

SIR ALBERT RODRIGUES, MD
POW Experiences as a MO in Hong Kong, 1941-1945

Interviewed in Hong Kong, China

by

Charles G. Roland, M.D.

8 September 1987

Oral History Archives
Hannah Chair for the History of Medicine
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been received, this person died. So there were roughly two cheques when he died. His widow was nice enough to write and say, "Look, I can't help you through your course, but I'll let you use the next one, if with the money you come back to Hong Kong."

But I had a cousin in Lisbon, so instead of coming back I went to stay with him. And his wife's father was a professor at Lisbon University. So instead of passing through I stayed a whole year there, which helped me get a little more experience. He took me around to the hospital and to the clinics, seeing about a hundred children every morning, and maintaining the language of Portuguese. Here, the majority speak English and patois, but I stayed fluent in speech which I learned in school, French and Portuguese.

C.G.R.:

Now this was what year?

A.R.:

This was in 1936. Then I came back to Hong Kong and started a practice in '37. Then '38, '39 I joined the Volunteers [Hong Kong Volunteer Defense Corps]. There was a one-pipper that I taught after the war broke out, and there was I. Because we were joined up with the Field Ambulance, three Companies. One was fully RAMC, one was combined RAMC and the Volunteers, and one was St. John's Ambulance -- we went with these. And my posting during the war was up in The Peak.

At that time the Canadian officer who was posted to The Peak also, was Gordon Gray. And we met from then on.

Of course you know what happened during the war -- it was a

A.R.:

some were silent. We felt that the majority was not against us.

C.G.R.:

How did the Japanese treat you in this early few days?

A.R.:

They left us alone. They didn't know what the heck was happening, they left us alone. Even when we went into camp, you could walk in and out of camp if you wanted to, but at the risk of running into trouble. And some of the doctors, one doctor I know, this Colonel who spoke fluent Chinese, he had his "foxy" outside and he walked in and out of the camp, and getting everything he wanted in the way of food. Eventually he stayed, even after when the perimeter was electrified, and he got out to China.

C.G.R.:

Certainly Leslie Ride escaped quite early, didn't he?

A.R.:

Ride, yes, Lindsay, yes.

C.G.R.:

Lindsay Ride, I'm sorry.

A.R.:

We were in the same room. The first thing I knew was when he said, "Well, I'm off." I said, "Where are you off to?" He said, "I'm going out to..." I said, "Why didn't you tell me?" And he said, "Well, your wife's outside. I can't ask you to come with me. We doesn't know what reprisals there may be." I was told he got back across the border when we were in camp.

C.G.R.:

tough battle. I think Hong Kong did well to last as long as it did. But I was there looking after the troops, and there was bombing that came to Kowloon, which the Japanese took over. In fact I worked with a Pay Corps officer -- Colonel Hennessey, from Winnipeg. I fixed him up -- he had both legs shot badly; and his assistant was Captain Davis. We moved them to the hospital up at The Peak. Eventually, one of the sad moments was, although I went back to Winnipeg to the happiness of meeting the people again, I had responsibility to greet Mrs. Hennessey and tell her all about it. During my year there I met many fine people. I spoke once to the radio and television, and once to the officers and men of the Regiment, about Hong Kong. But that is way far back already.

Then of course Christmas day we surrendered. And I must mention this because an order came from headquarters for the MO and the padre in the area of The Peak, where we were, "Go to the NAAFI canteen and destroy all the liquor there was." There was I with this padre of the Royal Scots, literally with tears in his eyes, throwing the whiskey and gin and everything against the wall to break up all the liquor. We couldn't let the Japanese get hold of this -- they would have run amok.

C.G.R.:

No, no. Things were bad enough.

A.R.:

Bad enough, yes. I was in barracks for a while, then an order came to go to Kowloon. So we all marched with what we could carry, all the way to Sham Shui Po, while all along the road were Chinese on both sides. A lot of them were jeering,

some were silent. We felt that the majority was not against us.

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C.G.R.:

I interrupted you, you were just getting to the camp.

A.R.:

So we got to the camp, and we met up with all the huts that were looted. No woodwork on the roofs, they'd all been taken up by looters and things like that. We literally put on our overcoats to go to bed. We started organizing ourselves, among the doctors -- two sections were doctors. And what we met up with, of course, when we came in, were people who were suffering from deprivations of the war, or who carried with them previous ailments. Amebic dysentery was one. We had up to 200 people in bed, suffering from dysentery.

At that time, I asked a Japanese officer, what about some sulfanilamide, because at that time they had sulphadiazine. So he sent me a tube, a full tube of sulfa, for the whole lot of 200 people. And I had to pick out the chaps whom I thought had a little resistance, to give them two or three tablets for the day and hope that would tide him over -- or not. On the other hand, in due course I had a room where I could tell the chaps, "Move him to that room." Eventually, we used that for the deathly sick -- 200.

C.G.R.:

Two hundred.

A.R.:

Two hundred patients out of 800 in the camp. But one thing I think we must mention, I think it was a miracle that they discovered this. We found in camp lots of powder which was called kiesulghur, k-i-e-s-u-l-g-h-u-r. We looked in the army, the British Army Medical Pharmacopoeia, and they checked tissues

there and some calcium compound, used for filtration of water. We found it had some absorbent power. So six of us, including John Crawford, big size, and me, small size -- he took a tablespoon and the next man took two teaspoons, to see at what stage it would come abrasive to us. We eventually got one teaspoon, four times a day, to everybody, which reduced almost completely the tenesmus.

C.G.R.:

Oh really.

A.R.:

They were much relieved after that, and their own resistance helped them. But I think that was just one of those lucky things. The other lucky thing was discovery tomatoes, growing outside the hut. From seeds from tinned tomatoes! -- believe you me. So word went around the whole camp, "Anybody receiving tinned tomatoes from their relatives -- we could get sometimes from across the fence a parcel -- Dried up all the seeds and planted them. We had a whole garden.

The third thing fortunate was the Japanese don't like tomatoes, so they left our tomatoes alone. What they wanted was watches and pens. But that was my whole thing with the hospital.

But then we had sick parades. And of course, sick parades, you had pretty well nil in the way of medication. You had the odd aspirin, and the odd quinine, and that sort of thing, and some powders; and mostly for the amebic patients, the army still had these tablets of Emetine. We'd dissolve them and use them for injections. But that ran out. But by the time that ran out,

the cases had either passed away or were cleared.

But the sick parade was necessary mainly for judging the state of health of individuals, because every day the Japanese would say, "We want 20 men for labor parties." We don't know where he would go; he may be carrying bricks, he may be carrying earth, may be going to Kai Tak to dig, for the new airport. So we had to put them in A, B, and C, and D would be the ones in the hospital. So they'd come in complaining, you'd examine them, and it's all relatively speaking -- somebody had to go, so from the worst to the best, what will the next one be, and eventually [categorized them] to A, B or C. "C," no duty, "B," light duty, "A," full duty. That's how it went.

One discovered medically, I think, how little man needs in the way of medications, for something like that -- provided you've got the will to live. Also, we discovered in a situation like this, it was the survival of the fittest and man gets selfish. So he looks after himself, which is natural. I mention this because a case stood out, was a man who came to camp, he had a shrapnel wound in the war, and he walked around with this limp. So he remained "C," until one day when the air force, the American air force came and strafed the camp -- he was the first back in the hut! Off the field. So next morning, "Don't tell me, you're 'B' today. I saw you last night. You were the first back." [laughter]

The other thing about survival is the fact that we had many cases of diphtheria. And we had nothing, no anti-diphtheria serum, until somebody slipped it in, surreptitiously. It's amazing how many of them got through without treatment, and

without complications, and are still alive.

C.G.R.:

Dr. Banfill has told me how difficult that choice was, once you started to get antitoxin -- then, who could get it; there still wasn't enough.

A.R.:

There was not enough to go around.

C.G.R.:

Tough decisions had to be made, yes.

A.R.:

Then you had cases of beriberi, where you had to give them vitamins. We'd line them up and, "All right, pants down," and bang, bang, bang! And every fourth or fifth chap would pass out before you reached him; even soldiers get a bit worried about injections like that.

C.G.R.:

You mentioned the Japanese asking for a certain number of men. Now, did they more or less live with your categorization? If you said a man shouldn't be working, did they permit him not to work?

A.R.:

If they got 20 they didn't care less about the others. I mean, they wanted 20 men, you gave them "A" or "B," and they go. The ones you could see lie around doing nothing, they couldn't care, as long they got their workers.

C.G.R.:

But if there weren't enough...?

A.R.:

But if you reached a stage where there weren't enough "A's" and "B's," they would insist and say, "Come on." We were aware of that so we had to really make the chaps....

At the early stages, of course, we had buglers and everything, and every time there was a death he was taken out of the camp to be buried somewhere. And they played the Last Post. It got to a stage where the Japanese sent orders, "No more playing the Last Post." There were so many in a day that they were afraid how the morale would be affected.

But those were the main things, the diphtheria, which went over, and then the beriberi, which was with us all the time, and the pellagra, and then what we called the "electric feet," which was part of the beriberi, a neuritis.

But fortunate for us, we were in a tropical climate. They had typhoon signals but no real typhoon. We had minimal clothing, just a fandushi, which is just a clout, and having good sunshine. There were very few other things that came up, no other epidemics or anything. Lots of chaps came in, "I've got a headache." So I said, "Sit down," I said, "I've got a headache too. What did you do before?" I mean, I'd never met the man maybe. He'd talk about his past life, and after 10 or 15 minutes I said, "Have you still got the headache?" It was gone! You had to use psychology, when the man is obviously is not seriously ill. A lot of people did die in camp; the minute they walked into camp they'd say, "We'll never get out of here." Others whom you'd think would be dead are alive, because they said, "I'm getting out at Christmas." Then Christmas comes and, "I'm getting out at

Easter."

C.G.R.:

You mentioned a hospital. I think I'm right in saying it wasn't a real hospital.

A.R.:

No. We allocated huts there, and so these two huts would be the hospital. One hut was for 200 people with dysentery, and the other hut for other people. And they had an isolation hut for the diphtheria.

C.G.R.:

Were there beds, cots?

A.R.:

Oh, they had beds all right. They used metal beds that had been there with the army. Because at that time it was an army barracks.

C.G.R.:

But they hadn't been looted.

A.R.:

The beds couldn't be, because they were metal -- no good to them. But there were no bed-boards for the whole thing, so you put your blankets, we got from the Japanese some blankets, because they were told where the government hospital was, so they were brought in from the government hospital. The doctor in charge of the camp, he didn't know where everything else outside was. They didn't have it themselves.

C.G.R.:

Was this [Shunkichi] Saito?

A.R.:

Yes. He was a nasty piece of work. I remember one case of a Canadian who had dysentery, and they called me one night, I think this was with John Crawford; it was really his appendix. We told Saito it was appendicitis and we were going to operate on him. So he said, "OK. You know where the hospital is in Kowloon?" I said, "I know." "All right, you go with them, with the patient." And I said Dr. Crawford was coming, and Dr. Lancaster. Because he did a bit of anesthesia. So we got him to Kowloon Hospital. First thing a patter of feet, all the nurses coming up to John Crawford, measuring their height against his, you know [Dr. Crawford is about 6' 4" tall]. I said, "The theater is on the next floor," so we went up into the theater. The doctors there, supposedly doctors, came up and suggested this is a case of appendix. If it had been an appendix that was fully ready, it would have ruptured at that time. I said, "OK, this is the surgeon." He said, "No no, we do, we do." So while in the theatre, the doctor called somebody to bring some ladder, because the operating lights were high; so John reached up a hand and brought it down.

And when we left, at that point I can remember too, I was in back, John [Crawford] was in front, carrying the stretcher. I walked behind, two nurses, of the Japanese, came and shoved biscuits in my pockets. To me, this was like the kid having chocolate he'd never had before -- we'd been starving. I always remember kindly of the women. Anyway we went.

But that's not the end of it. Eventually this man, I can't remember his name, but this man ended up in St. Theresa Hospital.

He ended up there with an open wound where the appendix was. Whoever did it did such a lousy job, they didn't even stitch it over or put a drain in. He died in St. Theresa's from this infection. He could have been saved. I was tempted to find out what happened. And I think John Crawford found out, that that was what happened -- he'd gone to the War Crimes trials, the case against Saito. I don't know what happened to him. I think he was condemned.

C.G.R.:

He was condemned but reprieved.

A.R.:

Reprieved afterwards. The only one who got it was "Slap-happy."

C.G.R.:

Yes, "The Kamloops Kid." [Inouye]

A.R.:

The Kamloops Kid. The other one was, of course, [Colonel] Tokunaga. The one, I saved his life, was the interpreter, they called him "Baby Face." He met me and started asking questions about what I was doing in Hong Kong, and if I was a family man. He offered to go and see the family, and would I give him a letter to my wife. I said, "I don't give you any letter. It would put me in trouble, and put you in trouble. My family is there, if you want to see them, go ahead." He did, he went to see my wife, and my son, who was then one year old, and this time he brought a note from the lawyer. Then he said, "Now do you want me to take a note?" This went on a few times. One day,

suddenly, he came to the camp with my wife and baby, and they called me to come up to the camp office. After two years, I was glad to see them. I kept telling them to go to Macao. They got me a bit more worried. So she went to Macao.

But then he came once, earlier on, to tell me tomorrow they will probably search the camp. So pass the word around, and all the radios disappeared. So I mentioned that at the trial, and maybe saved his life. He hated the British. He hated them. And I found out why. He was a King's Scout in Singapore. Same as the Kamloops Kid, he was treated badly in Kamloops -- I've read that since -- they worked psychologically to find out that he was ostracized and all that.

C.G.R.:

I've heard that.

A.R.:

That just shows how this racism causes bad feelings. But anyway, he wrote me a letter when he was in camp, thanking me, and saying that he's now reading the Bible every day and he realizes what a mistake he had made. But another instance that was interesting was that when they went out on these labor forces, one day, they needed a medical officer to go with them. So I was selected to go, and he was selected to go with them. We went up the hill to get sod for the commandant's yard, to turf it. So we sat on the edge of this level garden looking down on Hong Kong, and he said "Where's that?" I told him. At that time I was a member of the Urban Council, so I knew what the plans were. I told him, we had a plan especially from Scotland, called Aberdeen. The idea now is that that will be retained land and

eventually we will develop it. So he turned around, "You will develop it. You mean to say you are going to win the war?" So I said, "Well, what do you think?" [laughter]. Now if he'd been somebody else I'd have been up the tree. I mean they couldn't stand that from me. I really laughed when he said that.

C.G.R.:

Tell me about Dr. Rose, Dr. Ashton Rose.

A.R.:

Well, he was an enigma. He was a great public relations man. He knew how to look after himself very well. He was an Anglo-Indian. I thought there was some racism there. The British didn't like him. And he was neutral. Everybody thought he was collaborating with the Japanese. I don't believe it. I think he just looked after his own skin, and he was such an extrovert, in a way, that he got around them. He got to getting things that he wanted for the camp, from them. I think in that respect he did the camp some service. But at the same time he was apart from the British. He ignored them. Of course, [Major Cecil] Boone was the other one making it difficult for everybody. I don't know, I think the Canadians got along with Ashton Rose.

C.G.R.:

Yes, well, I've heard very similar comments to what you just said, "Questionable -- he did good things but...."

A.R.:

Advantageous things that we wouldn't have done. But that was him. I mean he got them to come out and play tennis.

C.G.R.:

Oh really.

A.R.:

Yes, he played tennis with the Number 2 commandant. Then he would say, "You a good tennis player? You come and play with us. You come join us, four of us." I didn't play but some of them were friends of mine who were good tennis players. And because of that they got a little tea extra. This was all part of the picture. We don't know what's happened to him but I daresay, after the war he'd look after himself. He suddenly turned up with a whole band, orchestra, instruments. He talked the Japanese into bringing it. They brought in a whole set of hockey sticks. Boone didn't get it, but he got it. And he got a lot of medication. In fact, he came around and said, "You need anything, you let me go. I can't expose it, what I've got here, you want it for your chaps?" I said, "I've got this dysentery patient." He gave me two eggs occasionally, to give to some weaker chap to eat.

C.G.R.:

That reminds me, do you know Miss Helen Ho? Is that a name that means anything to you here in Hong Kong?

A.R.:

Who?

C.G.R.:

Ho, H-o, Miss Helen Ho?

A.R.:

Helen Ho?

C.G.R.:

Yes.

A.R.:

In what respect?

C.G.R.:

Well I have heard, actually....

A.R.:

Is this a lawyer?

C.G.R.:

No, no, I don't believe so. But Dr. [James] Anderson told me that she was (well more than person has told me) that she was very helpful in getting supplies into the various camps when things were needed. She was in the city at large and she helped in.....

A.R.:

I think I know this Helen Ho. She is the sister of Mrs. Cumine, who is an architect here. I think she is the sister. Yvonne, Helen, and Elaine. Helen worked for a long time with the government, with out-patients.

C.G.R.:

Social worker?

A.R.:

She was a social worker.

C.G.R.:

That's the one yes. But you don't know....

A.R.:

She's still well?

C.G.R.:

I've been trying to find a way to reach her and I haven't

managed. I thought you might happen to know how I could do that.

A.R.:

I can ring up and find out an address for you.

C.G.R.:

Actually I now have so little time left. I feel badly.

A.R.:

Unless I ring her sister to find out how to get hold of her.

C.G.R.:

Well perhaps that when we're finished.

A.R.:

We'll try.

C.G.R.:

Does the name Ray Squires mean anything to you? A Canadian, Squires, an orderly.

A.R.:

No.

C.G.R.:

No, well, it's just one of the people I'm interested in and I thought you might have heard of him.

One of the questions that I'm very interested in is what about sexuality? How did people cope with this long period?

A.R.:

I don't think that ever came up as far as, from my point of view. What did convince me was, how easy it is for the alcoholic to get over his role, and how difficult for the smokers.

C.G.R.:

Cigarettes yes.

A.R.:

Why -- because the pipe smokers would get to drying papaya leaves and shoving it in the pipes to smoke. They came up with a hacking cough. That's how I got on to that side. The cigarettes smokers would even take the stubs that the Japanese threw down. We'd get the Red Cross parcels and they'd hock the parcels for cigarettes. Even at the time that they were hungry. On the other hand, there's no question, no doubt that the smoker was less hungry. Because the stimulation of the smoking reduces that feeling of hunger. My pay was a packet of cigarettes. Everybody was doing it, and I used it too, to get me extra food.

C.G.R.:

You weren't a smoker?

A.R.:

I didn't smoke, no. I never did. What they'd do is you'd get the Canadian cigarettes, Sweet Caporal, you'd change one for two Japanese, so you'd get two smokes for one, that sort of thing. Three cigarettes would get you an egg or something like that. You had the barter system always.

C.G.R.:

How was your personal health through all this time?

A.R.:

When I left camp at the end I was down to 113 pounds from about 125. Some of the others who were 200 pounds were down to 140. I ate everything they prepared there. There was a time when we had plain rice, nothing else. I bought, from the canteen, rock sugar; put it in a bottle, dissolve it, the rice comes up, I'd put a spoonful on it and eat it.

I always remember this incident when they brought in salt fish, white fish, big size, divided into four of us. It was a bad-looking fish, stinky fish -- "We don't want it." So they let me have it. So I cut it up in a bottle. Every day I'd finish all the rice that I had with a bit of salt fish. After three days they all said, "Maybe there's something to try." Now they all eat salt fish. [laughter]

C.G.R.:

Can you describe for me a more or less typical day in the camp? When you got up and what you had to eat, and where, how long your rounds took, that sort of thing? Can you put it together?

A.R.:

Only if I put it quickly. The first thing, you get up. I mean I can't remember the actual time. You'd get up and initially, morning parade. You muster on the parade ground, as they called it, and they counted all ranks. That was when they were afraid of escaping, so make sure in the morning everyone was present. Then you'd go back and you'd have your first meal.

You ask me what it was, I can't tell you, I can't even remember what we had. I guess it was just a congee. Then we spent maybe two hours, in my case, going through the patients. I had a book, I kept a book, I kept records of every patient at the time. I still have some of the records with me. Because they still come up now and say, "Do you remember what I had in camp?"

Then you had a sick parade. We all had our batmen system. One was my brother-in-law, who was not very strong. I said, "Well that won't help any." They'd go out to the kitchen with a

mess tin, and get food for us. There was a time, for a hundred days, we had nothing but rice mush, because somebody had escaped; this was the Japanese reprisals. Otherwise you'd get rice with a little vegetable, but never any meat. If you were lucky, you got some beans sometimes. That was all.

Later you'd come back if you had parcels sent in, and take things out of that to make the thing palatable. More or less everybody would take a siesta, then in the evenings you had the recreations. Some people played hockey, then few played cricket, lawn bowled, a few played volleyball; the Canadians taught us to play volleyball. Met Jack Price then. And his brother.

C.G.R.:

I don't know either of them. I know the names well but I....

A.R.:

His wife had a big accident. It's a funny world because he's been back from Hong Kong, we got out. His wife was the godchild of the Taipan of Jardine's, and he asked me, "Come and meet my godchild, who wants to see you because they know you well." So I said, "fine." Then the evenings we had an agreement with the Japanese to allow us, although lights out was at at six o'clock or seven o'clock, depending, to have music. I was made officer in charge of music for each hut. We had a roster of huts to visit, and we had five of us. I was backed with the guitar by Bardel from Winnipeg, he played the guitar. Sweeney -- I never remember names -- who passed away, I think. But Sweeney -- a beautiful clarinetist.

C.G.R.:

Oh yes. Arthur Gomes mentioned him.

A.R.:

And then Alves and Alderson on the violin. This was the five that went to the huts. We would start to play something, and then say, "Come boys, what do you want to hear now?" The chaps would call out. Great challenge for a musician. And so they played ad lib. Any tune you just hummed and they'd play it, he would follow it with the guitar. So that was the other part of the entertainment. We had a few concerts. We had female impersonators. That may be part of your point about sex. That was as far as we got. Two of the boys, when they were dressed up -- one was dressed as Carmen Miranda. I'm sure the men felt moved to see this!

C.G.R.:

Yes. Was it Sonny Castro?

A.R.:

Yes, Sonny Castro.

C.G.R.:

I heard he just passed away recently.

A.R.:

The Japanese came to watch it -- they thought we'd brought in women! [laughter] That's where the music came from, the instruments from Ashton Rose.

C.G.R.:

Dr. Bard mentioned yesterday that some Canadian had made a cello, out of a gasoline drum, wasn't it?

A.R.:

Oh yes.

C.G.R.:

Do you remember the name of the Canadian -- he couldn't, he said to ask you.

A.R.:

Bailey.

C.G.R.:

Bailey. It had slipped his mind.

A.R.:

You must remember that Bailey's father was head of the liquor commission in Winnipeg. And Jack Bailey, his son, took over after the war.

C.G.R.:

I was pretty young to be interested in the liquor commission then.

A.R.:

Well, when I was there, when I first arrived, a few of the wives came to me to the apartment which they had arranged for us. My first thought was, can I go down around the corner, maybe, and get your all a drink or some beer. They all laughed. They said, "Well if you're here you've got to follow the liquor commission here. I said, "What?" "Yes." So how do they do that? "You get a booklet and then we mark it." So I went, and I went in my cabinet, I was going to take pictures of the queue, waiting to get liquor. Somebody said, "Do you want to get killed? You'd better stop that." Because there was all sorts of people lined up.

Anyway I got my beer and whiskey, and then Jack told me, he said, "Any time you need extra, give me a ring. I'm head of the commission." So this Jack Bailey, he played the drums and the bass. He died already and his widow is now in Victoria -- Eva. We were very close. In fact, when I was at the Winnipeg General working in obstetrics, Eva was admitted for an appendix. I held her hand until she was operated on.

C.G.R.:

How did you wife manage through the war?

A.R.:

Well, first she ran from one place to another.

C.G.R.:

Did you have any children at that time?

A.R.:

One year old.

C.G.R.:

Oh, of course, you mentioned that.

A.R.:

His birthday party was missed because the war broke out, 8th of December. He had things all laid out for his party. My wife had to run from one place to another. Eventually she ended up at the Gloucester Building. I had police friends who said, "Don't worry Albert, we'll ring you up, or she'll ring you up, every day. Whenever we can get through." Then she moved to May Road, which the army set up to satisfy the wives.

She had to run up and down with this one-year-old to get milk powder and that sort of thing. We found out after the war that's not the half of it; she had a pericarditis. So she got

pregnant and the doctor wanted her to commit abortion. But she said, "I'm a catholic, I don't accept that." So we watched her and she had a second child. We got through that very easily, and after two years, eventually she got pregnant again. So I have two daughters and a son.

C.G.R.:

Oh yes.

A.R.:

He's just moved to British Columbia. One is in Toronto, she's been there 15 years. And the other one is in Berkely, California.

C.G.R.:

The one in Toronto is just next door to us.

A.R.:

She's in Merlin Street.

C.G.R.:

Oh, I don't know that.

A.R.:

Anyway, that's how it goes. My wife had this heart disease, she got better over it. I don't know whether I wasted the better part of that or not, but the pressure was up and down. She was 74 and she went to sleep and didn't wake up.

C.G.R.:

Well, when one's time comes that's.....

A.R.:

We always expected me to go, because I had those four bypasses -- she was worried about it.

C.G.R.:

At any rate you mentioned telephoning, that you would try to telephone. Had you access to a phone?

A.R.:

Well, wherever I went as Chief MO.

C.G.R.:

Oh, this was during the fighting.

A.R.:

During the fighting.

C.G.R.:

Oh I'm sorry, I thought you meant during your time as a prisoner of war.

A.R.:

No, during the fighting.

C.G.R.:

Yes, I just misunderstood. I couldn't imagine you'd be going to telephone her when....

A.R.:

No, because you asked what had happened to her. Now, when I was a prisoner she would stay with her mother in Kowloon. And as the POW camp was at Kowloon, while they were allowed to, she came to the perimeter, a few hundred yards, wearing a red scarf or something. I would wear another red scarf, so we could identify each other. Until this time the Japanese brought her in, with the boy; then she wouldn't come. She'd stay with her uncle, and aunt. Incidentally, this was the aunt who looked after me after my mother died, where I spent my summer holidays. Her husband was the secretary for Chinese Affairs. All our children now are

in different countries.

C.G.R.:

What is your theory about "happy feet," "electric feet"?

A.R.:

Oh, "electric feet."

C.G.R.:

The Canadians often called them "happy feet."

A.R.:

Yes, called "electric feet" and "happy feet." It's a beriberi neuritis.

C.G.R.:

You feel it's part of beriberi.

A.R.:

Yes, a part of beriberi. Polyneuritis of the feet. Lack of vitamin B1 -- they'd jump -- that's why they called it happy feet. That's why I told them, when we had the rice that we had some maggots in the rice -- "You eat everything there is," because polished rice would be the worst beriberi. Unpolished rice is just the thing; lucky for us they brought in this unpolished rice. But it had weevils -- well, cook it and eat it, it's got protein in it.

C.G.R.:

All protein, yes.

A.R.:

And so we had it.

C.G.R.:

Well we eat some things in restaurants sometimes that don't

seem very different from that.

[End of side 1.]

A.R.:

...because we didn't answer them when they called after you, and we didn't bow when we should. But beyond that, no.

C.G.R.:

I get the impression, from the interviews that I've done, that while I'm sure nobody wanted to be in a prisoner-of-war camp, medical officers perhaps were among the luckier individuals, because they were able to ply their trades.

A.R.:

I think that helps.

C.G.R.:

As being privileged, particularly in the sense that they could do their.....

A.R.:

Of course all of us would take time out. My friend [Dr. Martin] Banfill was, he to me was like a walking dictionary. We'd have our sessions, question and answer, and he'd just bang, bang. "Who won the baseball last year?" or something like that. He's got a retentive memory. Of course I did a lot of painting. So did Bard. I taught Bard French, he taught me Russian. That kept us, in between times, covered. With the doctors we discussed cases, maybe, to each other -- what we experienced in our practice. That's how it went along. As you had a regular routine of patients, sick parade and things like that, you didn't feel at a loss as what to do with your time. Although I don't think we had any privileges as such.

C.G.R.:

No, I didn't mean it in that way.

A.R.:

My recollection of that is this; briefly in two sentences. First, this is an experience I would not like to have again. But an experience which I have not lost, and I value, to a point, because as you think back you think of the friendships you made. And friendships made in adversity like this are strong ones. To me I would not have been to Canada. I would not have met all the nice Canadians I met. My children all are there -- my son is at McGill, my daughter Toronto -- all because of this, because of the connections. And there staying in Winnipeg, they said you must come back. And that's why my son went to McGill. And funny enough we went to McGill when Banfill was a secretary for foreign students.

C.G.R.:

Oh really.

A.R.:

So he spent a lot of his holidays with Edith and Martin in their house. These are the kinds of ties. My daughter, of course, she's in Toronto, she's staying there. She keeps asking for me to join her. These are options I have. I've now this home in Algarve. My other daughter is a teacher, she's in Berkley, and Anne is in Toronto. I don't think I'll leave Hong Kong -- one is used to it. Things move quickly here. It's a way of life, you can do it or you don't do it.

C.G.R.:

Well, you've talked about some positive aspects, as it were, of the camp, the friendships and so on. Do you think this has had any long-term negative effects on you that you are aware of, that you can identify?

A.R.:

No, unless I can say that my heart, that that might have been attributed to that. Because in that camp I thought I was pretty well. I participated in all sorts of sports and games, and I don't smoke and I don't drink. Yet, in 1981, six years ago, I was 70 then. You reach an age when you can expect something like that and you can't blame the camp life. I think the only one may be losing my hair. I lost all of it in the camp.

C.G.R.:

Did you?

A.R.:

But then, it may be in the genes already, you don't know. But if you call it a negative effect, it's one that has sent me thinking at the present time -- to ask myself, "Was it worth it -- the war." Because when you think of it, the two losers in the war are the top people in the world today, economically. So it doesn't make sense.

C.G.R.:

Gives one pause, doesn't it?

A.R.:

It makes you pause, you say, "What for, why?" And they were built up after the war, by the victors.

C.G.R.:

By the victors.

A.R.:

But that's history, you can't do any more about that, or think about it.

C.G.R.:

I was just in Japan, I came here from Japan, my first visit, and I was quite stunned. I had no idea.

Do you have any Japanese contacts?

A.R.:

No. I was friendly with a few of the Japanese Consul Generals when they were here. In fact, I was their doctor. The first one that was here was number two, he was a Consul, not a Consul General. I delivered his wife of a baby who was born here. Fifteen years later, it was 1960, his wife dropped in to bring their daughter to pay her respects. That was a nice gesture. Fifteen years old and they called her Shirley, and she studied in America. He's now Upper Cabinet.

After that, for a few years, every new Consul had a note from him, to introduce them to me. Now that's of course finished. But that's the only contact I had. Two Consuls before the present one, which was about five years ago, also. Then I had a letter saying, "I've now moved to Thailand, here's my new address." But beyond that nothing.

C.G.R.:

So you have no anti-Japanese feelings?

A.R.:

No. I had the first time I went through. In 1950, I went

by ship to the States, on the way to Bellevue. We stopped one day, just to go ashore and eat. At that time, every Japanese who passed, I'd sort of think, "Looks like a prison guard." You know, that feeling; but that's normal. Now, I just think about it, and over the time you can understand, maybe, why they had to do it. Same way now, having heard about the Kamloops Kid, while I don't condone his actions, I understand him better. It's man's inhumanity to man. It's built up quite a lot. That's why now, I don't feel strongly, but I certainly criticize all those who criticize South Africa. I mean, you can't attribute something to people from far away. You don't know what's going to happen. And to me, not because you're Canadian I say this, I think Canada is a happy mean between America and England.

C.G.R.:

It's a feeling I've had myself. I lived for 13 years in the States, so I know it quite well and.....

A.R.:

You don't have that extrovertness of the Americans, which I think sometimes is jarring, nor the conservatism of the British. That's why I love Toronto and Canada. In fact, my daughter went to study at the Ontario College of Art. She got her diploma.

C.G.R.:

Oh really, one of our sons is in the Ontario College of Art right now, studying second year, today, as a matter of fact.

A.R.:

Well she's an artist -- she paints and she wanted to go to England, to the big one, and they said, "No, you've got to go to another college first and then come to us. We only accept

graduates from other colleges." By that time a patient of mine here, a Baptist whose husband is in charge of Merrill Lynch, she said, "Why don't you send your daughter to Ontario College of Arts. I went there. It's a very good school." So she went. She was accepted. After she was accepted, after she was graduated, she said, "I'd like to live here." They said, "No, you've got to go back to Hong Kong. Go back to Hong Kong and then apply from there."

Just at that time they had the amnesty for Chinese who had entered illegally for x-number of years, they said, "Now you can come forward and we'll make you citizens." So my daughter said, "Will you tell me this, please. Why did you have to make me go back?" So they said, "That way, Americans and English may not have accepted." They said, "Well you have a point there. OK. But you must get a sponsor." Well I happened to be visiting. So I got a beautiful letter from the manager of the Hong Kong Bank, saying things that I didn't think I had done about the war and all that. I went with her to Immigration. This young girl in the Immigration office read this and said, "This is you?" I said, "Yes." "You come any time, we'll accept you." [laughter]

Just then a group of immigrants came in, Portuguese. She said, "My God, my interpreter is gone for lunch." I said, "Don't worry I'll help you." I helped her with all these Portuguese. [laughter] But it's funny how things work out.

Anne is is very happy there.. She's coming back to spend Christmas here. But as she says, come and stay any time. In fact, I got her a home there and there is one room there ready

all the time. I like gardening -- she's got a beautiful garden with apples and grapes. I sit watching the squirrels.

C.G.R.:

One last question, if I may. You just mentioned Christmas. What about Christmas in the camps?

A.R.:

Well, we celebrated Christmas.

C.G.R.:

How did you manage that?

A.R.:

We kept little bits, specials from our Red Cross parcels. A group of us would get together and would design a menu with Christmas things around it. We sat there and made our puddings and all that sort of thing. Of course, as Catholics we had mass. We had two priests there, one Canadian, one British, Father Green and Father [F.J.] Deloughery.

But as I say, miracles happen, and it happened quietly -- first the climate, second the tomatoes that grew, third was the bananas we planted, they were fruiting in two years where normally you never get any. And the fact that so few people got ill from other things.

C.G.R.:

Late in the war -- I said only one more question but I have one more -- the Canadian medical officers were removed from Sham Shui Po. Do you recall that that happened?

A.R.:

Yes, very much. We were all together. We had a hut with [?] and [?] Then another hut was Ride and Crawford. Another hut

Gray, Banfill, and Reid. And Cunningham, the dentist and another dentist, what's the other name.

C.G.R.:

Leach or something like that -- he's dead now.

A.R.:

Cunningham was here in this room, or next door, visiting me with a nurse from the Canadian Army.

C.G.R.:

Kay Christie?

A.R.:

Kay Christie.

C.G.R.:

I've interviewed both of them.

A.R.:

Yes, they both were here. You know why, because after my operation I was confined to the house and they were nice enough, when they visited, they heard I couldn't come out for dinner, so they came to the house. I appreciated that. Christie and Cunningham.

C.G.R.:

To go back if I may just to this business of the Canadians leaving, do you remember why this happened, do you have any idea?

A.R.:

Yes, because all the officers left, not only the Canadians.

C.G.R.:

Oh, you left.

A.R.:

No I didn't. We had all the officers and men in the camp. The officers, the doctors, were in the hospital area, the other officers were in Jubilee building. You've heard of the Jubilee? The Japanese had an idea that (they were probably right) with the officers there, they could mislead the men. In other words, anything just to produce a riot, to protest, to refuse to act according to the orders and all that sort of thing. So all those officers were moved to Argyle Street. They couldn't move all, they had to have some doctors, some service people. So Boone, Ashton Rose, Bard, and I, and no Canadians because the Canadians all moved out to a separate camp. They felt that by sticking, you reduce....

C.G.R.:

Yes, I see.

A.R.:

I think that is why they were moved. Then, some time later, before the end of the war, they brought them back but they had their separate area -- a fence. They were across the fence from the rest of us where we were.

C.G.R.:

Was this Camp N -- is that what it was called?

A.R.:

Something like that, yes.

Also they found messages that went through later, showing that there was connection between the officers and certain men of the two camps, and they were planning an escape. Have you read that book, something Honor?

C.G.R.:

Oh yes, yes I know the book you mean. I have that. [Oliver Lindsay, The Lasting Honour.]

A.R.:

Yes. I used to sit in that room talking to Bard and Gray about various things, after a hockey match. There was this bladder, empty bladder, lying on top of his shelf. That had all the messages.

C.G.R.:

When were you knighted?

A.R.:

1966.

C.G.R.:

Is it impertinent to ask how this happened? I don't know much about such things.

A.R.:

I got the MBE first, from the war. Then I served on the Urban Council, I served on the Legislative Council, on the Executive Council, and I still hold a longer period of active executive council -- Senior Member for 13 years. Which is like a premier. But apart from that, I've been on the University Council, and umpteen other committees and meetings. I retired from all except two now. One is the Volunteer Memorial Fund Committee, which is looking after the rights of the POWs. And I'm Pro-Chancellor of the University. This is more semi-social. When the governor can't attend for convocation or granting of degrees, I have to do it. Or if there is a university function where he has to be present and he can't make it, that's my

position as Pro-Chancellor. But all that came about in after my knighthood. Because I think the big one that brought it about was I was head of the addiction commission.

C.G.R.:

Oh yes?

A.R.:

Hong Kong had a big problem. I was the one who got the island outside, where they put these addicts there for six months, away from the crowd.

C.G.R.:

But working.....

A.R.:

Working quite well.

C.G.R.:

Reasonably well.

A.R.:

Up to the extent that Geneva World Health people nominate, every year, doctors from Singapore, from Malaya, to come here to see how Hong Kong treats or looks after its addicts. We have methadone treatment outside. We have the island where they are isolated for six months.

Then we've got a full committee, which I started, covering everything from police, to emigration, revenue, social worker -- all working together under our auspices, and the government giving money. That's one of the big things here in that field. Because it's still there. And my pattern, that I've built for here, is based on Toronto. I spent a week in Toronto, the Toronto research center; and Archibald, you may know the name, he

was the head of this.

C.G.R.:

I don't know him, no.

A.R.:

He's since been to the Bahamas and he's come back to Hong Kong twice, and I followed the pattern more or less that Toronto had, which was really unique, overall. They didn't have duplication.

I stayed in the Holiday Inn that time. I mention this because when I was on the 14th floor there was a fire on the 3rd floor and I didn't know it. I woke up saying, "What's happening." I looked out and fire engine was right downstairs, so I rang downstairs. They said, "Look, there's a fire on the third floor. You're all right, it's won't spread. You have a choice, either you come down, with the chances of having to walk up 14 floors, or stay put -- I stayed put. I stayed the whole day and then went down after things were working.

C.G.R.:

I remember that, I think, yes.

A.R.:

That's right, I have a great affection for Toronto. I think it's a great place. We have a group here now from Toronto. And unfortunately I can't attend the dinner. Mr. Brown, he's the chairman of the Toronto trade development, Hong Kong section. He gave me lunch while I was there last month or two months ago. I was in Toronto the end of June to early July.

C.G.R.:

Oh really.

A.R.:

With my daughter Anne. She said, "You can't travel alone."
So she came with me to Portugal.

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