DAVID AARON GOLDEN

Experiences as a Prisoner-of-War, World War 2

Interviewed by

Charles G. Roland, MD

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Oral History Archives

Hannah Chair for the History of Medicine

McMaster University

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Charles G. Roland, MD:

Mr. Golden, could we begin by having you tell me your full name, your birth date and birth place?

David Aaron Golden:

Yes. My full name is David Aaron Golden. I was born on February 22, 1920 in Sinclair, Manitoba.

CGR:

And your parents' names?

DAG:

My father's name was Solomon Wilfrid Golden and my mother, who's still alive, is Rose Golden. She's 93.

CGR:

Very good. Were you raised in Sinclair?

DAG:

No, no. The family moved away when I was an infant; we lived in Winnipeg for a short time, moved to Vancouver when I was about two, in 1922. Moved from Vancouver to Montreal, briefly, in 1931 -- lived in Montreal for about six months -- moved to Winnipeg in 1931 and lived in Winnipeg, with the exception of 4 years in the army, one year at Oxford University, until 1951 when I moved to Ottawa. Typically Canadian story, moving around the country.

CGR:

Yes, bouncing around. I've certainly done it.

Could you tell me about your education?

DAG:

Yes. I went to public schools in Vancouver, Montreal, and Winnipeg -- the University of Manitoba, the University of Manitoba Law School, and then one year at Oxford in 1946-47 but I

didn't take a degree there.

CGR:

How did you come to be in the army? How did that happen?

DAG:

Well, I was at university in 1939. Actually, in 1939, in September, I was due to register for my third year of a four-year law school course, and we heard on the radio, of course, the announcement of the outbreak of hostilities and so on, and a friend of mine and I said, "Oh, rather than registering in law school, why don't we go down to Fort Osborne Barracks and enlist." So we drove down to Fort Osborne Barracks. We were encountered by a very smart recruiting sergeant, and when he heard who we were and what we were, he said, "You go to school." He said, "When we want you we'll let you know." So we registered and, war having started -- I had no interest in things military or being in a Canadian Officer's Training Corps, or anything like that -- but of course, circumstances being what they were, I joined the Canadian Officer's Training Corps (COTC). Gradually I also was asked by the commanding officer, who happened to be a professor at the law school, whether I would do some training in what was known as the University of Manitoba, or University Military Training Unit (UMTU) -- I guess the COTC was voluntary, UMTU was compulsory, I think. I've forgotten. My memory is very poor on these things.

So, of course, it was understood that as we got near our graduation time, we would register for whatever we wanted to do. And another friend and I, we looked around, and somehow or other I got a call in the spring of '41, just as I was writing my

exams, that the Winnipeg Grenadiers required half a dozen reinforcement officers. So I said, "Well, I have no military background -- one unit's as good as another." There was one slight hiccup, you know, there was a lot of tension during that time, and I failed my medical. So I happened to know the doctor and I said, "This is ridiculous." I think I had albumen in my urine, I don't know what the hell it was, anyhow nothing very serious I'm sure. I said, "This is ridiculous." "Well," he says, "you cannot pass, you cannot join." I said, "That's stupid. I don't intend to sit in Winnipeg -- not that I'm anxious to go out and get killed, but still there is a war and I should be in it." He said, "Oh well. Drink a lot of water," or whatever, "and don't eat eggs." I've forgotten what it was. He said, "Come back in a couple of days," which I did and I passed.

CGR:

Who was the doctor? Do you remember his name?

DAG:

No. Just a minute, I'm trying to remember who it was. I think it was a fellow who subsequently became quite famous as a professor of public health in Carolina, Cecil Shepps. I don't know if the name means anything to you. He was a professor of public health or something.

CGR:

That I'm not sure about, but I know the name well.

DAG:

Anyhow, so I passed, and apparently there was some urgency about it so I wrote my exams but I didn't attend my own graduation. I was sent off to Brockville to the Officer's Training

Camp in Brockville, but in the middle I was yanked out because there was a scheduled sailing day for us to join the battalion, which was already in Jamaica.

CGR:

Excuse me. This was about May or June of 1941?

DAG:

Yes, it was May the 3rd, my enlistment date, and I got to Brockville a week or so later, and then got sent back -- I can't remember if I got sent back to Winnipeg and moved from Winnipeg, or whether I got sent right from Brockville to Montreal. I don't remember now. We had to pick up one of the "Lady" boats. There were five or six of us and we had to pick up one of the Lady boats, and that was about the middle of June, or the latter part of June. The Winnipeg Grenadiers were all in Jamaica at this time. At one stage there was one company in Bermuda and the rest in Jamaica , but [now] they were all in Jamaica guarding the internment camp and going what they called ship's guards, to prevent ships from blocking the harbor at that time.

So I got to Jamaica around about there and I had been there a very short time when we were picked to be one of the battalions going to Hong Kong. Although I didn't know where we were going, I knew we were going somewhere. And because I was one of the newest officers, I stayed behind to be in charge of the rear guard to turn over to, I think it was a Hamilton unit, I think a Highland unit from Hamilton took over from us. By September we were back in Winnipeg, and I had only been there about three months before. I didn't know, I wasn't high enough in the hierarchy to know what was going on except that we were going some-

where. A couple of senior officers used to make sort of veiled allusions to the fact that you won't be cold where you're going. I didn't know where we were going.

We left Winnipeg the latter part of October. My memory's poor on this, but I think we sailed on October 25th, got to Hong Kong about November 16th, if I remember correctly, 1941.

CGR:

That fits my recollection, yes. Were you on the Awatea?

DAG:

Yes, the Awatea. We had a lot of new people, a lot of new officers, we were way under strength and a few people decided to leave the boat at Vancouver, the usual sort of thing. Yes, we were on the Awatea.

CGR:

And what was your rank?

DAG:

I was a lieutenant.

CGR:

Just a bit about your impressions about Hong Kong. You had not been there before, I take it.

DAG:

No, I had not been anywhere except -- you know, people these days forget what the world was like 45 or 50 years ago. You didn't jump into a plane and travel around the world. I lived in Vancouver as a youngster, of course. Lived in Winnipeg, lived in Montreal, I'd been down to the States on a debating tour once, but that was basically it.

Hong Kong seemed like a very strange place. We were only

there for a short time before the balloon went up. Of course, Jamaica was very foreign to me too and very strange to me and I wasn't there long enough really to get a feel for, you know...I've always thought of myself as an outsider. I didn't think I was going to Jamaica to live in Jamaica. I didn't think I was going to Hong Kong to live in Hong Kong. I'm sure permanent force officers regard wherever their station as their home; it never occurred to us.

But it was a teeming city, that was the first impression you had, the enormous mass of humanity and so on. I didn't see all that much of Hong Kong. We were only there about three weeks, and I was -- I don't think it was a formal appointment -- but I had been asked to do some intelligence liaison. When I was in Jamaica I was introduced to the local command intelligence officer. He led me through a few of the things there, and the same thing when I got to -- I guess because I was a lawyer by background, or whatever. I don't know what the reason was. So I was also asked to be sort of liaison on intelligence. So I visited a few of the command intelligence people and so on. Then we had to get familiar with our own barracks, and we had to get familiar with our assigned positions, which were on the island. So I didn't see much of Hong Kong. It seemed interesting, but I would have preferred to be back in Winnipeg or -- at that time I was a Rhodes Scholar -- I would have preferred to be in Oxford. So I perhaps didn't have as open a mind as one should for new experiences.

I was tired too. My last couple of years at the university were rather hectic. I was very active in student affairs. I was

active in debating, I was taking, of course, my law course. In those days, we worked in a law office for half day and went to school half days. I was an officer in the COTC, I was an officer in the UMTU. I used to lecture on military law at night. So I was sort of a pooped-out 21-year old kid; so I don't think I took advantage either of Jamaica or of Hong Kong as much as one ought to have done. But I don't really have, as I say, much of an impression -- one impression, of course, we all had was that nobody seemed to know very much of what was going on as far as the military affairs were concerned. But I guess that was normal for those days in that part of the world.

CGR:

Well maybe that's an appropriate place to ask you to tell me briefly about your war, your personal three-week war.

DAG:

My personal three-week war was basically a non-war. I was at headquarters at Wan Chai Gap, I guess that's where I was. I was really acting as assistant adjutant, I guess. Very early on after the breakthrough on the mainland, I forget what they called the whisky...

CGR:

The Gin-Drinker's Line?

DAG:

Whatever. There were no Canadians left on the mainland. In fact, there was nobody left on the mainland. Then the landing on the night of 18th, or whatever it was. So all through the peace I was basically manning the telephones, issuing battalion orders, and so on. Then the dates are very hazy. There was some sort of

flap that you were surrounded, or whatever, so we left and we moved off and we came back the next day. Then, round about the 23rd or 24th, I guess, we moved out. At the time of surrender I was actually off on Mt. Cameron, I guess. I can't remember where it was. There was a group of us and as far as we were concerned, we were looking to see who was shooting at us and who we were supposed to be shooting at. I remember we spent a rather unpleasant hour on a very exposed spot while a little spotter plane came down to look at us, and we thought it was about to dispose of us. I was actually with Dick Maze, I think, Lieutenant [Richard, WG] Maze, and one or two other people. I forgot where we were. We were told, "Hey, you aren't supposed to be walking around with rifles and pistols and so on. The Governor and commander-in-chief has surrendered the island." So we ourselves had not been captured. But it was the same thing.

Then I'm very hazy about what happened after that. We sort of wandered around. Told to go here, go there, do this, do that for the next couple of days. I don't even remember where we ended up. I can't remember whether my first internment camp was Sham Shui Po, or whether it was North Point. I was never in Argyle, which was basically an officer's camp. I don't think I was ever at Argyle. I don't remember where, but there was lot's of wandering around, sleeping on the floor and that sort of thing, and wondering if we were ever going to get fed. Oh, of course, wondering first of all whether you're going to live for the next 24 hours. You know, a feeling of let-down, feeling of, you know, guilt -- even though I personally haven't surrendered to anybody, still soldiers aren't supposed to be prisoners-of-

war, they're supposed to be out killing people.

CGR:

Can I just break in there to ask, had you any training whatever in being a prisoner-of-war?

DAG:

No. I do not recall. First of all, I had very little training compared with what people got subsequently, later on in the war. But to the best of my knowledge that was never raised. Now, I'm sure in the course of my lectures on military law, I must have told my class and known myself that your obligation, when you're a prisoner-of-war, is to escape and to give only your name, number, and so on, and you're not required to do anything else. But beyond that, nothing. I have no recollection of anything at all. No.

After we were captured, it was a very confusing situation. The Japanese didn't know what to do. They were busy sorting people out. You had Indian units, which of course they were very anxious to propagandize. I'm sure they realized that they couldn't very well convince the British or Canadian troops to join the Japanese Army of Liberation, but they thought they'd have a very good chance with the Indians. In fact, in some places (I don't know about Hong Kong), but in some places they got lots of recruits who joined Chandra Boses's Indian Liberation Army.

So they had their own problems. Not only that they did not know what to do with us; they ended up putting us in the old army camps. I guess North Point was a Chinese refugee camp.

CGR:

What was it like there? What would your daily life have been? Can you give me a typical sort of day?

DAG:

Well, I guess you have to take it in phases because we did eventually settle in to what you might almost call normal routine. But that was not true initially. First of all, there was a great temptation to think this was all purely temporary, this was all a big mistake. Chang Kai Shek or somebody was going to put it all right. Gradually you realized that this was part of the world scene where the side you were on was being clobbered, just clobbered everywhere, and that your role in all of this was a pretty minuscule one compared with what was happening to those two battleships being sunk off Malaysia, and the fall of Singapore, and the invasion of the Dutch East Indies. You know, some of us were not all that stupid, we had a pretty good idea of what the map of the world looked like. And it sure looked like the Japanese all the way from Pearl Harbor. Although we had very poor sources of information, they made certain we heard all about those things. We didn't hear too much about the way the European war was going.

So that phase was a phase of great despondency, of great uncertainty, alternating with the most ridiculous rumors that it was all going to be over 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon, and that sort of thing. At that time, I guess you'd have to say the first few months, there wasn't what one could call a normal routine, so much. People were still living off the fact that most westerners were pretty well muscled and had lots of fat on their bones. The

rations were terrible, that sort of thing. There was nothing at that stage that I can remember of any worries of health, which became such a preoccupation later on with the "hot feet," the "electric feet" and that sort of thing.

Later on then, of course, we got into quite a regular routine, but it was different depending on where you were, because some of the other ranks got sent to work in Japan, in coal mines and shipyards, and of course their life was entirely different from my life. The officers, in fact, were not required to work except as sort of commanding work parties, going out to pick up rations, or to supervise the reconstruction of Kai Tak Airport. And I did very little of that because I was, theoretically, the adjutant. I was supposed to be keeping the books, etc., etc., which, of course, was a negligible matter.

Okay, after that phase, what would a normal day be like? Well, my normal day, I guess, for the first little while before we realized that this might be counter-productive, I used to go off with a small group with Wells Bishop [Major Wells A. Bishop, RRC] and job a bit and do some setting up exercises, throw a medicine ball around, maybe played a little volleyball. We didn't do that after a while. We realized that we weren't building ourselves up, we were tearing ourselves down. But we did that for a while. Wells Bishop was a nut about keeping fit, and don't let the bastards get you down, and so on. But after a while that was dropped, but we did that for quite a while. Then you'd perform your morning ablutions, which were pretty minimal. You might or might not shave, depending on whether you could scratch anything out of your razor or borrow somebody else's. We

used to keep grinding the razors on the inside of a glass, which makes it work. But there wasn't much spit and polish. You probably wouldn't have any soap, or you might -- you wouldn't use soap every day, that's for sure, because you couldn't afford to. You'd have some breakfast. Well, there'd be some rice.

I had a minimal amount of paper work to do. Then I used to work in the camp vegetable garden. We used to try and raise some potatoes and some tomato plants. One of my jobs was diluting the human fertilizer so it wasn't too strong for the plants. I didn't mind that. Some people didn't like that particular aspect of the job. But as far as I was concerned, it was there around you everywhere.

There was a fair amount of reading material available. People brought some in, trucks had gone out to get some. We'd play cards, gin rummy, we played cribbage. We ran some classes. We had some illiterates, we ran some classes and tried to teach people to read and write. Of course, as time went on, somebody that you knew well was probably sick or in hospital, you'd go over and talk to them, visit them and so on. Couldn't bring anybody anything. You could bring yourself, you could talk to them. We used to do a certain amount of lecturing and so on, depending on what camp you were in. One camp, in particular, we did a lot of that. We had people with different backgrounds. So maybe I'd talk to people about the Canadian political system and maybe somebody else would talk about developments in science that he was interested in, and so on. We'd run quizzes and things like that.

There were some concerts. Some people had musical instru-

ments with them. In fact, there was a doctor, a Dr. [Solomon] Bard, who was quite a good musician. He used to play. And of course you had these youngsters of mixed Portuguese and Chinese ancestry whom we used to make up into very attractive young women, and we used to have these skits and so on.

I used to walk a lot in the evening. I had a particular friend who was the director of education for the Hong Kong government, a man much older than I. We would walk for an hour or so. Of course, lights out. Not that we had any lights. It was very early. You see, all these things would be done very -- I guess I've skipped lunch. We'd have something, for dinner we'd have something. It wouldn't be very much.

Now, of course, there were some days that were not typical. We did, eventually, did get some Red Cross parcels and Red Cross food. That would be a very untypical day when you have distribution of Red Cross parcels. That would be a very untypical day if you had an inspection by a Red Cross guy [Rudolf Zindel], who was never allowed to see anything or do anything, anyhow. Or the commandant, and so on. Or you'd have one of these periodic searches to see whether they could find illegal radios or, in particular, these little immersion heaters that used to blow the lights in downtown Hong Kong, and so on.

CGR:

And were there radios?

DAG:

Yes. I'm not a handyman, but there were handymen who used to put things together. Basically, by reading between the lines you could get the main thrust of what was happening in the world,

through a little English-language paper that they used to send in. In other words, this is the way you would do it. You would hear about the glorious Japanese base at Rabaul and how it had repulsed all the attacks. Six weeks later you'd see a tiny item -- the glorious Japanese air force inflicted devastating damage on Rabaul. You say, "Okay, knock that off. The Americans have taken that."

Actually, they were quite honest about the eastern front. They were quite honest in saying, the Germans have evacuated such-and-such a city, and the Russians were now 42 miles from the Dneiper or the Don, or whatever. And there was always somebody around who was familiar with that part of the world and could tell you exactly what it meant. Not so much among the Canadian, but when we were with the composite group, you know; there'd always be some guy in the British army, or the British government, who had been stationed there or who worked there or something. That was not honest, but you could get what was going on.

Yes, there were some radios. Well, I shouldn't say some; there was some contact that way. Originally, of course, initially, there was quite free [contact], people used to talk to their families -- not Canadians, but local, over the fence and so on. That lasted for a month or two. And there were some people who escaped. Four Grenadiers tried to escape and were caught and were executed, which was very naughty of the Japanese. They ought not to have done that.

CGR:

Were there any intelligence activities going on -- specifically deliberate intelligence activities in the camp. For

example, was there any effort made to document things -- atrocities, war crimes, etc.?

DAG:

Yes, but on a not very well-organized basis. For instance, I kept a diary of things like that. It was caught in one of these sweeps and I was absolutely convinced that I as going to be executed the next day. I suspect if they had read it, I would have been. Obviously, nobody ever read it. I had a very, very unpleasant few days. I didn't think I wanted to end my life in quite that way. I kept saying to myself how stupid it was that I [had] written this. But anyhow, I did. I kept some other records which we buried, and never did find. I don't know what anybody -- that's what I did. I don't know how much John Crawford [Maj. J.N.B. Crawford, RCAMC] did because they kept records of illnesses.

CGR:

They got a fairly substantial amount of medical information out, which is all over in the Archives. I mean, a couple of hundred pages of material, of specific details, and regimental numbers, and so on.

DAG:

I have no personal knowledge of anything other than that. Now early on, of course, we used to meet and talk in small groups about escaping and so on. But that didn't last very long. After a while it became perfectly obvious that occidentals trying to escape, without a network out there, you didn't have a chance. Some of the locals got away early on, but it was done through a network of people outside. But I don't recall any serious dis-

cussion about escaping. Certainly not after the four fellows got -- they were captured immediately and I think they were shot the next day, as far as we know. It was obvious that you just couldn't make it. After that it became extremely difficult. They had electrified fences. So it was not a minor matter.

CGR:

What about atrocities? I'm interested especially in things you may have personally observed.

DAG:

I did not observe any atrocities in the normal acceptance of that term. I saw things they shouldn't have done. I saw them slap people around, which was obviously not acceptable. I did not see Barnett get beaten up badly. We all knew he was. We all saw him afterwards. He's the British fellow who yelled out to the visiting Red Cross guy, you know, "We're starving." etc., etc., and they gave him quite a going-over. Having you stand all night in the rain because they were unhappy about somebody having done something wrong. But atrocities, no -- I didn't see anybody get beheaded or anything like that. People slapped around, yes.

Now is it an atrocity, in the 1940s, to let people die from diphtheria? I don't know if that's an atrocity or not, in the generally accepted sense of the term. To allow people to literally die of malnutrition when they'd been offered shiploads full of food. Of course, their sense of their own position didn't allow them to do that. No, I personally have no present recollection of seeing, or being part of anything other than blows to the head, and that sort of thing. And not very much of that. Some, but not very much. Other people may have had other experi-

ences, but those are mine.

CGR:

You mentioned educating some illiterates, which suggests that the camps were mixed officers and other ranks.

DAG:

It varied. My memory is terribly poor. It seems to me I was in two or three camps. It seems to me I was in one camp twice. I can remember a camp where we were together, I can remember a camp where there was barbed wire separating the other ranks from the officers. I can remember a camp that was only officers. And, of course, at one stage, a significant number of the other ranks, those that were fit enough to travel, were sent to Japan.

CGR:

What about the relationship between officers and other ranks during this time? Were there frictions? Were the other ranks jealous of real or presumed benefits that officers had and they didn't?

DAG:

Yes, initially, because the officers, as is required under the Geneva Convention, were paid. And initially that money, small though it was, could buy limited quantity of extra rations and so on. But after a while that disappeared, and then everybody was pretty well in the same boat. I don't think there was any real friction later on. And there was a significant period of time when we were separated, as I say, the other ranks, many of them were sent away. But in actual fact, I don't think the living conditions were any different, after the initial period.

You know, your conditions of living did not relate to whether you were an officer or another rank -- it was whether you worked in the cookhouse or not. If you got one of the prime jobs sawing the wood for the stove, obviously your rations were a hell of a lot better than the colonel in the hut. It didn't matter what your rank was, whether you were a captain sawing the wood or whether you were a private sawing the wood.

Then, the question of luck. Did you get diphtheria before the serum? I got it after the serum. When I got diphtheria, somebody struck me with something. Some of them got it before and some of them died. Did you have a series of debilitating bouts of diarrhea or not? Did you have it at the time when Crawford happened to have some medicine? Or when he had run out? None of those things related to officers or other ranks.

Now there were personal differences, of course. There were people in camp, among the Hong Kong Volunteer defense forces, who had family outside and, despite all difficulties, there was always a parcel for them every week. It might not have much in it, but there was always something. What their families were doing to get it, they never knew. Maybe they were signing chits to pay x-millions of dollars after the war. Maybe they were selling their gold teeth, or whatever. There was that kind of a difference, obviously. And in the early days, there were differences between people who happened to be captured with nothing on them, and others who happened to be captured with a watch or a ring, or something like that. None of these things lasted long.

CGR:

What about your own health? You mentioned you had diphther-

ia.

DAG:

I guess my own health wasn't bad. I was skinny as a youngster; it didn't matter what I ate or what I did, I was skinny, really skinny, 6'2". I used to run about 150 lbs, I guess, and we tend to be fairly lean in our family. Okay, so I went down -- obviously everybody went down -- I didn't go down very much. How much can you go down? So I guess I weighed, I think, at the end of the war I weighed 138 or 139 lbs, something like that. Now lots of people lost 100 lbs. I did not have hot feet, or whatever you call it. I can only imagine what it's like after talking to people and seeing it day in and day out. It sounds terrible! Terrible thing. Do the doctors know what it is? I don't know. I don't remember talking to anybody subsequently.

CGR:

You mean the cause of it?

DAG:

Well, what is it though? Obviously there's no disease known as hot feet, I assume.

CGR:

No, I assume it's a neuritis caused by lack of vitamins, especially some of the B vitamins, and the nerves simply react abnormally because of the lack of the vitamin. That's as scientific as I get.

DAG:

Beriberi, pellagra. People used to get a scratch and they'd have an infection for six months. I healed reasonably well. I don't remember having some of these horrible ulcerous sores that

were so common. I had, and I guess was hospitalized, for diarrhea, suspected dysentery, but I don't believe I ever actually had dysentery. I don't think I ever actually had dysentery.

CGR:

Do you remember how you were treated for that, for diarrhea?

DAG:

I don't think I was treated with much of anything, except I was in a bed instead of a sack suspended from -- but in fact it was not dysentery, I think. I had to have several teeth removed because of -- whatever reason people have teeth out to have them out. I had a great big sebaceous cyst on my head that for some reason or another Crawford thought he ought to take off, and he did, and it did not get infected, which was the danger.

Then I got diphtheria, but I got it at a period when there was serum. I don't remember being terribly sick with it. In fact, I'm sure I wasn't. You know, there was no special diet or anything. There was nothing they could do for you in the way of food, and we were stuck away in isolation. I was lucky. I was with another fellow who got it the same time, an older officer in the Royal Rifles [of Canada], the paymaster, [Capt Andrew C.M.] Cecil Thomson, who happened to be a lawyer. I was a brand new lawyer who'd never practiced and he was quite a well-known Quebec City lawyer, so we used to chat and walk. You now, now when you're sick, you say, "Oh my God! Look what I'm missing. I have to do this. I'd planned to visit my granddaughter. I was going to go to the ballet, I was hoping to take a trip to..." You didn't miss anything in Hong Kong if you were sick. They just moved you from place "A" to place "B." Your life was exactly the

same. The only thing is if you had diphtheria you were away from the rest. Otherwise it didn't make any difference.

I don't remember it. I don't remember that I was sick very often. After all we lived a pretty regular life -- no cigarettes, although some people used to sell their rations for cigarettes, a rather stupid thing to do. I wasn't much of a smoker. I just quit. Of course, there's no booze. Somebody once got a bottle in for Christmas and about 20 of us shared it. We got about an ounce each and we were tiddly for hours. You know, early to bed, early to rise, no liquor, just a small intake of food, probably good for your -- no cigarettes.

I don't remember lots of colds or anything like that, although it used to be so perishing cold in the winter. When you tell that to a Hong Kong resident today he thinks you're pulling his leg. The climate is so balmy there, in the winter, but we were so cold. I've never been so cold in all my life! I go for long walks -- not in this weather, but in weather a little warmer than this, and I don't get as cold as I did in Hong Kong. The food, the fact that the doors didn't fit and the windows didn't fit, no heating of course, clothing and so on. Finally I decided, "The hell with it!" I decided that the only way to stay warm was to sleep in the nude and pile all your clothing on top of you and that worked reasonably well. We found that there was no real problem coping with the heat in the summer. But the winters -- which fortunately were not very long -- were absolutely perishing.

But I don't recall being sick very much. As I said, I had diphtheria and I had runs of diarrhea. Also I think I hurt my

neck. It developed subsequently. We used to have these volunteer details to unload the trucks of rice and I was not particularly muscular or strong. Guys would put a couple of 100 lb sacks on your back. I could carry them, but I think maybe it did something to my neck that I could have done without. I would say that my medical history in that three years and eight months was not terrible representative and not very depressing.

CGR:

At the time, I know from Dr. [S. Martin] Banfill [RCAMC] and others, that when the diphtheria epidemic was taking place, and when they began to receive the antitoxin, it wasn't nearly enough and some pretty tough decisions had to be made about who got it. Were you aware of that? Were you involved in that? That was a totally medical thing,s was it?

DAG:

No, I don't recall that at all. If you had asked me, I would have said the contrary. I would have said there was a period when there was no antitoxin and there was a period when there was antitoxin. But not enough for everybody -- I did not know that. Maybe I was one who got it and others didn't, although I got it late in the game. I was not familiar with that.

We took no precautions. I mean in my role as adjutant and so on, I used to visit people and I don't remember taking any precautions not to be exposed to it. I guess you just thought you were going to get it or you weren't.

CGR:

Pretty difficult to take precautions anyway in that kind of

situation. What about sex?

DAG:

Yes, what about sex! There was none. No, that's not true there was none. Most of us believed, on rather flimsy evidence, that there were some homosexual relations that developed. Not many. After all, you don't have a hell of a lot of sex drive when you have no food. You have some, obviously. We believed that there were several homosexuals. In fact, there was quite strong evidence that there were several homosexual relations.

CGR:

Can you give me any examples of kinds of evidence? I'm not asking you to incriminate anyone, but what do you mean by "fairly strong evidence?"

DAG:

Well, it seemed to us that there were several couples who were more couples than friends. They used to go off, and the way they used to look at each other. Maybe wrongly, maybe we were wrong, but that's all. I never found anybody. I never looked. And you know, there wasn't a hell of a lot of privacy in the prison camp. The opportunities were there, obviously. But they weren't very numerous.

I never heard of any actual heterosexual relations. Maybe they did exist, but I never heard of anybody smuggling in a girl or anything like that. It may have happened, but I certainly never heard of it. There was a lot more talk about food than there was about sex. That drive -- hunger is obviously a very strong drive. Of course there was talk about sex, no question about it. And there was very little stimulus. After all, sex

drive is there, but it gets stimulated. Everywhere you go you see young attractive women, you are exposed to sexually alluring advertising. We didn't have any of these things. Although I suppose there were some so-called pornographic books, but that would be the extent of it. We never saw any women, or at least I don't remember ever seeing any. Way in the distance you'd see some people that are attired in Chinese costumes. So sure it was a problem, but it was less of a problem than one would have thought without having gone through it, and knowing what an effect hunger, deprivation of other sorts, had.

CGR:

Could you tell me something about the room you lived in? How many people were in it?

DAG:

Well, the one that I remember most vividly -- and in fact somebody did a drawing of it. I forgot where I have seen it. I don't have it. What I remember most vividly -- it was a long hut which was a regular British army-issue Sham Shui Po barracks hut, with no windows. It still had a roof, no windows. Had doors, but I can't remember if the doors worked properly.

CGR:

Excuse me. When you say no windows, there were window openings, but no glass.

DAG:

Yes, no glass, window openings. There'd be a long row -- each hut had one room at the end, or maybe two little rooms, which I guess in peacetime would be [for] the corporal or whatever in charge of that hut. The way we used it was, the colonel

lived there. This was an officer's hut. This was a hut for officers only, a mixture of Winnipeg Grenadiers and Royal Rifles.

The beds would be -- when I say "beds" they were different things. Some people had iron beds with little palliasses; other people had four wooden up-rights with sacks nailed to them to form a mattress of sacks. That's really the two types of beds. Each had their advantages. They're both difficult to control as far as bedbugs were concerned, which was a big problem all through prison. There'd be two rows. They were quite close together. Maybe on one hand you might have two feet, two and a half feet, something like that. There might be a small table and a chair or two in the middle of the hut, there might not. Outside the hut there would be a funnel where you could urinate without going to the latrines at night, because you got into a big hassle with the guards and so on, so the practice developed of just using that unless you had to have a bowel movement, in which case you'd have to go to the latrine.

You might have a rope above our bed where you might hang your washing or something that you'd done. The odd person had a kit bag. There's nothing uniform. Everybody, you know, depending on what he was doing or where he was when he was captured or when the surrender came. Some people had shoes, good shoes. I had a good pair of shoes and big feet, and one of my brother officers was a very devout catholic. He used to wear my shoes to mass and I figured I got something out of that. I'm not sure what. I hardly ever wore the shoes. I don't remember whether they survived or not. We all wore clogs and fandushies, we called them, a little loin cloth, except during the extreme cold weather.

You'd be very close together. I don't remember how many we would be in a hut. I don't remember whether we filled one hut. I guess there were about 40 or 50 of us. I guess we were all in one hut. I think we probably were all in one hut. I think all the Canadian officers were in one hut, if I remember correctly.

There were no facilities in the hut. You had to go out to wash and shower and so on. We'd eat on our beds. It seems to me that the odd person had a little stool or table in between two beds. I seem to recollect the odd person eating at a table. Yes, I think we did have some rough tables in the room. Somebody would bring in the chow and it would be dished out; it would be all over in three minutes.

CGR:

Were there batmen?

DAG:

No. There may have been initially but there certainly wasn't later, no. You did everything for yourself. There may have been right in the beginning when there was a mixed camp and the officers were being paid, but that didn't last very long. There wasn't very much to do. There were just the ordinary things. You had your clothes, your personal cleanliness and then you'd be on -- as I say, I worked in the garden and other people did other things. I can't really tell you much more than that.

CGR:

How was morale?

DAG:

Well, it varied. Everybody had to work it out for himself.

George Porteous, for example, a very interesting fellow, subsequently became Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan -- George could only keep (he suffered a terrible blow; he opened a letter one day and discovered that his wife had died. I happened to be standing right beside him as he opened it.) -- he could only keep going by saying, "The war is going to be over a week next Tuesday, and therefore I have nothing to worry about. I can be happy, and so on, because a week next Tuesday is only 11 days away, only 9 days away." When a week next Tuesday comes, he says, "Well, it turns out it's going to be two weeks Thursday." I worked on exactly the opposite principle. I found that the best way that I could organize my life was to say, "This is a very, very, very long and tortuous proceedings. It's going to come out all right. I personally may not survive, but there is no doubt that the forces of righteousness are going to prevail and our side is going to win. We may get bumped off near the end." (Near the end of the war that was a great concern. That didn't do morale any good near the end. There were a lot of people who thought we would be bumped off.) But I worked on the principle that I could cope best by saying, "This is a very long process. If it turns out to be less long then I had anticipated, that's all to the good." And you had to adjust depending on the way you yourself saw things.

I don't believe that, on the whole, morale was bad during most of the period. But then I have got to qualify that. It was poor at the beginning, very poor. After all, who was prepared for the kind of physical conditions that we were putting up with? Who was prepared with the blows to our morale that we were read-

ing every day, expecting any day that New York had been, you know? Morale was quite poor during the diphtheria epidemic. People felt badly, not only for themselves but....It was not good when you were confronted with a lot of people in a row with electric feet, with their feet in a tub of water trying to get some relief. That was hard to take. It was bad when you were called out at night for an all-night roll call, and so on.

But basically I would say, in the camp where I was, with those exceptions morale was not bad. Now, of course, people tended to get irritable and there would be flare-ups that wouldn't normally occur, but that's normal with people living in such confined surrounding. You couldn't get away from each other. It was impossible, it was absolutely impossible. One guy had a distressing habit of humming through his teeth that drove you nuts. What could you do about it? You were going to have him there again tomorrow and the day after. Or somebody used clichés until it drove you up the wall. So, you'd go for a walk, or read, or go play poker for some illusory stakes, or something. But other people may tell you differently. I would say that morale wasn't bad.

CGR:

Were there instances of co-operation with the Japanese, collaboration?

DAG:

Oh yes! There was a Major, a trial of Major Boone. We were absolutely convinced that he would sell any one of us for a smile from the Japanese. In fact, I think he was acquitted. I'm sure he was quitted. A sergeant-major from the Winnipeg Grenadiers

[CSM Marcus Tugby] who was also accused, and in fact I defended him as a civilian lawyer and he was also assigned a major in the army as his military lawyer, but I actually ran his defense. He was acquitted of all the serious charges and convicted of a minor one and given a reprimand. He was not guilty. But he got in wrong with some of his people. But this was in Japan. I felt no compunction of defending him because I was not in the same camp, not in the same country even.

But the instances -- first of all, the opportunities were not great, I imagine, although I've never thought about it in detail. But there were a few things. For instance, a few of us were taken out to broadcast. I was one and John Crawford was one and I forget who the others were. Oh, given a great big meal, treated very nicely, cigarettes. We had to show them what we were going to say and they inserted, in mine, a couple of sentences -- "I hope this war will end soon. No more war for me." and I just said, "I'm sorry, as a serving officer that's not appropriate for me to say and I can't say that." They took it out. I didn't stop to think, "Hey, you want to get your head knocked off?" I just said that and they said, "Okay." If I had said that, would that have been collaboration? I don't know.

Anyhow, I don't personally recall any discussion of anything like that. As I say, what could we do? There wasn't very much we could do for them. Unlike the Indians, of course, where they made a big, big pitch to them. I think the only -- and of course it was talked about daily, hourly -- was the fact that we were absolutely convinced that Major Boone in order to whatever -- he was a hard man to figure out. We never could figure out why he

did what he did. He didn't appear to have any great privileges. You know, you never saw any beautiful girls running in and out of his boudoir. He was a very sparely built guy. So if he was eating better than we were it wasn't showing. I don't know. But of course we were absolutely convinced that he would sell us all, if the Japanese just crooked one little finger. We never made it stick. I personally -- I think John Crawford was a witness. I'm trying to remember what Canadian witnesses there were. Anyway, I believe he was acquitted.

CGR:

John went to some trials but I have a feeling those were the trials of the Japanese. I didn't ask about this other business.

DAG:

Yes. I think it was the trial of the Japanese, yes. I think Boone was quitted. Actually, we placed him under arrest immediately and there was some fear that somebody would do him in, and we weren't keen on that either, so he was placed under arrest and we gave him a suitable escort. But that was the only case that I know of that I can recall. There may be others that I didn't know about. But I don't recall anything else. As I say, it's pretty hard to imagine what they could get from these poor Canadians. What could they do for them?

CGR:

Are there any other things that you can think of that might be of interest to me, anything that has to do with your responsibilities as adjutant that might have to do with the health of the people in the camps? Anything of that nature?

DAG:

There really wasn't much. I was pretty far removed from knowing the ins and outs, all the intricate negotiations that went on. You know, are you going to give me any medicine, or aren't you? We were the envy of everyone else with respect to our dental facilities, because rightly or wrongly, Canadian dentists are regarded as being very good. And we had both our dentists with us -- Win Cunningham and Mac Spence.

CGR:

I've interviewed Win Cunningham, incidentally.

DAG:

Mac is dead, I believe.

CGR:

Yes, a couple of years.

DAG:

Yes. Win was always referred to as "no strain-o Win-o." He had such a relaxed view about everything and we'd always say, "Hi, Win. How are you?" "Well, no strain." He'd move with the same deliberate -- he still does I'm sure. I'm sure there's no change, I'm sure there's absolutely no change. They were bloody good dentists. So we had excellent dental care. They seemed to have whatever equipment they needed, too. I suppose they were allowed to send out for it; I'm sure they weren't captured with it. As distinct from the medical aspects, but I don't know the ins and outs of that. I don't know what the battles Martin [Banfill] and Rose -- was that his name, Dr. Rose?

CGR:

There was a Gray.

DAG:

No, but there was an Indian, a senior Indian.

CGR:

Yes, that's right -- Ashton-Rose.

DAG:

[Acting Major L.W.] Ashton-Rose [IMS], an Anglo-Indian. And Ross Gray, or was it Gordie Gray, I've forgotten.

CGR:

Dr. Gordon Gray [RCAMC], yes. He's in Edmonton.

DAG:

His brother's a lawyer here. I call each by the wrong first names. And of course a fellow -- Dr. John Reid [RCAMC] -- who died many, many years ago. So there was no shortage of good doctors, it's just that what they had, I'm not familiar with that at all. I didn't have a hell of a lot to do with them. As I say, I was not sick all that much. It seems to me there were occasions when they got stuff and we were given injections of various sorts, and so on. But that's very hazy, very hazy.

With respect to my own role, I tried to collect the effects of anybody who died, and they were usually non-existent, and I don't think most of them survived after the war. Nobody had anything worth anything.

I played a role at one time, it seems to me, in delegating people to go on work parties, but that, of course, was purely an intermediary role. It was the doctors who decided whether somebody was fit to go or not. I suppose they had terrible battles with the Japanese: "I can't produce 10 fit men." But I had nothing to do with things like that at all. No, I was never

involved in anything like that, to whatever extent it existed. It was not part of anything that I did.

CGR:

Well, very good. Perhaps I'll stop there. Thank you very much.

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