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Experiences as a POW in Asian Theatre

Interviewed by

Charles G. Roland, M.D.

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Hannah Chair for the History of Medicine

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Charles G. Roland, MD:

I'll ask you to begin Mr. Hunt, if you would, by telling me your full name and where you were born and when and all of that kind of information please.

Joseph Arnold Hunt:

I was born in St. Adelaide, Quebec, in 1910.

C.G.R.:

What date?

J.A.H.:

1910 in December, 21st of December.

C.G.R.:

Twenty-first of December; just before Christmas.

J.A.H.:

That's right.

C.G.R.:

And your parents?

J.A.H.:

James Hunt.

C.G.R.:

What did he do?

J.A.H.:

He used to work as foreman on the river, driving the lumber. He used to be a game warden for the Americans on the North River. And after I started to grow up and I come out of school, I was 16 at that time, with just a small school thing, there was no....

C.G.R.:

One-room school?

J.A.H.:

Yes. And my first trip I made, I left home and went to Malwi, working in the lumbering camps. There I had the misfortune of fracturing three ribs. I went to a hospital in, it wasn't a hospital it was a hotel, in Thordon. At that time they had the Schooner liquor, and one night there was some fellows from the hotel came down to Mr. Sinets. They wanted me to go down the cellar to see if there was any liquor. I told them I had no rights to go down there, I was just a porter there. Oh, they says, "You'd better go." So I said, "No, I'm not going." So I went and I lied down on my bed. The table was like over there and my bed was right here and there was a room bared off, just a pull curtain, you know. So anyway, I said, "Oh, go to hell you guys, I'm going to bed." When I, just from I saw on the bed this way, they came in, they said, "Hey, you want to go down to the cellar?" I says, "No, I'm not going down the cellar," I says, "for nobody." They wanted me to get down on my knees and say my prayers. No way. They were going to make a job I think. No. Anyway, good luck. They were led by Dave, and Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. O'Connor came in and a fellow by the name of Cote, Willy Cote. I thought this was it. I told them. So anyway they took them out. Now, I didn't know it but the old lady and the old man went upstairs, and they barred themselves in their room. They asked me where was the old lady. I said, "I don't know." They must be somewhere. So they went upstairs and they found them in their rooms.

C.G.R.:

Did they?

J.A.H.:

Yes. So they got them to open the doors, so everything is OK, he says. They told their names, it was Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Cote. They said that the guys wanted to rape the wife. Anyway, when they got out of there they talked it over, and next morning they sent the sheriff to come and arrest the guys. From there, I was there about a month maybe, landed up there. I went back to Malwi and started working in the same camp. My brother came there, Gerald Hunt, and Eddie Murphy and was cutting pulp. By Jesus, those people used to swear, it was something awful. I says, "I'm not staying here." One night their camp caught on fire, the office, and they just had time to get out in their underwear. A little dog burnt in the camp.

Anyway, the next morning me and my brother said we're going, I said, "This is no place to stay." So finally I went out to get our wood scale, the numbers for our wood pulp are mixed in amongst theirs. "How come?" I says, "Our pulp is in with theirs?" That there is something only that our wood scale was sharp. And come into the camp and at that time you know they used to make the yeast in a big pail there to make bread. And they had that hanging over the stove. And one guy said to me, he says, "You haven't enough pulp to pay what you bought." I said, "What did I buy?" He said, "A pair of moccasins." I said, "Well, there's enough, I'm not crazy." I says, "You go and get my numbers and I'll do your pile of pulp wood and scale the wood or else I'll see about it." So anyway one word led to another and I got mad. I threw off and I had two feet in the bottom of

the pail and it all came down over the stove and it made a great pancake [laughter] on the stove. So anyway, they made out our time, so much a day; we left there and there was oh, about 30 or 40 that left the camp. They noticed that there was dirty work going on. Then they wanted us to go back. We don't. We come down on with a horse, on horseback and they wanted us to go back. No, we don't want to go back. So we kept on.

We came out to Malwi, and from Malwi we start walking up by foot. We walked up and we slept somewhere in Fox River. Fox River we started walking again and we come to a house there. And they went in there and it was a person had died and it was a funeral parlor. We went in there and said a prayer. A fellow in there, he says, "Your not going to walk any further, you're going to sleep-home." I says, "Oh no." He says, "No, no," he says, "you're coming to sleep home with us." Anyway, we went in and we slept at this person's house. The next morning we landed up in Gaspé.

C.G.R.:

Now was this just before you went in the service?

J.A.H.:

Oh yes, long before.

C.G.R.:

Oh, long before.

J.A.H.:

Yes, it was in 1930.

C.G.R.:

Maybe we could go up to the war years, could we, and you

could perhaps tell me how you got into the service.

J.A.H.:

Well in the service I started up, in the service I was working at the mill and one day this one fellow says, "Oh," he said, "your not joining up in the army?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Why not join up?" Anyway I joined up with the, what the hell do you call it, the Quebec regiment there. I was joined up with a Quebec regiment and they said, "You're English." I said, "Yes." They said, "Why don't you join up with the English regiment?" So there was a fellow that said, "Join up with the Royal Rifles." I said, "It don't make no difference to me," so I joined up with the Royal Rifles.

C.G.R.:

So this would have been what, 1940?

J.A.H.:

No, 1939.

C.G.R.:

1939, OK.

J.A.H.:

I joined up with them and went up to Quebec for training. My brother joined up, Hector. And Alfred joined up and two other brothers joined up but not in the same regiment.

C.G.R.:

How many brothers did you have?

J.A.H.:

Only ten brothers.

C.G.R.:

Ten brothers! really!

J.A.H.:

And six daughters, sisters.

C.G.R.:

Six sisters. Oh my, big family. How many of the boys joined the army?

J.A.H.:

There was six altogether, except one didn't pass. Gerald didn't pass, he had to come back here. One eye couldn't see well. There was five of us in the army.

C.G.R.:

So you went up to Valcartier did you?

J.A.H.:

Valcartier. We took our training there. From Valcartier we went over to Sussex; from Sussex we came back and went to St. John's, Newfoundland. We came back from there.

C.G.R.:

Excuse me, one question, what was your service number?

J.A.H.:

E29864.

Oh I guess after Valcartier, we went up to stay awhile and then they told us we were going on a trip. We didn't know where. I know we left and took a boat in Vancouver.

C.G.R.:

Was that the Awatea?

J.A.H.:

The Awateah. We went overseas, stopped at Pearl Harbor for awhile. From there we went into Hong Kong. There we stayed at

the Hong Kong barracks there. We started taking drill every morning. One day we got notice that the leave was ended and be sure if anybody is pointing a gun at you not to miss them. So we knew that there was a war on.

We crossed over and....

C.G.R.:

Now what company were you in?

J.A.H.:

D Company.

C.G.R.:

And who was in charge of that, which officer?

J.A.H.:

Captain Price. There was.....

C.G.R.:

That's all right. We'll come back to that.

J.A.H.:

There was two others. Bradley and there was an old officer, he's dead now.

C.G.R.:

Well it's too long ago.

J.A.H.:

Parker, Major Parker.

And we got across there and one of the guys got shot getting off the boat.

C.G.R.:

How, you mean accidentally, or.....

J.A.H.:

No, he was fired on by the Japs, I guess. Phil Crosman

[E29866, died 21 December 1941] got shot as he got off the boat. And I guess one of his officers was wounded there too.

Anyway we started up along the road and we come to this bridge here and they met signs to go down the sides. So I went down the side and there was a boat there at the river. So the guy said we'll take the boat and go across. And one went to push the boat out and there was three or four shots fired. So anyway I said, "Get the hell out of there." So anyway we came up under the bridge and we crossed the water up to here with our rifles over our heads and went up the other side. There was big buildings there and they were all afire. Anyway we got up into the hills finally, we got up into the hills crouching along the road. We slept up in the hills there that night and they had what they called dugouts there to sleep in. And different ones on guard.

So anyway this night I was on guard and these bloody monkeys, I was on guard and a monkey was up in the tree and he made a jump right behind me. He jumped in front me and I just had the bayonet through him. I thought sure it was a Jap. He started off. Anyway they came out. That's a monkey, I said, jumped down in front of me and I hit him with the bayonet. He said he shouldn't be dead. It's not my fault.

Anyway, later on, a day after that we were out at the edge there, looking across to the other side and there was a bridge. And me and Byron Willett [E30010]. There were little trees there and we were sitting behind that. Anyway he says, "There are tanks coming." And we seen down on the other side of the bridge

fellows giving signals with a flag. We knew it wasn't our flag, it had a rising sun on it. So I said, "Try a shot at it and burn it." He said, "We didn't get no orders yet." But I said, "They're Japs."

But anyway somebody fired. And then they gave orders to fire the tanks as they were coming in. The fellows in behind us with the Bren gun there was firing on them. We seen the fellows with the flags, waving the flags. We can't say we saw them shot but anyway the flags fell. And the fellow that was coming across with the big tanks there, when they come up to the bridge, the Bren carriers they must have hit one of them, they went crossways into the bridge. And it was kind of a while before they kind of blocked the traffic there and they started jumping out. One fellow came out on the bridge. I fired and the poor fellow, I don't know if he jumped over the bridge or if I shot him. He sure went over in the water. But that day it was hell on earth, all day till darkness.

C.G.R.:

Now this was all on the island that you are talking about?

J.A.H.:

Yes.

C.G.R.:

Not on the mainland.

J.A.H.:

No.

C.G.R.:

Yes, I thought that, I just wanted to be sure.

J.A.H.:

So that way the evening started to camp down there of which coming up the hill right towards us. We were throwing grenades and things. They caught the grass on fire and shot them back -- they were buggers for that. Finally that night Captain Price sent me down to get a blanket that we put on the ground, where we had the kind of huts there in the ground. I went down and got the blankets and I shoved them in my cover-all suit and put them on my back and started to come up. On the way up, Japs started firing on me. I could feel the pulling in the, they were shooting but hitting into the blanket and into the....Anyway I just pulled it off and I crawled up, I left everything there. Anyway I got up to where they were. But old Captain Price said, "To hell with the blankets, we'll manage. Just forget about the blankets and the coveralls."

We were talking and the first thing "zing" -- felt a whistle, got me in the helmet here and knocked me cold. He thought I was shot. When he picked me up he said, "Where are you hurt?" I said, "I'm not hurt." He said, "What happened? You're not hurt?" I said, "No." I said, "I'm dizzy." He looked at my helmet, there was a ridge in the helmet where the bullet had hit. He said, "By geez that was a close one."

So it was a day or two after that, we were crawling up in another gulch. There was some trees, high trees further on. And there was me and a couple of other guys. I can't remember their names, it's so long ago I've forgotten that. It was blowing over there. There's no wind here. All of a sudden bang! "Oh," he says. He fell back. He got shot in the leg. The first thing,

bang, and I can't say it was me that shot them because it was somebody else. But there was three of them up in that tree. They come down, when they come down they almost scared you. He yells out, "My God!"

Anyway, we got, some of the rest got down to the headquarters there, the place there, the headquarters, first aid. And we kept going that night. I remember McRae, George McRae [E29951, died 21 December 1941], they were coming up the hill and Mr. McRae says, "Come on you yellow bastards." He got up, he stood up, and the minute he stood up they shot him down. But that was another night.

Jim Tarrel, he got shot in the leg, and there was water catchments there. So we got, the four of us, we got him, four or five of us who got him. We drug him down that catchment down to that first aid there. We got a bite to eat there and then we got back.

C.G.R.:

The catchments, is that what they called nullahs? Is that what they called a nullah?

J.A.H.:

It could be.

C.G.R.:

It's like a ditch or....

J.A.H.:

It's made like round like this for the water when it drains. They called them water catchments.

C.G.R.:

Yes, I know what you mean. OK. Well this must have been

pretty close to the surrender then, was it?

J.A.H.:

No, it was quite a few days after that that we, it was a couple of days up there we had nothing to eat. We'd just stay there and watch -- "Is it me or you going to get it?" Finally, one day we got out, it was this day that I remember I went up the hill, they sent us, me and Major Parker with another crowd. Sergeant MacDonald stood up on the hill in with the crowd, Major Parker came down the hill. Now, down the hill here there was a police station near the sea. Here was a hospital and over there was a graveyard. We came down, it was in between the prison and the hospital, and there was a place there, kind of a hut, little building far in the graveyard -- there were Japs in there. So anyway, they finally got them. But a fellow by the name of Eursal Kaine [E30003, RRC] got shot across here.

C.G.R.:

Kaine?

J.A.H.:

Eursal Kaine, he got shot across the temple. So Major Parker says, "Arnold, go and get that guy and bring him in the hospital." So I got there, but there was shots ringing on both sides of my feet. But I got him in the hospital, when I come to the hospital there, to the door, the Hindus there, they took my rifle. I went in. When I went in I noticed one of our guys was shot in the tummy. I come and got him and put him on a bed there, and when I went out the guard was gone and my rifle was gone. So I went in and I said, "They're gone with my rifle."

The doctor says to me, "You take down those beds there and put them out on the floor. Just forget about your rifle." So anyway I had no choice.

So finally, afterward, Sergeant Major _____, the bugler, he was brought in, he was shot in the mouth here. The doctor says, "Come over here." I went over, he says, "You hold down this man's hands, arms." So I hold down his arms. He says, "Just a minute." He pulled out his picture and said, "Give that to my wife." I said, "Keep your pictures, Sergeant Major, you're going to get out before me maybe." So anyway, he put his pictures away, and they said keep quiet. So anyway they, but apparently nothing helped him that day. He got the bullet right down in here.

C.G.R.:

Down in the jaw.

J.A.H.:

Down in the jaw. He pulled that out and anyway after he says, "OK, pull down some more beds." So anyway I was taking down some more beds and putting them out along the wall and "Chubby" Powers [Vincent Powers, E30720, RRC], I don't know whether it's right but we always called him "Chubby" Powers, came in and he had shrapnel in the legs. They took his revolver and they threw it out the window. So, I jumped out through the window. It was maybe seven, eight feet high. It was how they played out all over. Some were still living and moaning -- arms off and some with the legs off. I picked up the revolver and started crawling down. I went in behind the prison. And I came along and it was just like skulls of horse, that they're dead --

ducks and geese and came along with little pigs. And when I came there, hog. I jumped, I was ready to shoot with the revolver. I was going to get at the pigs on the way. Don't pass there, got up through the sage there, up the hill....

C.G.R.:

Excuse me, can I just ask one question before I forget? The doctor you mentioned who told you to get the beds, was he a British doctor or a Canadian doctor?

J.A.H.:

I couldn't say, sir. I don't remember.

C.G.R.:

OK, go ahead then please.

J.A.H.:

Finally I got up into where we had left off there, up in the hill where Sergeant Macdonald was. I said, "Canadian coming in." He says, "What's your name?" I said, "Arnold Hunt." He says, "What's your number?" I said, "E29864." He said, "What regiment." I said, "Royal Rifles, B Company." He says, "Come in with your hands up." I come in with my hands up. He says, "Where is your rifle?" I says, "They took it down at the hospital." He says, "What revolver have you got there?" I says, "Chubby Powers." He said, "You shot Chubby Powers and took his revolver." I said, "No. I was under the officer there." He said, "Anyway get out of here. They've got the big guns right on me," he says, "get out of there." So anyway he was going to shoot me. Oh yes, cursing me, boy, and was going to shoot me. He said, "You shot Chubby Powers, you god damn dirty son of a

whore." I said, "No, no," I said, "come on, you don't know what's going on down there." So anyway I got out and I got about 100 feet from there, in behind a cliff of rock. I wouldn't have been here today. There was nothing only ground and rock. Everything was -- a big cannon they had shot right in to where we were standing. We finally, we had it, that was on the 25th. I'll never forget it. It was a sad day.

C.G.R.:

I expect you've thought about that every Christmas since.

J.A.H.:

The less I want to think of it the better, sir. But they raised a white flag and we walked in. They took all the rifles and all that. So down to Hong Kong we went.

There in Hong Kong we were put in a kind of barracks there and paraded in. So they put us to work. To start, they put us to work making an airport -- leveling lots of big hills to make an airport.

C.G.R.:

Kai Tak?

J.A.H.:

Kai Tak, yes. We worked there quite a while. So one day a Japanese come, say, "you work hospital." Fine. I went to work in the hospital. I just looked after the fellows that were sick there. Then the diphtheria, whatever you called it, dysentery started up there. That was awful. One night I was sleeping between three dead people.

And we had beriberi -- it was all swelled up in your legs. You weren't supposed to have any water, you got just to drink a

bit of milk once in a while. You couldn't eat any rice. Then one day a Japanese come to me, "Shigoto." He said, "You go to work." I says, "He's sick." I says, "bioki." He drew off and he hit me hard, "bioki ni." He said, "not sick." All right. A couple days after he was out by the fence there, out in the yard, so I went, it was a Chinese woman and a man came along, they wanted to give us some rice. So one of the guys went to get the rice and the guard noticed him. And he come over and he caught the two of them, they took them and tied them up to a post, iron post there, they took them and about a dozen practiced bayonet on them. They pulled their clothes down and practiced bayonet on them. Anyway, they took them and went and got some gas or oil there, and they threw it over them, and they burnt them, half alive.

C.G.R.:

Isn't that terrible.

J.A.H.:

Yes. So anyway later on, I don't want to talk too much about that, later on I was transferred over to Niigata, Japan.

Going to Niigata, Japan, I was put down in the bottom of the boats in the coal, we were sleeping in the coal in the bottom of the boat. Half the guys were sick, throwing up. Myself I was sick, throwing up. And when we got off there, we had trouble walking, we were sick. They just shoved us around, booted. So they brought us to a camp there in northern Japan and told us the first one ran away or did something like that would be shot. So anyway, we haven't much chance here.

C.G.R.:

Do you remember what your number was at Niigata, your POW number?

J.A.H.:

No. When we was in the camps we started to work. One night we came in, some was working on the boats, some was working in the foundries.

C.G.R.:

Where did you work mostly?

J.A.H.:

In the foundry.

C.G.R.:

Excuse me, was that Shintetsu, the company called Shintetsu?

J.A.H.:

Oh, it could have been, I wouldn't know. I was sleeping along near the wall in this camp, all around the walls. And when I woke up I heard cracking -- it sounded like a hurricane or something. At first I start thinking, "What's going on, what's going on?" Well anyway, the first thing I know I was outdoors. I don't know how the hell when the camp just went, opened out and crashed down. It was a lot, someplace that died in that crash, a lot injured. There were a number lifting a log off a man. The poor man that's tried to lift it today, I guess I wouldn't be able to. I guess the good Lord helped me to do it.

C.G.R.:

Oh yes, crushed his legs.

J.A.H.:

Yes. Anyway, after we got that, they put us in another

camp, put us into another camp. And we used to go out to work every morning. Some mornings somebody reached down to pick up a butt of a cigarette, they'd see a cigarette, they'd go to pick it up they'd get a wallop across the back or across the arms, they had those, like handles they used for a four-foot hammer, you know. They'd throw that around at the ends and they let you have that across the back or where-ever they felt like hitting you.

C.G.R.:

Did you do any work at Niigata as an orderly, as a medical orderly?

J.A.H.:

No. Down in Hong Kong.

C.G.R.:

That was just at Sham Shui Po, was it?

J.A.H.:

Yes. One day I went into work in the foundry and the first thing they told me was, "You go to washroom," he says, "you benjo." Now, the banjo, I thought was music. I said, "Me can't play music, me can't play the banjo." I said, "No, me can't play banjo." Anyway he turned around and he called the guards, and they beat me up each in their turn. So I had a bad start. Finally, after the guards left the little foreman, I guess he was more Russian than he was Japanese, he says to me he says, "you laugh," he says at the interpreter. I says, "Me, no." He says, "Yes, you told him you can't play banjo." I says, "At home banjo music." "Music," he says "show me." I says, "Throw me your pencil and your paper." So anyway when he got a piece of paper

and he took his pencil, I showed him. "Ah, not same banjo," he says, not the same banjo. [laughter] By saying banjo I got a hell of a beating over it.

C.G.R.:

Maybe could we go back to Sham Shui Po for a while. I'd just like to ask you some questions about the work you did as an orderly, as a medical orderly. What exactly did you do? What were your duties?

J.A.H.:

Well, the duties there, you'd just give them something to eat when it came meal time. Besides that, sweep the floor. I didn't give any medicine or anything like that, just give them to eat. I didn't give them any medicine.

C.G.R.:

Did you help the men if they had to go to the bathroom? I mean did you help them if they were weak and that kind of thing?

J.A.H.:

Yes, yes.

C.G.R.:

Who did you work with? Who were the other orderlies you worked with yourself?

J.A.H.:

Now I can't remember because most of them were Chinese or Japs. There were a few ladies there but I don't remember their names.

C.G.R.:

Ladies, were there?

J.A.H.:

There was a Japanese lady, I guess.

C.G.R.:

Really.

J.A.H.:

It seems to me it was a Japanese lady. I know she was a doctor. She used to come around once a while.

C.G.R.:

How about the Canadian doctors, were they there too?

J.A.H.:

Yes, now it seems to me there was some Canadian doctors there -- Banfill and there was another fellow there, Crawford.

C.G.R.:

Crawford, very tall, tall....

J.A.H.:

Yes.

C.G.R.:

And how about Ray Squires? Do you remember Ray Squires? Does that name mean anything to you?

J.A.H.:

I heard the name but I can't....

C.G.R.:

How was your health, yourself, while you were there? Did you have any of these diseases?

J.A.H.:

Well I have that I mentioned the beriberi.

C.G.R.:

Was that the wet beriberi with the swelling and so on?

J.A.H.:

Yes. And later on I had pneumonia when I was over at Niigata, Japan. I used to come into the barracks, and would be laying down with quite a few others say, "shigoto - go to work." So we were sick. They'd say, "bioki nia -- you're not sick." They would give us a kick in the feet or the body -- they didn't look where they kicked you. Anyway, I was able to get up and go to work again. I started working back in the foundry. So one day I was bringing some pig iron and we were taking out a piece from the furnace and they came with the trolley and got it jammed between the legs. They had a chance to jump clear but I was in the center. So I had passed out. I come to I was behind the furnace. The Japanese foreman brought me a bit of rice. I didn't feel too much like eating rice after that. So anyway a few days sick or laid up with my leg, and I started to work again they put me working where they make the shafts for the boats. [End of side 1]

He was showing me how to make shafts and all that. I was working there three or four months and he was saying, "Shigoto, you're doing good." So anyway, one fine morning I came in and started to work and he says, "America eti domi." He says, the American soldiers no good they drop bombs under potatoes and their crops. Me, not thinking no longer than my nose, I said, pretty soon there will be lots of American soldiers." So I got another beating.

So they took me from there and put me on where they make little bolts, 8 inch and 12 inch. And working there one little Japanese working there he says, "Me you wrestle." I said, "No,

I not want." He asked the foreman. Anyway the foreman says, "Ok when there no work, OK. Work no wrestle." So anyway once in a while he would come and start throwing tricks on me, judo there and all that. So everything else was going on pretty fine. One day a fellow by the name of Demers [Emile Demers, E30162, RRC], he had traded some clothing for cigarettes. Anyway they took him and they beat him up. They pulled him all through the....He was bleeding from the nose and the mouth. Today, I guess he never got over it.

Finally, one day this Japanese come in and picked up a chunk of coal there and went to shove it in my mouth. When he went to shove out his arm, I caught his arm. I throw him over into the coal bin and he got laughing, you know. But the foreman come with a piece of iron there, about four or five feet long, and let me have it across the back. I fell to my knees and the little Jap, "No, no, no." He said no, don't. And the Japanese foreman made a drive at him with a rod of iron, the Jap. He turned around and hit the little Jap a slap in the face. So anyway I got up, when I got up, another drove an iron bar across the back. There's two Jap guards came along, they beat me up. Broke my nose, and in the mouth.

When they left I said to the foreman, I said, "Benjo." I went to the washroom and when I was coming back, I said, "Today I'm going to die. If the son-of-a-bitch comes to bother me I'm taking the shovel and splitting him in two."

When I was coming in the sirens started. When the sirens started, they all started out and head for the underground. We

came in underground, the Japs were pouring in behind us. And we got out and started to work, the siren goes again, about 20 minutes, maybe. They had a boat outside, they had an ammunition factory aboard it. The boat was just outside the foundry along the seashore. And they had dropped a bomb in that and every 10-15 minutes you could hear that tat-tat-tat-tat when the fires took up in that. You'd think there was somebody all along the land, shooting. So anyway, we come out at dinner and then went back out there to work, and come to dinner and there was a table about this high there all along. We used to sit back to back from one another, to eat. The windows there, all along on both sides, were all shattered and they just looked like they had took a pick-axe and picked all over on the table where the bullets hit. It's a good thing it wasn't at our dinner. We would have been shot down instead of the Japs.

So anyway, in the afternoon we started in again back underground. That night we got out at, it must have been almost 7 o'clock. We started to go into the barracks. It took the guards all they could do to keep the Japs away from getting at us. The next morning we come in....

C.G.R.:

This is what, the Japanese workers?

J.A.H.:

The fellows is civilians that wanted to get us.

C.G.R.:

Yes, right.

J.A.H.:

Well anyway, the next morning the Japanese officer come in,

"No work, you are going to rest. Shigoto Yasume." So anyway the next day there was the same, the third day the same. So anyway, I was out having my breakfast, a tin of rice, I thought I heard a plane come. I saw a plane all right. Coming down. I wasn't too sure if it was a Jap or an American plane. Anyway it come down so low, almost touched the camp. They dropped pamphlets. And they come to the other side there was a bunch of green wood there, he took a couple of the tops of the trees. If he had come any closer he would have crashed. Anyway, when I picked up the pamphlet I brought it in to Captain Price. And Captain Price come out after and he says, "Boys, I don't want you to go wild. Now the war is over we don't want you starting another war. We've got to keep quiet. But we're going to have some planes come in and bring some food and some clothing. And I want a couple of you to go up on the roof and we want to get some paint and we want to mark 'prisoners of war' on the top of the camp in big letters."

So anyway I and a couple of other guys, I just forget who it was, went up on the camp marking the...And we were just about done and this big plane was coming, coming so low it almost....And it dropped a barrel on the camp facing ours and it went through the roof and Corporal Dow was sitting down this way, and it went through the floor about a foot from where he was sitting. The second barrel dropped between that and the school, Japanese school, and it caught a Japanese woman or a girl and it killed her dead. So there were a couple of barrels fell in the school. They had that ghee oil in there. What a mess, we went

in there to get that, oh what a mess.

Anyway the next day they dropped some in behind outside the barracks. Me and Joe Ward, Joe Ward was a boxer, Joe used to show me how to box, and this stuff dropped outside the barracks in the parachutes. The old Japs was cutting the parachutes and taking the stuff and giving it to the women. Me and Joe Ward we went out, and Joe Ward caught the Japanese by the shoulder this way and the Jap turned and he hit and he fell and he took off. He caught the other fellow by the back of the shirt -- the old shirt remained in my hand [laughter], it was dropping off his back and they took off. So we picked up the stuff there and brought it into the camp. A couple of days after that they come dropping stuff again. They dropped some on the way out. There was the saw mills out near the seashore there. And Gord said to me, "We're going to get that." I said, "Hell we can't go there." He says, "Come on." We went down and there was a Japanese that used to rent bikes there. We went in there and took each a bike. There was a fellow coming up with his arms full. Joe Ward drove up alongside and drew off and hit him. [laughter] All these cans were flying, and he got up and took off on the run. We came down to where the saw mill was, where the fellows were loading truck up, lumber there. Joe Ward he talked pretty well better Japanese than me. He told them to unload that food there. He says to me, "Can you drive a truck." I said, "No, I've never drove a truck." I says, "OK. They're going to drive the truck." We let them load all the stuff, and drives into the camp. The cabin boys comes out, "Are you trying to start another war?" he says. "By Geez," he say "you did it didn't you." I said, "Yes it's our

food and we were going to get it."

So anyway, a couple of days after, who comes in, two police with this Japanese. I took the bikes and we put them up against the wall. Captain Price says, "When you were in town the other day did you take any bikes?" I said, "Yes, two." He said, "What did you do with them?" I said, "They're over there against the wall." So anyway I go and get them, get the bike and the old Japanese said something. The police officer says to me, "You know you could get shot for that. In Japan we shoot anybody who steals."

I said, "Yes, what about the Japanese when they took us prisoners in Hong Kong, they took our wrist watches, they took our Kodaks, and our rings, and they should have shot them too." He says, "Japanese do that?" I says, "Yes Japanese did that." I said, "I had two rings on my fingers, they took them, I had a Kodak, they took them, and my watch. I never got them back." He says, "Japanese did that?" I said, "Yes they did." I said, "And you're going to shoot us because we were fighting for our own rations." "Don't do it no more," he says.

But then one night we went out, me and three other fellows. We walked straight out there, met a police. Before we met the police we met a Jap. He brought us to where all the blind pigs were. They wanted us to go in there. We wouldn't go in. So anyway he left us on and pulled out and we came down and met a police. I told him, we were straight, we had left the camp. "Oh," he says, "come with me." I went, there was me and two other guys, I forget their names, he brought us into the police

station. The commandant, I saw everybody at attention, the same as we were at....After he calls the waitress, he brings a big bottle of American whiskey, saki, a big bottle of saki good. Now I started thinking, the guys either got poison, they let them drink alcohol off the engines there.

C.G.R.:

Glycol? Yes, I heard about that.

J.A.H.:

So anyway, I took a little taste of it. He said, "Good, good, don't be afraid." So we drank a bottle of saki between the three of us. And we took a bottle of strong stuff. He said, "Me show you my home." We went down to his place, down behind the prison there, a couple of acres from that prison. He took us there and we were acquainted with his wife and his daughter. His wife came out and put a big plate of grapes on the table and "eat, good, good eat." So he brought out some more strong American whiskey and says, "Me got lots of American whiskey." So anyway these other fellows got drunk. Opened the window and throwing up through the window. And the police officer was mad. He says, "He get better after." So anyway there I got, I said, "We're going to go." He said, "No you're going to sleep here. Japanese know I work for a Canadian." I says, "Yes." He said, "Sure. Japanese Imperial Army know I work for a Canadian," he said, "they cut my neck." He said, "You see that wall there." I said, "Yes." He said, "You see that wall there?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You see nothing there?" I said, "I see the wall." He said, "Just watch. Nice American plane." I said to myself, he's going crazy. Press on the button, little doors opened up, an

American plane there about this long. He says, "Me go back to America. I not stay here."

So anyway we slept there and the next morning we come into the camp and the Japanese started giving us hell. So I started going over and hit them a slap. He says, "Canadian war finished." But the day we left there, walked out, me and Joe Ward we took each a rifle at the guard house there and walked down to take the train. There this Japanese when they seen the train coming or heard the train blowing I grabbed the rifle by the stock, the barrel and I brought it across the track and I threw it through the crowd. They were awful yelling at me. I said, "I don't want no souvenirs, I had enough."

C.G.R.:

Well I guess that's a good place to stop.

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