

JOSEPH PATRICK POIRIER

Experiences as a Prisoner of War in the Asian Theatre, 1941-45

Oral History Archives

Hannah Chair for the History of Medicine

McMaster University

Hamilton, Ontario

L8N 3Z5

Interview No. HCM 6-90

Charles G. Roland, MD:

No, I know the name, but I don't know him.

Joseph Patrick Poirier:

He was my best friend from the age of 3 years old. When he joined, his father came home and told my father that the only son that he had, had joined the army. So I said, OK, I won't be here long. I'm going to follow in his steps. So I did. I signed in Matapedia as a volunteer. I went at night, we took the train there, a bunch of us. And we got to Quebec at three o'clock in the morning. We crossed over and they brought us to this Colfield Barracks in Quebec.

The next morning they put us on the trucks and we landed in Valcartier. It was close to dinner time and some of the boys were having dinner outside because they were painting all the huts. I saw my friend sitting down, so I went and tapped him on the back. He said, "What in the hell are you doing here?" I said, "The same thing as you." So I said, "I'd like to be in your company." He said he had had a few weeks advance. So I said, "Well I'll try to catch up to you."

I went in the same company but not the same platoon. So in the afternoon they gave us our outfit and what not. Then everybody went to a tavern to have a beer, and I yet don't like to drink no beer, I don't like it.

So we did our training in different platoons, but we would always see each other at night. It started one night, I was quite lonely in my bed, I said, "Oh, why did I join the army?"



He wanted me to go to the canteen with the boys.

I said I didn't like beer, and I said, why did I join the army. I was, between the two, kind of lonely, I said, "Ah what a place." But no sooner than some of the boys heard that I was playing the piano, I played the piano by ear, so they came over and got me out. I started playing the piano for them. People used to give me beers for playing. I didn't like beer, so I used to pass them on to my buddies. So it kept on like that.

Then all the moving of the regiment started, from one place to another. We landed in Sussex, and from Sussex we were to Gander airport. From Gander we went down to St. John's, the city of St. John's. We were there for a little while and then they transferred us to St. John, New Brunswick. We had an older colonel, another colonel, a brigadier from the First World War, he was quick, a mad guy, mad at himself. He used to have stand-tos early in the morning and what not, and he always had us on the stand-tos hour, so Colonel Home, our colonel, said that we had to move out of here because the boys are not satisfied, and myself, because we were always on stand-by. We weren't allowed to go out camping. And then from there, we got on the train and went to Vancouver. In Vancouver we got on the boat and sailed to Hawaii.

CGR:

The Awatea?

PP:

The Awatea, that's right. I was sea-sick for twenty-one days across. I almost passed out. I couldn't keep a chunk of ice or orange juice or nothing, it would come up right away. We

hit some bad weather there. Anyway, when we landed in Hawaii I got out and I was very weak. I used to fall over just like a drunk man. But soon we hit the deck again for Hong Kong. It was Honolulu and then Manila. We landed in Manila. Manila wasn't a very clean place, by the looks of things. We never got off the boat, we were not allowed off the boat. Then we headed for Hong Kong.

When we arrived in Hong Kong I spent a week in the hospital. I was so weak. I was dreaming that my bed was shivering and was moving around. They kept me there for about a week.

CGR:

Please go ahead then and tell me a bit about your impressions of Hong Kong.

PP:

Yes. When we arrived in Hong Kong I made a promise, I said no matter if I never go back to Canada, it would only be by plane, no boat whatsoever, because I was so sick. But after the war I was glad to come home by plane or whatsoever.

Anyway, we were pretty well in Hong Kong. We had our passes and we used to go till midnight. We played in a band, we had parades. We used to parade, the United Church parade, and then we'd bring up the catholics. I remember once I asked my sergeant, I said I'm a Catholic, and I said I'd like to go to my church once in a while. I said, "We parade Catholic, and we parade Protestant", and I said, "I never can go to my church." He said, "Poirier you had better listen; you're in the army, you're not behind the plow," he said, "you've got to follow suit," he said, "no matter what church you go, it's for one God

and that's all." So I had to shut my beak.

Anyway we stayed there for about two or three weeks I would imagine, because...a little more than that. One Sunday we had a stand-to right after church parade. They organized us and we were shipped to the hills. We stayed in the hills there for a little while, and then they declared the war.

CGR:

Excuse me, which company were you in?

PP:

I was in "B" Company before I was transferred to the Band. Like me and the other boys, coming from A, B, C, D, Company we all moved to Battalion Headquarters because all the Band Personnel has to follow a first field ambulance course.

But once on the field, like in Hong Kong, we were in the hills all in small tents, or whatever you call them, bivouac. And we sneaked through by tents, and with the rifle ready, on guard. Until the war started, then we heard the bombs, they were bombing all our camps, and what not. And that stood for twenty-one days, if my mind is not mistaken.

We were captured then. During the war it was pretty hard on them. I was in the band, and the band was the first aid [group], we went through the Field Ambulance course. My first guy that I picked up around eleven o'clock, I'll never forget that, but my first patient, in other words, there was a guy, they were young and I was with Captain Powers, do you remember the Powers that was Minister of Air? That was his son [E30720 Vincent Powers, Rfn., RRC]. [When the war started we were up in the hills of Hong Kong and what I meant to say, was it was my first experience to

render first-aid to an injured soldier at 11 o'clock at night in the fog and rain. I went in guessing where the man was until I heard severe breathing. Captain Powers was close to me. I wanted to say Captain Powers father was the Minister of Air in Quebec.]

CGR:

Oh yes.

PP:

They yelled, "Orderly, first-aid man, first-aid man, come on, there is a wounded man here." So I went down. I couldn't see where he was, only I heard him taking big breaths. As soon as I got close enough to his head to find out, I got a burst of blood, hot blood right in my face. And that seized me up. Oh, I said to myself, "Oh boy what's going on here? Am I going to go through this battle that way?" Anyway, I got cooled down, and then after that I was all right. I helped this wounded man to the ambulance because I was close to the road, and many more got wounded there. We put them all in the ambulance.

Then this guy was driving the ambulance, his guard, his bodyguard, was wounded, and it happened that he was close to me, so he said, "You get in with me and come to the base, to the hospital." I went with him, and there was Dr. Lynch from England, I don't know if you ever heard.

CGR:

I've heard his name, yes.

PP:

Dr. Lynch. He said, "I need a man and you are going to stay with me because I need help around here." So you can't refuse

orders in there, and you've got to follow suit. I said, "I'm with the Royal Rifles." It doesn't matter he said, "You're working with me."

So at the same time there was a Chinaman that came in, a Hong Kong Volunteer, who was fighting with us. He said, "There is a wounded man down in the ravine." So he said, "You better hurry up and get him," because he weighed about 200 and some pounds. So I went down, of course, with a stretcher, and the Chinaman. Picked him up and brought him to the medical service.

He marked this, he said, "Look him over, whatever there is for an operation." [Also Doc. Lynch had told me to look him over where the man was wounded and tell him.] So he had been shot in the stomach and he had about two inches of blood, just like Jell-O. So I opened that up and I seen where he was wounded. The doctor said, "We'll sew him up and then put him outside," and he died a couple of hours after. It was like that all night long. So the next morning he said we had to move, because the Japanese were getting close to us, we were getting machine-gun burst all around us, so he said we had to move. So we went down to Stanley. Before that I was under Captain Price and Dr. Lynch.

CGR:

Canadians?

PP:

Yes, they had the pulp mill. The Price brothers, Captain Charlie Price.

CGR:

Oh yes, I thought you meant a medical officer.

PP:

We had a ravine. In Hong Kong they save all the water, you know, the big tubs that they have, round tubs, just the ordinary tubs that would collect all the water that goes down the mountain then. They used to send us one at the time, one every seventy-five feet. And there was Japanese machine guns on top of those, on top of the hill, and they used to fire at us.

They fired on three men, one had it in the arm, the other had it in the leg, and the other in the knee, and they dropped, and they stopped. I was the fourth one. So Mr. Price said, "Well, you're in the army, you are the first-aid man, you go and pick them up." I can tell you, I wasn't very big in my boots. I ran down, but I went all over, zig-zag. So I managed to get those three boys, drag them away, and then the bullets used to skim the cement around me, and I was dragging them around.

So after, Captain Price sent a couple of boys up that mountain to shoot them, and they got them, up in the nest, the Japanese nest. And then we kept on. We had another road to go across. Quite a few of our boys got wounded there, too. We managed to bring them down OK through Stanley village.

At Stanley village, that was the place that we had to give up. We ran out of ammunition, and we were all in a great big house that was all holes as big as the window there, I suppose from the big guns of the Japanese. Around three o'clock in the afternoon we had to put our arms up and get out of the way, because otherwise we would have been shot and tortured to death; then a whole bunch of Japanese with machine guns came up to that house. They used to fire ahead of us or behind us to see if one

of us would run. But it didn't matter to the boys. Anyway he brought us to an old garage. And we must have been around a couple of hundred in that garage, all sitting down knee to knee. And we waited five minutes.

There was this Japanese translator, he used to come in and say that you only had forty minutes to live, because we are all going to kill you. He would repeat that every ten minutes, come back, open the garage door and say, well, you haven't got very long to live. Of course some of our boys lost their line, in other words start yelling and crying, and every one, well, their nerves would break down. We were without water and food, and we were on the last....So when the hour came up, the buses came around and they loaded all of us in the buses, brought us down to Hong Kong. That was in North Point Camp.

Our hard labor started there. Not the working, but the lack of food. They organized some stoves and food in cans and stuff that used to come in. We had no plates, no dishes there, so they made dishes out of cans and stuff like that to eat with. And we had all kinds of rice.

We were quite a mixture of people there. There was some Indians from India, and Hong Kong Volunteers, Chinese, and Portuguese, and Canadians, and English, there was two regiments from England there.

After a while the boys started to be sick. There was a hospital there that was in awful shape. I know one of our boys, Antilla [E30276 Leo S. Antilla, Rfn, RRC, d. 30 September 1942, Acute Enteritis], he died of hiccups. They tried everything, shots and everything, on that guy but they never could succeed,

and he passed away.

The hospital was in an awful condition. They had double beds, you know, that used to fold, an iron bed, big strips [of iron], and they were lying right on that. We lost quite a few of our boys there too.

They were laying on cement floors for I don't know how many days, and then they brought in beds. But they were so full of bedbugs and lice that you couldn't sleep at night. They started an infection in the skin from the bites of the bed bugs and lice. The Wallace beds, wooden beds, were packed full of bedbugs and lice. Oh it was awful. We got where we were all picked all over.

Anyway, we started getting more and more patients, more sickness. Then they transferred us to administration building in Kowloon, Sham Shui Po. Sham Shui Po was the old [regimental] camp and barracks where at one end and then the administration, that's where they started the hospital. And that's where all our doctors were, Dr. Gray from Winnipeg, Dr. Banfill and Dr. Reed.

CGR:

Were you an orderly at North Point?

PP:

Yes, I was an orderly there too. But the orderly, you had to stay in with the men. There was special work in the hospital, but you came back with the boys at night to sleep.

CGR:

I see.

PP:

In Kowloon, the administration there, we all had an

apartment between three orderlies that slept in those apartments. Then there was a burst-out of this diphtheria. I had a pretty bad room. I had patients with diphtheria and dysentery. Oh it was awful. There was at least two or three guys that passed away every day in my room.

CGR:

How many would have been in your room altogether? How many would it hold?

PP:

Well, there was some rooms bigger than others, but the worst we used to put in four little beds in one room, but the other room maybe it kept about six or seven like a little hall. I remember I had to fix up the [dead] patients, wrap them up in a blanket to send them to be burned or buried, one of the two.

I got, like a nervous breakdown, I said, "I can't stand that any more." I said, "This is getting on top of my head." And I started to cry. One man said, one of the RCAMC doctors said, "I want you to forget about the whole thing. They are not dying because it's your fault." My fault, we haven't got no medicine so we can't give them nothing to recover. So he said, "You better hang on to your coat, and everything is going to be all right. We're behind you, we're all behind you. Carry on your work."

CGR:

Now, who was it said this?

PP:

Captain Reid, Captain John Anthony George Reid, from Toronto. And that was a doctor, a real doctor. That's where

that Captain Banfill there, the one that pulled me out because, "If you can't do the work we'll have to get somebody else." And I got work, even though I was nervous and had tension. Anyhow, I carried on with that.

Then a bunch of doctors got together, there was about 2,000 men was supposed to go down to Yokohama, Tokyo. And the doctors had their pick, every doctor had a little slip and he would put it in a hat and one would draw a slip, with numbers, and here were the ones to go. Here was the ones that were to go to Japan. Captain Reid was one, and then there was Captain Gray from Winnipeg. He was the one choice that went down with a bunch of men. And then the doctors had a choice on their orderlies.

So I was a choice, and then at the same time I got diphtheria. And Morgan from Winnipeg, an orderly, we got what you call diphtheria. We lifted the men, they would throw up in our faces, and the next three days I had a mask on. I caught it all the same. But we were treated with an infection of antitoxin. We were supposed to be down in bed for at least fifteen days because after this injection it's really tough. I remember, I said to myself, "I'm going to go up on the second floor to see some of my friends," at night, after I got the injection. I didn't listen to him. I started going up the stairway and there was a patient coming behind me and I couldn't take my breath any more, I was gasping for air. So this guy took me in his arms and brought me back to the bed where Morgan was. Now, we didn't want to tell the doctor what happened because I wasn't supposed to move out of my bed. So Roy he helped me out, taking my breath and rendering me first aid. So I got out of it.

But then we had a bunch brought down to Japan. But that boat we went on, they were carrying potatoes and animals and all that. After leaving for Japan everything had dirt on. They didn't know that they gave us animal dirt. Down with the filth, that dirt wherever we were sitting down. Can you imagine me when I had the sea-sick? I had another sea-sick. I vomited on the neck of the other guy that was sitting, we were all sitting down there. I was sick all the way. And when we arrived in Nagasaki.

CGR:

Which draft was this? I think there were four all together.

PP:

We were, I guess, at one of the first drafts. It was 500 men that went to that draft to Japan.

CGR:

Do you remember when it was? I think the first one was January '43.

PP:

Yes, that's the time it was. I can't remember exactly the date.

So we went out to Japan and we were at Yokohama. That's where it was, the big camp, and it was the Nippon Kokan that we worked. They were building boats, gun boats, and freighters, and what not. When we first got there everybody had to work at Nippon Kokan. I got into a paint gang and we were with this Jap. We used the paint, five gallons of paint in the morning and five gallons in the afternoon. But the brushes were about a foot wide, and about 1 inch thick. And the Jap showed us how to do

it. It was no wonder that we went through five gallons of paint because we used the big brushes exactly we used to dip half of it in the paint, and you could make that go further. No wonder we went through ten gallons of paint a day.

But then in the camp they started to have more patients.

CGR:

Excuse me, before you get onto that, how many were in the gang?

PP:

Oh, we were about 15 of us in that paint gang. But they were all different groups, different, some were on the oxygen tank, and others they were markers, iron markers, the Japanese, some of them they learned a trade with chisels and everything.

Anyhow, it turned out that there was more patients and more patients getting fever, and getting diarrhea. It kept on going and always coming up with more patients. So the doctor then asked the camp commandant if they had orderlies. And you had to get orderlies for help in the camp. So that's why they kept me, and Bernie. Bernie was in another camp, he wasn't in Yokohama.

CGR:

He was at Niigata.

PP:

Niigata. That was another camp, so was Duguay [E30393 Joseph A. Duguay, Rfn, RRC]. Anyway, we started working on ships in the camp. The shifts were pretty long, it was from four o'clock till the next morning around eight, nine o'clock before we could do different shifts. We had about 38 patients, because when we went to Japan there was Mulcahy [P48688 Patrick F.

Mulcahy, Sgt., RRC], and then Sergeant Veale [H6026 Richmond F. Veale, Sgt., WG], and the McKnight brothers [H6830 Elmer E. McKnight, Pte., WG; H6865 Gerald E. McKnight, Pte., WG; H6863 Melville G. McKnight, Pte., WG], and Morgan [H6620 Francis J. Morgan, Cpl., WG], and me, there were quite a few, but we all had to work at the beginning, as I was telling you. And we just started hauling out the orderlies from the working party and they worked in the camp. But we had a hard time in the camp there.

CGR:

Doctor Reid was there?

PP:

Doctor Reid was in command, always in command. And then some American came in, he was this Major Kagy, he was a surgeon.

CGR:

I know that name, I've heard that name.

PP:

Yes, Major Kagy. He was good to me, because he called me, "My little Frenchman." And you know that I went over the top of the sergeant because he used to detail me, and I was only a simple soldier. He used to say, "I want my Frenchman here. Get prepared for an operation," and whatnot. The others used to feel bad about it because they were sergeant and corporal and he could take them but he didn't want them. He was the boss because he was a major, he was on top of Captain Reid, of course. And we had a Captain Finn, and Doc Wyler, he was a, his family was pretty high class in New York, in charge of the government or something, he was a pretty high class doctor. But Captain Reid and Major Kagy was always the boss around that case and so was

Winnipeg Doctor, Gray. Anyhow, we worked under those people and that's it for the time being.

CGR:

One thing that I wanted to ask about is, since the war have you done anything further along the orderly line, or medical work of any kind?

PP:

In the camp?

CGR:

No, no, I mean after the war, back in Canada.

PP:

No, I was offered a job but the pay, you were only paid about \$2,000 dollars a year, and that's why I didn't bother going. I got another job in construction. I learned the barber trade, but after the fifth haircut it was too hard on my eyes. I got a headache, I used to throw up over it, and I had to quit. So I went back to the Veteran's [Administration] and the doctor told me, "This is your eyes and this is too steady for your eyes, the hair and whatnot." So he said you'll have to quit that. And that's when I joined the construction and I was a timekeeper there for construction. I used to gather the time with the truck with the construction.

CGR:

Let me take you back to the camp for just a minute, if we can squeeze this in here. Can you tell me, when you were at Sham Shui Po what exactly did you do for the patients. I know there wasn't much to do, but what did you do? How did you spend your time?

PP:

First of all, they used to -- now, I don't know if it's God's truth or not, we had "Vitamin B," as a doctor called it. Now I don't know if it was sterilized water, anyway, we used to give injections, intramuscular injections. Every second night I'd got through about 100 and 150 injections myself.

I had jaundice four times from the lack of sugar and the lack of fat. And I had beriberi, dry beriberi, just a touch of it, the dry one.

CGR:

"Happy feet" or "electric feet"?

PP:

"Electric feet," shooting pain we called it. But some of the boys had it pretty bad. And I had headaches often. Headaches, headaches, enough to turn me down.

I had hemorrhoids and I was operated; I had infection in the rectum and there was glands, they operated on me in the prison camp. There was three doctors there and the orderlies and everything, "Now you've done enough butchering, Poirier, so we butcher you for awhile." Then I had a boil under the armpit, and they operated cold. After putting the forceps in it and opening it, and they used to look at me and say, "So Poirier, it's over." I didn't blink or nothing, I was red as a beet.

Anyway when I came back home, you know, I had a right eye, sore eye, and a headache. I went to the Veterans Hospital and there was an Indian from India with a turban, he was a specialist on eyes, and he found out that I had the beginning of an ulcer

right at the ball of the eye. So right away he said, "We'll try to kick him up, I mean to heal right away so we'll give you some medicine and some ointment." And you know something, after twelve years, three years ago, I had the same thing coming back. It was just like somebody throwing sand. Dry. At night I wake up around eleven o'clock and oh what a pain. I went down to see a specialist, it was a woman at Notre Dame Hospital, and she said, "you'll have to wait, I'm going to see a specialist, and he's going to examine you." She said, "I can't talk right now. I'll leave him and see what he found." And she does the same thing as him. Before I got in the chair she said, "He's got the beginning of an ulcer." Twelve years after! Just imagine. Then she asked me what kind of ointment did he give me, and drops. I still had the drops, I was so afraid to get another one, and I got one. So she got me the same drops and I got rid of it again. It's over three years now.

But I often have headaches, God! enough to throw up. It pounds in my head and I think I'm going to go nuts, you see, if there is a vein that bursts I'm finished.

CGR:

One of the things I wanted to ask you about is, would you tell me a little more about Dr. Reid? He, of course, has been dead a long time, I wasn't able to talk to him. Tell me a bit about what kind of a person he was, what he looked like.

PP:

Dr. Reid was one of the finest doctor you would have been able to meet. In other words is dedicated, the same as Major Kagy. He's the one that after I had a quarrel with Captain

Banfill, he's the one who took over. I didn't know of any operation in the camp, he used to do the listening, and he used to say, "Major Kagy you've got to operate on this guy right there," and he used to make a cross with his pen, and he never missed. Any operation that was there was a boo boo. That was the kind of a doctor, an amazing doctor.

When he came back, he wasn't at home very long and he took sick. We had altogether, we managed to buy him a nice watch, expensive watch, because he was so nice to us orderlies. And I was supposed to go up to Toronto, he had sent me a card to go and visit him, and I was going to go up and then I heard he passed away. He was one of the best doctors we ever had for anything, anything.

Well after Major Kagy took over, of course, he had the say there in the camp, it was the main thing. But Captain Reid, he was asking about this patient, this patient has got a sore ear, later a back, a front, and we can't relieve it, and is he supposed to go to an operation and make it out of this, because the boo boo is right there. He was a nice man.

CGR:

Yes, I wish I had had the chance to meet him.

PP:

Yes, it hurt me so much when I heard that he passed away; he looked so healthy. You know, in the afternoon he had asked the camp commandant if he had the permission -- there was a medicine ball that weighed about, oh I would say 12, 13 pounds, big medicine ball. The other orderlies didn't want to go at all, they never had enough strength, so he'd pick on the Frenchmen --

on me -- "Now, Poirier, you come and play with the medicine ball." Every time he threw that ball I used to back up about three or four feet. [laughter] I used to say, "It's too swift, Captain, my God! take it easy, after all." "Come on you can take it. God damn you!"

One day he had asked Morgan to check up this patient who had a high fever, and he came out, the patient, told the doctor he was 102, 103, and when he turned his head I sent the ball without knowing, and the ball hit him in the tummy, and he went down. I went over, to give him aid to bring him back up, and he said, "Go away, God damn you, you almost killed me! Wait until I get back here; you are going to get it!" Anyway he used to call me "Poirier for the medicine ball." I used to hate that because it took part of my strength.

CGR:

What happened to Morgan after the war, do you know?

PP:

Frank Morgan, he was a good little man too, and he was my best friend. I don't know what happened after the war. Even I didn't know; we were supposed to visit each other quite often, but we were so far apart, like Toronto and Winnipeg. And after all, the means weren't there, the money, it cost air traveling. So we always put it out to say, well, someday we'll get together and have a big meeting, all the Winnipeg Grenadiers, but the Royal Rifles are the ones that are left. And we had a nice meeting. We had a meeting in Quebec City and there was a few boys from Winnipeg. I remember Nicholson [H6264 William C. Nicholson, Pte., WG], he was an orderly over there too. I met

him and he's the one that told me that Morgan passed away. Oh, I was downhearted because I was supposed to see him. I had a hard time coming back because he wanted to take a little drink. I said, "You're not taking a little drink." I said, "You're going to meet your wife with your two daughters and you have to be careful; if you take a drink you're going to be drunk," because it didn't take very much. I got off with him, because he had me off to meet his parents, and I almost missed my train going back because of the crowd.

CGR:

This was in Winnipeg?

PP:

Yes, the crowd. I was rushing like hell to get back on the train. But, oh, his wife gone and she lifted him off the ground, she was crying, he was crying, the kids and parents and relatives as well.

CGR:

It would be a very emotional scene.

PP:

Yes. The same thing happened to me after I reached home. My mother went blind during the war. That hurt me.

In the prison camp I gave quite a few injections, intravenous, every second night I had a job. I remember the first intravenous, Captain Reid showed me how. It was a big husky guy. He was a company sergeant major, and I give him some calcium. Calcium was the medicine there if you wanted to boost a guy that was down-hearted and he couldn't move and he was really gone, we give him about 3 or 4 ccs of calcium intravenously. The

next day he said, "What in the hell are you giving to me? I just feel like a brand new man, and I want to jump over the camp."
[laughter]

You know something, after the war I got a craving for salt, and it was something out of this world. I used to eat salt by the teaspoon. One day the doctor at the Veteran's Hospital in St. Charles, in Quebec, the nurse told him I happen to eat a teaspoon full of salt. She said, "What are you doing that for? You haven't got no business doing that now. That's not good for you. I'm going to tell the doctor." And he got on my head, I'm telling you I got an awful going down from the doctor; he said, "You're going to cut that salt right out." Major Kagy had told me if your system craves for sugar, craves for salt, give it to him. He said when you have enough your system is going to reject that. Don't be uneasy about that. He always told us that. I told that to the doctor, and he said, "No, he's mistaken. Everybody makes mistakes, but he's mistaken. I want you to have no salt whatsoever." So no salt.

Coming back to this guy that I gave him the first injection, he passed out. Oh, I said, "Captain Reid, come here quick, quick!" He was on sick parade. I said, he passed out. Oh, he said, I know, you went too fast. Because calcium, you must give that very very slow. After that I gave him many many more and it went all right, except the first one. I got into a hell of a way there.

CGR:

So you worked in the Jubilee Hospital.

PP:

Yes.

CGR:

That was what, about four floors, wasn't it?

PP:

The third floor, we worked on.

CGR:

You were on the third floor.

PP:

Where all the dysentery cases were. I had the worst cases there, for heaven's sake. All the beriberis were out on the other side and all the ulcers, everything, but the blood was so thin that everybody caught everything, boils and ulcers and everything. I think that I had the worst ward, along with Morgan. Morgan used to work with me, the two of us together, in that ward. Diphtheria and dysentery -- dysentery means death, eh? Maybe in Canada they would have saved you but it's an awful germ that gets into your intestine and then it burns you out. You can't drink. I remember some of the guys used to drink half a cup of tea or water and they'd have to run to the toilet and pass right out. It didn't stop at all.

CGR:

Yes, it sounds terrible.

PP:

Oh, and the pain you went through. You were in the iron beds, and blood and mucus used to drip off that iron bed around the floor. We used to use papers. And the guys were dying like that, even dying in the toilet and all over the place. Oh they

were so sick.

CGR:

Terrible times.

PP:

That's why, you can not forget that when you work with those patients and see them dying in bed, bent in two with cramps. There was a guy that used to go about 48 times, that's quite a few times going to the toilet. It's awful. Like I'm saying, mucus and blood used to drip off your rectum, steady. And the cramps and everything you can imagine a big effect?.

I had dysentery, but very light. The same with beriberi. But diphtheria, caught me, I had injections of antitoxins. I was told by Captain Reid and Major Kagy that those antitoxins came from a stud horse, the blood of a stud horse. And it was too strong for me to take it, and that's why I had to take it easy, because I had to do this. Then I soon learned eh, how strong that was.

CGR:

On the whole, do you think that the Canadians did well as prisoners? I mean were there troubles, were there....?

PP:

After we came back?

CGR:

No, I mean in the camps.

PP:

In the camps. Well, there was a lot of things that were discouraging, hysterical sometimes. It was pretty hard to explain. There was always something on that, on that card

everyday. Some of the guys used to get discouraged and start running to hit their heads against the wall, and what not. Discouraging. That's something, the Japanese were frightened of a crazy man.

CGR:

I've heard that, yes, I've heard that.

PP:

They used to be very afraid, they got away from you, they didn't want to go outside with them and talk. But I was fortunate, you know something, I don't know if it's my French that got me so easy with the Japs, to learn the Jap[anese]. I learned it quite easy. Sometimes I used to help the doctors, [translate] what the Japanese doctors used to say, and the orderlies, their orderlies, Japanese orderlies. I used to get along, write everything that they were saying, and giving it back to our doctors. The English people seemed to be having a hard time to explain the way it was written.

I have a few prints maybe, if you're interested. It's all in that.

CGR:

Yes, very much.

PP:

You know that I copied the whole thing. I don't know if I have it in this booklet, my other French booklet. I don't think I have it here. Anyway I translated English, French and Japanese. I don't know if it's in this book.

[End of Side 1]

[I meant while in the Company which I was working subject

about a shovel they bought from Japan.] So they sent to Japan, and there was two young fellows that came in the company, so Dr. Stewart told me, he said, "Pat, we have two Japs who have come in for the shovels. I want you to talk to them in Japanese, see how they are going to feel." I said, "it's a pleasure." So they went to this fountain to drink water and I passed on the side of them, and I said, "Konichiwa" (good afternoon). He turned around and he started looking at me, where it was coming from, talking Jap. So when I came back I said something else, "le ca ga deska - how are you." Oh my God! if you could have seen him. Then he asked me, where did I learn my Japanese. Every morning they used to come in and say "Konichiwa," and bow at me and everything. We had fun. I only was there a couple of weeks, it was a surprise. [Recorder off briefly.]

CGR:

Oh yes, he [Dr. S Martin Banfill] and his wife are still living in the home they've been in at Percival Street, 87 Percival.

PP:

You never happened to meet Colonel Price?

CGR:

No, I know that he has been in an institution for a long time I guess.

PP:

He used to come at all our meetings that we had. He was such a nice man.

CGR:

I've heard so many good things said about him, yes.

PP:

Oh my God! The pride of the group the Price. They were some of them, the oldest one was a colonel in the first war. They were always the first in front of the men, not behind the men. The men used to follow them.

CGR:

Yes, so they were real officers.

PP:

And that's rare, eh. Real officers, and they are the real McCoy's, I'm telling you. And that's why the boys took pride in the Price brothers.

CGR:

Well anyway, no, Dr. Banfill wasn't, as I say he may have been in the hospital but he's certainly healthy.

PP:

I want to try too and see him. I'll try to phone him or something. Maybe it's hard to get, but, I mean, mention my name.

CGR:

Oh he will remember your name, I guarantee.

PP:

I imagine.

CGR:

Yes indeed. If you like I'll give you his phone number. I have it right here.

PP:

Well, I would be so pleased.

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