I take your photograph?

O.O.:

Not a bit, no.

Remind me, I want to show you a piece of shell they took out of my head. But I'll show it to you later.

C.G.R.:

OK. Was that in the Second [World] War?

O.O.:

No, no, first.

C.G.R.:

First World War.

O.O.:

I was in the Second War, but didn't do much real soldiering. No, in the first war. But I have it mounted in the other room.

C.G.R.:

Could you tell me what you were doing in the Second War?

O.O.:

In the Second War I was in the militia as a Guinea, that's what they called the Home Guard. Then secondly I was asked to take this job as the assistant (it sounds like a big mouthful), Assistant to the Adjutant General of Pacific Command, which I did. I was then a Major, I guess, and I went to headquarters in Victoria, Fort Point Barracks. I lived there for quite a while, over a year, I guess, at that job. I was in that job right until the end of the war.

And when the war was ended they asked me to go to this one. They couldn't get anybody else to take it, and I just said I didn't want to go anywhere. But I wouldn't refuse, you know, if they wanted it. I'd do what they told me but I....Anyway, I went to Japan. First of all I went to Ottawa for a few months as an assistant -- what in the hell do they call it, Assistant Adjutant General, I think.

Then I went from there to Japan in charge of, in command of the War Crimes Section for the Far East. Nothing to do with the big political trial in Tokyo, which was similar to the trial in Nuremburg. They had to have the same thing in Japan. But I had nothing to do with that. Mine was purely military, for the Far East. That included Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, and Hong Kong. I was under two generals. One was the Lord [Louis] Mountbatten, at Singapore -- he was in what they called Southeast Asia Command -- and General Douglas MacArthur, who was in Tokyo in what they called SCAP, which meant Supreme Commander Allied Pacific. I was attached to his camp there and

to Mountbatten's in Singapore. I never met either one of them but I'd seen them. And it was quite a sight to see old MacArthur. He was quite a boy.

Anyway, I went there and I was between Hong Kong, Singapore, and Tokyo, Japan, 14 months over there, until we wound up the War Crimes [Trials] as far as we were concerned. And I came home. I had a staff of about, I think there was five of us that I count; four of us, actually, and me. Was it four? I've forgotten. Maybe four, and three or four warrant officers and a couple of sergeants, I think. We had our real headquarters....I left some of them in Hong Kong under a Major Puddicombe, who afterwards became a judge in Montreal in the superior court. Beverly Puddicombe, he was a First War veteran. The others were, except for one of my sergeant-majors, or warrant officers, were all second war. One of my sergeant-majors was in the first War. And that was about it. We worked back and forth. I think I left two in Hong Kong and most there were in Japan. That was about it.

Of course, the courts were American courts. But they had one or two Canadian officers. There was a Colonel Moss from Toronto, from the Governor General's Bodyguard, and Colonel Marty Griffin, from Vancouver, a lawyer. I knew him quite well. They were used as...they were both lawyers, I think, and they used them as the law officers on the trial. I think that's what they did, I'm not sure now. Anyway that was the set-up.

We had to always use American rules of evidence and so on, which were somewhat disconcerting to me because I was trained in the different English common law and so on. It was all right.

We got along with it. Mind you I took a lot of American cases. I did a lot of American cases. They then would help me with Canadian. Sometimes we'd have Canadian cases and the prosecutor would be an American, and other times I would be prosecuting an American, when I say an American I mean largely American because they never captured a few Canadians, or a few British, a few Dutch. And we had a Dutch section too. Not under me but there was a Dutch and there was a Chinese, and every bloody Asian. That was the set-up, and I was there 14 months on that.

Incidentally, one of the jobs I did for Ottawa when I was there -- nothing to do with the army -- but they were sending back [to Japan] at their own request thousand of Japanese [-Canadian] citizens who who had been moved from the coast or anywhere they wanted them to go, they were fed up they wanted to go home. I was asked to meet them, which I did. I met the ships that came in and did whatever I could to make their return smooth, you know. That was all, but I sometimes had to go myself, sometimes I sent one of my officers, that was it. I had no part in the big trial, the big political trial. But I saw it. I was there as a spectator once or twice.

C.G.R.:

-  
Did you have any involvement in the trial of Colonel Saito, for example, at Hong Kong.

O.O.:

Who was he?

C.G.R.:

He was the medical officer at Hong Kong.

O.O.:

Oh yes, I remember him, but he was tried by, I guess if he got tried, he would be tried by either Major Puddicombe or some of the British. Because the British had more prisoners in Hong Kong that we had. But I do remember Puddicombe had one or two cases. I think he had part of the trial of "The Kamloops Kid." Before the military court where he was found guilty. And then in Lord Mountbatten's staff, it wasn't confirmed, finally, out of court, because they held that as he was a British subject and should have been tried in a civil court. They turned around and tried him in a civil court. But, of course, we would have nothing to do with that. And they found him guilty. When he was found guilty he jumped up and raised his hand and shouted, "Banzai!" And that was it. But I don't think he was a British subject. I think he was on one of those fake birth certificates.

C.G.R.:

Oh really.

O.O.:

That's my own private opinion, because I remember in Tokyo seeing a report showing where he had been born, the address in Tokyo, and his family were an old Samurai family. Mind you, he could have been that and still born in Kamloops, but I think he was one of those false birth certificates that were a very big problem before the war. I say false, but they were not false, they were genuine as far as being issued. But they were issued by the local office to cover kids who were not even born here. So they were genuine in that sense. Anyway, that's what I heard. But I don't remember what happened.



What does Ken [Cambon] say? Does he know?

C.G.R.:

No. He doesn't know.

O.O.:

Well, God! I've forgotten. You may find it in somebody's papers, if he'll lend them to you. Well, let's have a look.

They were unable to find him. And they discovered that he was in Hiroshima at the time of the bomb. So I've forgotten what his name was, but that's the recollection that I have. For that reason he could never have been brought to trial. But I don't think he, I don't think he was Saito. He was an officer attached to the Mountain Artillery. Anyway, that's what happened to him but I don't see any more about it.

C.G.R.:

At the Silesian Mission. This is where all the men had their heads cut off?

O.O.:

At the Silesian Mission. By the way, I saw that boy [Norman Leath]. He lived, you know. He lived and came to Tokyo as a witness and I saw him. Well, I was quite well acquainted with him. He used to eat at the same table sometimes in Tokyo when he was there as a witness. He was an Australian, wasn't he?

C.G.R.:

I thought he was Canadian.

O.O.:

No it wasn't a Canadian. The Canadian died, I think. The fellow that had his head cut off, didn't quite make it. But, he

survived. I think he was the Australian. And there was also a nurse from the torpedoing of the ship Lisbon Maru. She was an English girl or an Australian and she was shot in the water as she was struggling shore.

C.G.R.:

Was that Banka Island near Sumatra?

O.O.:

Well, I don't know where it was.

C.G.R.:

I think I know of the case you mean.

O.O.:

She came to Tokyo to give evidence. I remember her, she was at the same table in the mess there. We were all living in a big building called Empire House, and she was there. But, no, I think the Canadian was killed. I'm not sure but I remember it. But, hell, isn't there a narrative of all this somewhere?

C.G.R.:

I suspect there is. I haven't found it yet, though.

O.O.:

Shephard, Ed Shephard had been in this camp at Omine. He had struck a guard, hit him. He was one of the Royal Rifles. And the guard had jabbed him with his bayonet. The American officers insisted, they were raising cain because I wouldn't prosecute this fellow, the guard. Well, I said, "What do you expect. Here's a prisoner of war, hits the guard, gives him a good poke in the nose, and the guard pushed his bayonet. What would you expect?" They couldn't see that. But anyway, I didn't prosecute and Shephard was quite satisfied. He was with

me.

But there were a lot of cases where we charged the commandant with stealing food parcels for his own purposes -- things like that. And cruelty, you know, batting a prisoner, beating him and....But that was common in the Japanese army. You see, looking back on it now, of course I don't feel any better about it, but I say this -- they had an ancient civilization. It was a civilization and it was as old as ours, but it wasn't our civilization. They thought nothing at all of cracking a private soldier over the head with a club, or the flat of a sword, or something like that. But, of course, we didn't.

Then, of course, there was another case we had where, I've forgotten the camp, I believe it was the same one as.... I think the man's name was Takata, and he brought a witness in his defense who was a Lieutenant General in the Japanese army and was the Inspector General of Prisoner of War camps. He gave evidence, which is on the record, that there was a complaint made about this commandant officer of this camp, by the civilians, that he was so lenient with the prisoners, he was coddling them. And this old guy, a general, said he had to make a special visit there to investigate it, to find out. And he found that he was just giving them the regular allowance of food and treating them just like that....Well, that was pretty strong evidence in his favor. However, there were other things that he undoubtedly was guilty of -- stealing food and taking it home, things like that. Whatever they had, they had. There were witnesses who carried the stuff home for him.

With regard to the medical care, it was damn little. You don't need me to tell you that. Ken will tell you that. They got moxibustion. But, of course, they [the Japanese] believed in that. I said to one fellow, "Well, have you ever read The Wandering Jew by the French author Sue?" My God! they'd never. He talks about moxibustion in the time of Napoleon, in France. It was a recognized thing. Well they couldn't, of course, our people couldn't see that. Many thought that was foolish, you know. It was very difficult sometimes to hold the balance of what was....But there was lots of crimes committed.

I'm sorry I can't send my mind back to Japan.

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