

WILLIAM MUIR STEWART, MB

Experiences as a Prisoner-of-War in the Far East, 1942-1945

Interviewed by

Charles G. Roland, MD

14 August 1985

Plus a self-interview by Dr. Stewart & Dr. Ken Cambon, Vancouver
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Oral History Archives

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Charles G. Roland, MD:

I wonder if you'd begin, Dr. Stewart, by telling me a bit about your background: where you were raised and educated, who your parents were, why you went into medicine, a few things like that to provide a context.

William Muir Stewart:

Yes, why I went into medicine was always....I think [explaining] why anybody went into anything is always fraught with some difficulty, but there it was -- I might have been an engineer but I became a doctor instead. I was born in Northern Ireland, went to school there, and also went to Queen's University in Belfast; and qualified in medicine in July 1935. Thereafter I did some time in the hospital, and after that I took a holiday trip on a Blue Funnel vessel which took me to Japan and eventually brought me back to Liverpool. That I think is somewhat important because I got a taste of the Far East on this [trip] at that time.

Shortly after that I joined the army. I joined the army, I think, largely because of my -- the people I went to to ask advice, which way my career should go now. One, in particular, who had been helpful to me during my undergraduate days, he said, "Look, there is going to be a war anyway" (this was in 1937), "and if you've any thoughts of getting into a foreign kind of service or a kind of service involved in performing duties, why not go ahead and join the army, because we probably all are going to be in that in a short time." So that really is why I joined the army.

CGR:

So you'd be in ahead.

WMS:

That was towards the end of 1937. After, you know, the usual kind of training and preparation, my first posting outside was to the Northwest Frontier of India. That I thoroughly enjoyed. That was a pretty rugged sort of life.

CGR:

Khyber Pass, that sort of thing?

WMS:

Yes, that's right, well it was actually in Waziristan. I enjoyed that kind of life very much. There were, in the camp there at Waziristan, there were some 10,000 men, no women, none at all, not even in the bazaar. We spent a good deal of time chasing various Northwest Frontier villains, to us at that time. [End of first part of abortive July interview.]

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CGR:

I would suggest that you just pick it up at Waziristan and carry on from there, please.

WMS:

Yes, I was in Waziristan until, oh, the summer of 1939, and shortly after that I was transferred (with war appearing fairly imminent), I was transferred to Singapore for duty there as a medical officer. I don't think you want any more detail than that, except that I stayed in Singapore about, until....First of all, the Japanese war began, the war with Japan, after the attack

on Singapore by the Japanese, starting, I think, on the 7th of December, 1941.

I left Singapore as it was falling and eventually made my way, in a yacht, to Sumatra, and then by devious means, or by various means, I should say, through Sumatra to Java, to Australia, and I stayed there for some time. I was put on the ship to return to India. That ship left Freemantle on the 5th of May [1942] and we were picked up by a German raider, Raider #10.

CGR:

What was the name of the ship you were on?

WMS:

I was on the ship called the Nankin. Purely as a passenger on way to...along with a few other odds and ends of people rather like myself who had got detached from their units and were now being sent back to duty in India. A German raider picked us up on the 10th of May, in the middle of the Indian Ocean, and after some months we eventually landed in Yokohama. We finally were transferred to the Japanese on the 21st of August, that is 1942, of course.

CGR:

As far as you know was this a routine for them to transfer their prisoners to the Japanese?

WMS:

No it wasn't, no it wasn't. In fact they had taken most of their prisoners, before, back to France, but we started off in that way. At least I believe that's where we were bound. We didn't have too much information about what we were doing, of course. But at one time we were down very far south of the

Cape, the cape of South Africa, and I think at that very moment, Brazil declared war. Whether she declared war, I'm not sure of her actual status, but she certainly gave the Americans bases from which they could patrol the Atlantic. So, their escape route up the Atlantic in the shelter of South America was rather cut off. Before that, they'd gone up the coast and then dashed across and rather shut their eyes and just hoped to get through to...I think they were based in St. Nazaire, and they hoped to get through there on this occasion, of course. So they turned around and brought us back into the Indian Ocean, where eventually we went through the Sunda Strait, that's between Java and Sumatra, and then on to Japan, to Yokohama. We stayed, actually, in another ship in Yokohama for a little while -- for about three or four, maybe three weeks. Eventually we were transferred ashore to Japanese control.

I think there was some argument going on between the Germans and the Japanese about the conditions of handing us over to Japanese control. The Germans said that they were trying to insure that their officials in Japan would have some contact with us and could supervise to some extent the kind of treatment we were receiving. But we never saw them again. We never heard anything more from the Germans.

CGR:

And about when did you get to Japan?

WMS:

Well, we were finally transferred on the 25th of August.

CGR:

So it was about two months, a little over two months from

your capture.

WMS:

Well, it was most of May and June and July and a good bit of August.

CGR:

Close to three.

WMS:

Nearly four months, in fact, yes, three and a half months.

CGR:

Were you doing any medicine at all during that time?

WMS:

No, no. The Germans had their own doctors and they looked after us. None of us were sick anyway, of course, we'd all been taken in good shape, so there was no...oh, there was the odd little thing but I wasn't asked to do any medical work there.

CGR:

OK, perhaps you'd just carry on then with what happened at Yokohama and where you were sent next, and so on.

WMS:

Yes, well in fact, the actual hand-over between the Germans and the Japanese was a subject for comic opera, almost. They lined us up on the dockside. As I remember there were 169 of us altogether. Mostly merchant service people, but a few military service as well.

CGR:

Mostly British?

WMS:

Yes, mostly British. There was the crew of one Norwegian

ship and the crew of one Australian ship, and the other ships were British. There were five ships on board, five ships' crews on board, altogether.

Anyway, they lined us up on the dockside, and they had difficulty counting us. They counted us, first of all, in a long line, and they got somewhere near it, I think about 180 or so. That wasn't good enough because it didn't tally with the Germans. They put us in two files and then in three. I think in the end they gave it up and just accepted what the Germans had said [laughter]. But this was a very good indication of what was to come in the way of administrative, simple administrative things, which they didn't seem able to cope with. It seems the simplest thing in the world.

Anyway, we were eventually put into trucks of some kind and driven a few miles only, and we went into a camp which I believe had been used for ordinary labor in the civilian -- Japanese labor. That was at Kawasaki. We then became known as Kawasaki No. 1 camp.

I should say probably that there were two other doctors in this party. There was the doctor off the ship on which we were captured, a Dr. Lang (Laing?) an Australian, and there was a Dr. Curtin....

CGR:

Dr. Curtin? [Presumably Dr. A.P. Curtin, Australia.]

WMS:

Curtin, yes, I think that was his name, who was in the navy.

CGR:

They both went to Kawasaki also?

WMS:

Yes, they went.

CGR:

The whole group went.

WMS:

The whole group, yes.

The Germans had looked after us pretty well, really. You know, they told us when we would get cigarettes, they told us when we would get our meals, and we got them bang on the spot. It wasn't very comfortable down in the holds of the ship. We slept in hammocks. But there it was. Pretty hot at times, you know, and particularly when we were in the tropical areas. But it was all right, you know. The food was all right, a lot of beans -- bean stew and sauerkraut seemed to be the order of the day -- quite adequate, you know, in quantity and nutritionally too.

Things were different, of course, as soon as we got into the Japanese camp. I can't remember whether we got our meal that night or not, but I think we probably did. They were fairly regular with our meals, under Japanese control. They soon organized some of our cooks -- or people who would do the cooking -- to get it done. The camp wasn't really completely built, they were still building the kitchen as far as I remember. They were putting the roof over the top of where they had these large boilers for rice or whatever it was -- it was mostly barley, I think we got, though I can't remember just at the moment. That was the fare for, really, forevermore, was to be rice or barley,

mostly barley, pretty rough barley too. Sometimes stuff which we called coiang [?], which, I think, was a red millet. Occasionally some rice, but that would have been rather a luxury, that combined with some very thin watery soup or stew, two or three times a day.

CGR:

Do you have any idea of the caloric value?

WMS:

No, I couldn't really give you that, except that everybody started to lose weight right away. I think that's really the best indication. It was made pretty clear that the people who were working would get more than the people who were not working, right from the very beginning.

CGR:

And that's the way it was.

WMS:

And that's the way it was, and that's the way it remained, too.

CGR:

What kind of a camp was Kawasaki? What were people there to do?

WMS:

Now, it was a work camp, again, but I can't remember the exact work that they did. I know some of them worked in the steel factories, steel works, but I can't really remember the details of the work they'd been doing. We got a few more [men]. It was the first camp in the area, first camp established in the area, and I think a few more stragglers came in from various

parts who had been picked up rather irregularly throughout the Japanese theaters, and I think anybody who came to that area was shoved into our camp.

CGR:

Was there a hospital, a sick bay?

WMS:

No. I think it's fairly important that we should remember that at least most of our people arrived in good shape. We'd been well looked after, you know, comparatively, by the Germans. We weren't under any stressful conditions, we hadn't been out on the field for a long time, we had no wounded with us. So most people were in fairly good shape and, arriving like that, of course, there was no great degree of sickness. We did have a few deaths there, I remember; one chap, I think, died from pneumonia, and I can't remember any of the others. I've got no records at all of that time. No doubt you can maybe turn them up from somewhere -- Kawasaki No. 1.

Anyway, have you had any other interviews with anybody from Kawasaki?

CGR:

No one who had medical responsibilities. Men who were at Kawasaki, yes, but not medical....

WMS:

Yes. The backbone, the numbers, of the camp, of course, were merchant service mostly. And some of them, indeed, were killed at the end by American bombing while still in that camp, although a lot had been dispersed and distributed all over to various camps. Including the two other doctors, they had both

been removed; and finally I was taken away. I was the last doctor in the camp, and I was taken away too, leaving the camp with no doctors. I was taken to Niigata in October of '43, and there I stayed.

CGR:

So you were there about 14 months?

WMS:

Yes, something like that, yes. Well, when I arrived in Niigata, life was very different there. I think we were subject, in the Kawasaki camp, to a bit of inspection from....we were kind of guinea pigs, sort of thing, on the Japanese scene. And several people came to see us and so I suppose there was some supervision went on which made the camp situation, from our point of view, a little bit easier.

As soon as I got to 5B in Niigata, of course, it was a very different matter. There I was quickly informed that this was a labor camp, and the men were here to work, and work they would. It was my duty, I was told by the Japanese camp commandant, it was up to me to see that they were fit to work. And that was why I was there.

Japan was at war. Everybody in Japan had to work, and those who didn't work, didn't eat. So that was pretty well the...this was, I think, it was a Major Yoshida (I think it was Yoshida, but I'm not too sure). There were 350 Americans in this camp and 300 Canadians. Also with the Canadians there was a submarine crew, a Dutch submarine crew, who had been with them, I think, in Hong Kong, and they stuck together. That was really the camp. I was No. 651.

Now, where did we get to?

CGR:

Well, perhaps you could tell me a bit about what you found at Niigata when you got there, from the viewpoint of health and so on. My records suggest that the Canadians who were at Niigata, left Hong Kong on the 15th of August, so they would have been there just about a month, I suppose, by the time you got there.

WMS:

Yes, something like that. I wouldn't be sure of the dates there, but I know they'd been there at least, about a month, I would say. The Americans came shortly after the Canadians. And shortly before I arrived, well to put it crudely, they just started to die. I think it may have been on this account that I was transferred from the camp I was in. Why they picked me I don't know. I believe that the American detail had, when they arrived in Japan, they had some 30, 40, 50 doctors with them, who were taken away on arrival and sent to a camp near Tokyo, which already had a lot of doctors. It seemed an extraordinary thing. But this seemed to be quite in order because it was a work camp and they were there to work, they weren't there to be sick.

CGR:

The Americans probably went to Shinagawa, did they?

WMS:

That's right, so I believe, yes. They had plenty of their own doctors; but there it was. This was another piece of the kind of administrative botch-up which the Japanese seemed to make, which made for more stress, of course; having had their own

doctors, then taking them away and bringing in somebody new. Well there it was, this was the kind of thing that happened.

Anyway, they'd had, I think, seven or eight deaths before I arrived, from dysentery and pneumonia, and the residue of old illness. So I was called to the office, where the commandant gave me a lecture in stertorous military Japanese, through an interpreter, of course. The interpreter wasn't very clever either, he wasn't very good. He was about as scared of the commandant as I was, so it didn't really make for a very good interpretation, a very good understanding. But the gist of it all was that this was a labor camp and the men were here to work and work they would. And those who didn't work, well, as far as I was concerned it was my job to keep them fit.

I then saw the various facilities I had. There was a room, a hut kind of room, which had been made available for the seriously sick. I suppose there were 20 or 30 people -- on the floor, of course, as was the custom. That in itself was all right. And we had half a dozen medical orderlies. Some American, some Canadian. Chief Dixon was the chief, the principal one there. And there was [Ken] Cambon [HCM 23-83], and an American called Quintero, Jose Quintero (nice chap), and Fred Drover, a Canadian from somewhere in the Maritimes.

So I saw them and I asked them what the form was, and I got a pretty good picture from the medical orderlies of what the conditions were. I had already spoken to our own camp...the senior American officer, (there were five American officers altogether), I had already spoken to him and he had given me a fairly good reasonable rundown of the situation from their point

of view. The main thing that was worrying them most at that time was pneumonia. They had come from the tropics with mostly tropical kit, and no real change of clothing, no extra clothing at all, and it was now starting to rain and snow. It snows quite a lot in Niigata. We had about two metres of snow later on. And it was windy and wet and miserable outside. The buildings were completely inadequate for our...there were huts without windows -- oh they had the window holes, you know, but no glass in them. And later on we got some wooden slides which would close and keep the snow out, but otherwise it was pretty drafty. No heating. So conditions were pretty primitive.

The food was very much the same as I'd had over at Kawasaki, same kind of food. Probably more of that Japanese radish, you know, which is a long daikon, in the soup -- that seemed to make the bulk of the soup. I don't think it had very much food value. It was a vegetable, however.

From a medical point of view, a great difficulty arose from the fact that paper and records were very difficult. I eventually got some notebooks. There were 650 people, and I hadn't anything like 650 sheets to give one to each man, but it was obviously important that if I was going to make any progress at all I'd have to get each man on a certain amount of documentation. So I think the sheets were maybe about 7 by 5 inches, and I think by putting two persons on each sheet I was able to get some form of records started, so that when a chap came back to me I could look up his number and see what he'd been in with before.

The medical cases at that time were these pneumonia cases. Classical lobar pneumonias. I hadn't seen them for some years

because, with the advent of the sulfa drugs round about the mid-'30s, these practically disappeared, you didn't see it anymore. But here they were, right up again.

CGR:

And the Japanese weren't supplying you with sulfonamides.

WMS:

No. They did eventually provide some sulfonamide, which I think was sulfapyridine. Not that it matters, particularly, but they called it Trianon, t-r-i-a-n-o-n. But it came in .2 gram tablets, and the dose which they regarded as being sufficient was two tablets, twice a day, which is not very much, really.

CGR:

Not for sulfa, no.

WMS:

No. Very, very small dose -- inadequate. So we had this problem -- a ward full of pneumonias -- to try and select who should get the...who should be treated. This was very difficult. You could treat the sickest, or you ignore them, or not ignore them but rather leave them out of your treatment. You could treat those who are least sick, hoping that they will get better themselves, and try and spread the available bits as well as possible, as advantageously as possible, to help those in the middle degree of severity. And this was very difficult. However, it eventually solved itself: some died and some didn't die, and some, almost cases which we would have given up, got better, you know, and some tragic ones who seemed to absolutely cure themselves, and then drop dead, like that. We had two cases just like that, when they seemed almost ready to leave the sick room.

Anyway, there was almost literally no treatment at all, and they'd made good recovery in the room. But this was classic lobar pneumonia.

So that was the most striking case, possibly, the pneumonias, but the background for the sickness of the...the Canadians were in much worse shape, I think, than the bulk of the Americans. They'd had dysentery, they'd had a lot of diphtheria, and of course, just general malnutrition with a lot of edema, and then very often going on to this neuritic form of what they called "electric feet." I'm sure you've heard of it.

CGR:

Yes.

WMS:

This neuritis, which gave them a lot of pain, a lot of suffering. And they were usually pretty well shrunken ones, they'd got rid of their edema, and along came the neuritic side. They were pretty...generally I think there were very, very few really fit ones amongst them, who hadn't already had some of these serious illness during the time in Hong Kong. So that was pretty poor ground, poor material to start trying to work with.

As the conditions went on, the weather got worse, the clothing, of course, from being inadequate, became completely useless. Footwear was a great problem. Just general privation from these necessities, shortage of them, led to all the steady progressive lowering of the general health of the whole group. And more and more deaths.

I can't remember -- I haven't got the death records here -- but I think in that period of about five months in that winter,

from the time, say in November and December and the first three months of the first of the year, I think about we had about 80 deaths or so at that time. After that things began to get better.

CGR:

Actually I do have some records. [Tape off briefly.]

WMS:

I think he died on the -- he says, "July ?, 1945", I think he was July 4th, 1945.

CGR:

This is Spears.

WMS:

Yes. I think it was July the 4th because it was the American -- it was an important day.

CGR:

A holiday, yes.

WMS:

He said....well it may have been the next day that he was killed...and he said that if he wasn't released by that day he was going to run out of the camp. He was a bit of a nut, I think [laughter].

I can't really go into much detail on the medical side of it, you know. Maybe that's disappointing to you, but it's about 40 years ago -- to try and patch up any detail, you know, it's just really not on, other than the background to the general health, and the general conditions, as I mentioned, the weather.

CGR:

It's broad impressions I'm after. I don't expect detail --

that would be foolish of me.

WMS:

But all the time there was very little done to alleviate the situation and make it a bit better. I was going to say we mentioned in the tape we've done now [tape recorded by Dr. Stewart & Dr. Ken Cambon, in British Columbia, the previous week], if it's translatable, some of these things -- we mentioned Spears, and we mentioned the general conditions and how they affected the whole group, you know. The question of morale, particularly during those first three months of 1944, well, December, January, February, March -- January and February, in particular. I would say that 4-month period was the worst and most of the people really died during that period, or as a result of illness which they had picked up during that time, and never really recovered from it.

CGR:

Was it that winter, that first winter, that the barracks collapsed?

WMS:

Yes it was.

CGR:

So that also added to this whole....

WMS:

Yes. Have you got that fairly well recorded?

CGR:

Well, I've interviewed several of the men who were in the building.

WMS:

It was just about an hour after the New Year started. It was in the morning, sometime, I would say the early hours, maybe 1 o'clock in the morning, on the first of January, 1944.

We'd been moved several times to different camps; now, I'm not sure of the dates of those. We'd come out -- this was to be our permanent camp, and then when this happened, I think this brought some notoriety, maybe, from the camp and they sent some people from Tokyo. I think maybe, in some way, this produced a certain amount of relief for our people. At least they got onto the map, as it were, from Tokyo. And the plight of the men in general, then became a little more obvious. Oh, there wasn't very much obvious change. I think it did probably lead to some improvement in general. I wouldn't like to try and specify it. But I think the attitude did improve a little bit there.

You've got a fairly good record, I think, of Dr. Fujii and his....

CGR:

Well, please tell me that, because that's part of what you told me the first time, which I no longer have.

WMS:

Yes. After I'd been in this camp a few days and had a chance to survey the total sick....I didn't really mention the way it was conducted. We had this room, which was really a hut turned into a hospital room; at one end of it we had a few medicines, and a few notebooks. In the evening all the workers, who'd been out working, they'd trudge back and they lined up in the corridor outside, and they eventually came through and we had

a quick look at them, and did any dressings. There was quite a lot of sepsis, septic sores. We tidied them up as well as we could. I would have thought, in fact, that a man with an obvious septic sore would probably have had more sympathy from the Japanese than the chap who was developing pneumonia, you know, that sort of....

CGR:

Because you could see it.

WMS:

Yes, yes, you could see it. With our inability to make any relationship with the Japanese or to understand each other; of course, this was something they could understand, whereas, they distrusted anybody who said they've got a pain in his chest, or a pain in his back, which wasn't absolutely obvious. So, now where did we get to on that....I've rather diverted to that, but this is the way it was done.

Now, Fujii. Fujii came a few days after I was there, and he had a review of all the cases. He spent the whole morning seeing all the cases who I had marked off duty.

CGR:

Now, who was he?

WMS:

I don't know really who he was, except, I believe, he was attached to the headquarters camp in Tokyo, or the headquarters staff from Tokyo. We were part of the Tokyo area. In 5B it was still Tokyo area, although we were hundreds of miles away.

He seemed quite sympathetic at the beginning, and reasonably competent. We went through all the cases. He shook his head

here and there, and said, "Yes, yes, yes." When he saw all these chaps with tachycardia, and running about 120 or so, at rest; some of them had been ex-beriberi cases, some of them had been diphtheria cases, and so on. Anyway, they were all debility cases, one way or another. Well, he -- I thought, anyway, that he had agreed, more or less, that these needed rest. So we put them off work. And this seemed to be looking up, you know, like we were now beginning to get a little bit of understanding.

But it didn't last very long because he came back. He seemed to think they should all be better in 10 days -- but they couldn't have been better in 10 months. But he seemed to think that, and he came back about 10 days or 2 weeks later, went through the cases again in the morning, and then he seemed to get tired in the afternoon and didn't take too much interest. And really announced at the end of it all that they could all go back to work, with maybe a few exceptions. Now this was a great blow. And off to work they did go. Some were taken out on stretchers, at least one chap died out on the job, and others died shortly after being brought back.

I mention this because this really set the pattern for the whole of the rest of the [war]. From time to time we were threatened with the same kind of....if the numbers on the sick list started to creep up, we were threatened with this same kind of pogrom, if you like, you know, where just -- unreasonable -- out to work, everybody, without any consideration. Although we did try keep on edging the numbers up from time to time, it was always a bit of a tenterhook, you know, how far we could go before we would bring down the wrath of the powers again.

We did, several times we ran into trouble, but never quite so bad as that, when they took it into their own hands and said, "everybody out." In fact this was still going till the last day of the camp, this same attitude. And that day they devised a new system of getting people.

We were beginning to get some inkling that Russia, I think we had some inkling that Russia had come into the war. We didn't know how far the Americans had advanced. Nor did we know about the atomic bombs, although two had already been dropped by this time. And they were trying to devise a new system whereby they brought everybody out on the parade ground in the morning. There were some supervisors came out, some civilian supervisors, who came up from the various works where the men were working, and took away their gang, which had been paraded for them by the camp staff. This time everybody was out, including the patients from the hospital -- they were carried out on stretchers, and they were going to decide who was fit to work and who wasn't. We'd let the numbers drift up a bit because of the rumors which were beginning to circulate. I think our chaps got a little bit of information from some of the Japanese they worked with on the outside jobs; they'd built a little bit of a relationship whereby they could get some information.

CGR:

But there was no radio in the camp?

W.M.S:

Not that I know of. Not that I know of. I don't think there was, either. There might have been, very late on, around

about this time, because we got a lot of people who had been bombed out of various camps in June, July, around the Tokyo area -- Tokyo or Yokohama. We got quite a lot of inflow then. Our numbers went up from 650 to about 1000 at that time, because we, I suppose, we were what was regarded as a safe area, or an area, anyway, where they could accommodate these people. It's possible there was a radio came in then. But I don't know. Any information was kept absolutely silent, of course, and nobody asked any questions. But there was never any definite clear-cut information coming to us.

CGR:

To go back to this hospital business, about the number you could keep -- was there ever an absolute number? I mean, did they say there can be "x" number and no more?

WMS:

No, no. Not that. But they would be critical if the numbers went up any day, you see, more than the day before. They would almost say, "All right, you can keep him out, off duty; somebody else must go out instead." So there was never any absolute number.

CGR:

I've heard of camps where the Japanese would issue a certain number of tickets, and when the tickets were used up that was it.

WMS:

Yes, yes. Well, maybe this was pretty well the same sort of thing. I'm sure you've heard of what we called "the magic number." This was the number of man-days worked -- a percentage total, and they worked out that so many men had gone to work each

day, on a long sheet of paper, and finally on the bottom right hand corner was the percentage of man-days worked against the percentage of the possible of 100 percent. This we always referred to as the magic number.

Ken Cambon used to help. Takahashi was the medical corporal, and Ken Cambon used to -- later on, not at this early stage I'm speaking of -- he used to help him work out the figures. And he did, in fact, did develop a bit of a relationship with Takahashi, but I don't think Takahashi had really very much power himself. I mean, up to a certain limit you could form a relationship and then, of course, to make any changes he had to go to the camp commandant or go to somebody else. So you could work your head off and still not get any relationship which would be effective.

I think Major Fellows who was the....he tried fairly hard, actually, but he wasn't, I want to say popular, he wasn't really acceptable by the Japanese. They resented the fact that there were any officers, they seemed to resent the fact that any officers were there at all. There was no authority -- there was no law and order in the camp except what the Japanese had laid down, and which nobody really understood. This was really one of the sad things about this, as far as morale was concerned, it was absolutely destructive. But there was nobody you could appeal to if you felt any form of injustice.

CGR:

There wasn't, like in Europe, a Senior American or Senior British Officer?

WMS:

There was a senior officer, but he had no power.

CGR:

No, no, I see.

WMS:

No power, no power at all. In fact, it seemed to be obvious it was deliberately done this way so that there was no authority and the Japanese wouldn't have anything to deal with, you know, any organized system. And this, I think, from the morale point of view, was so important. We live in an organized society and there is always, if you feel you've really been done by one of your own fellows or by somebody else, some other system -- you can appeal, you can go to someone. It's like a riot situation where law and order is disintegrated, and there's no police, there's nobody you can get at. It's very difficult, and, I'd say, depressing on morale for people to have been brought up in an orderly society.

Now, any questions?

CGR:

Let me ask if you would say a bit about your own health during this time.

WMS:

Yes. I was fortunate in that, the way I was captured, I was in good health. I hadn't been under any particular stresses or strains and was well nourished and in good health. I came out of a group, I think, which was fortunate; you didn't want to be too big, for the big frame needed a lot of food, you didn't want to be too small so the work you were being asked to do was too much

of a burden -- somebody in the middle. I possibly had more, a little more better clothing, you know, from the way I came, than most people. Also I was in the camp, I wasn't working outside in the coal yard or down in a stevedoring job, so my clothing lasted better. So that was fortunate, that was a good start.

CGR:

Did you eat the same as everybody else?

WMS:

Yes, just the same as the rest.

I got the odd coughs and colds and things. I didn't get any serious dysentery. I had diarrhea from time to time, I think practically everybody did. Usually it would clear up.

I had a lot of edema in that spring of 1944. I was really badly swollen up in my legs on two occasions, lasting for about 10 days, I suppose. It's a very odd feeling when you can't get your boots on, or your shoes on, and your legs grate together, your thighs, you know, you kind of get your knees wider and wider. And the mental lethargy that comes with it, of course; it's very hard to keep awake and going. But there it was, I got better. Normally, these edema episodes, they ended up with a...usually ended but they seemed to start at night. You had this going on all the time with people. And urination, absolutely pouring, you know, off to the toilets a dozen times or more. In the morning you'd wake up shrunk, dried out. But still feeling pretty weak.

But I didn't, I would say, I never got serious dysentery. I think anybody who got serious dysentery, this was about the beginning of his troubles. Because any vitamins or any nourish-

ing food that he was taking in was disappearing -- he wasn't... and he'd go on down, down, quickly. So I didn't have any serious problems. I had, as I say, a lot of diarrhea but everybody had that and that seemed standard. An awful lot of people got piles, strangely enough. I don't know whether it's the loss of the ordinary musculature and fat content, but they seemed to get shrunk and they got piles, very badly. There was very, very little we could do with it. It was the kind of thing which didn't get much sympathy from the Japanese. But a lot of that.

CGR:

How about your weight?

WMS:

Oh yes, my weight. I went down to, I suppose, about...I was around about 11 stone then, that would be 154 pounds -- that would have been about my normal fit weight. I was down to about 100 pounds at the worst of times. Yes, that would be about right, but somehow you seem to struggle on with it, you know, and not too bad. When you're living in a community, which is even worse, you see, it's all a relative matter, this sort of standard which you set. But it certainly doesn't improve your ability to do anything. I think the people who were out on some of the working jobs, they got extra food outside and occasionally I think this did really....

[End of side 1, tape 1.]

I don't think I've got an awful lot more to tell you unless you've got any special questions you'd like to put to me.

CGR:

Well, I've got a few questions here.

Well first of all, can you tell me what you remember about Mortimer?

WMS:

We've got Mortimer on the tape, Cambon and I (this is rather a bit of a box and cox; I hope you can separate it; I think you need some clever intelligence). Most of what we know, I can tell you very quickly. He was a foolish sort of chap, and I think he pinched some food from the Japanese and was caught, and he was sentenced. There was somebody else involved too, or at the same time, and there were two of them originally. And they were not tied to a stake but they were, well, they were tethered to a stake. I think there was a rope around their leg, and they stayed outside the guardhouse which the men going out to work and back in from work every day passed. I think this was largely part of the punishment and part of the system is to let everybody see what happens to you. This was in very, very cold weather. I think he was the...the other chap, he didn't stay long anyway.

But Mortimer got very bad frostbitten feet. We brought him in several times. When I say we brought him in, the Japanese brought him. We made several representations. Each time I tried to get through to the Japanese. They didn't bring him into the ordinary medical room, they brought him into another barrack room, and I think it was Chief Dixon and myself, we went and dressed his feet as well as we could, and they were in an awful mess. I mean, there was bits of the bone sticking out of the front (to put it in it's crudest form) of the phalanges.

We thought several times, at least I thought several times

that they were going to take some notice that this chap was in such a state that he was going to die, and I said this. At least once or twice they took some notice of this and I thought they were going to say, all right then. But then he was returned to the place of punishment and nothing happened. All I could do was to represent how serious I considered it, and the Japanese didn't need me to say how serious it was, because they came and saw him, you know, this was something that was so ominous. The gangrene had gone up half way up his foot. But there it was. Eventually he did come in, I think he collapsed outside, actually, and he was brought in, but he died a day or two later.

CGR:

And how long had he been out there?

WMS:

Well, this is where Ken and I were a bit in dispute about this. I would have said about 10 days, a week to 10 days, that sort of thing. I couldn't be sure. Ken thought it was rather less than that, but I'm quite sure that....he didn't remember that he had come in several times because I don't think he was there at that....well, there's nothing you can do. But he was tough, he never complained, he never tried to make any trouble, and we told him we'd try and do what we could for him. But the whole background atmosphere was so grim at that time and it was so hopeless. People didn't....the whole camp, nobody in the camp, you see, could see any future of living anyway. How we were ever going to get out of this? --even if the Americans or Allied forces did eventually defeat the Japanese, we weren't going to be there.

CGR:

You didn't expect to be there to see it.

WMS:

We wouldn't have been there.

CGR:

No.

WMS:

We wouldn't have been there, we were quite sure. So one's attitude to somebody dying, of course, becomes quite different then. Tragic though it may be at the time, but there was no mourning, there was no grief, ever, when somebody died. And nobody felt, well, there but for the grace of God go I; it seemed to be more a relief from the pain and the suffering and humiliation as much as anything else, and it would come to all of us. This takes us into morale.

CGR:

My next question was going to be to ask you something about -- for want of a better term, I would call it the psychology of survival. Why, given two men who seemed equally fit, or equally unfit, and so on, why does one live and the other doesn't?

WMS:

Well, I would say there's one word which really solves that, and that's just luck. If he gets bad dysentery, on these restricted rations and under these hard working conditions, he's going to have a great deal of difficulty in surviving. And that's just about it.

But I would have thought...starting off at the beginning,

your very big chaps, they didn't do well; the very old, comparatively speaking, didn't do well; and we had some very young chaps in the first camp I was in, they didn't do terribly well. You know, there were junior cabin boys and things like this from the merchant service, younger than soldiers would have been, they didn't do very well. I think it's a bit like The Cruel Sea, if you remember (Did you read The Cruel Sea by Nicholas Montserrat?).

CGR:

Oh yes, oh yes.

WMS:

If you remember how he describes when the Compass Rose was sunk, how the men were dying, and he said a lot of them died pretty well as they had lived. I think it was a bit of that too, you know. Some were tougher and some were...but all the time there was this great blast of....Dysentery to my mind was the worst thing. Of course, when you got special episodes like the pneumonia, that was a different matter.

CGR:

Yes.

WMS:

Yes, sure. But from the general attrition that went on and the debilitating and general come-down of health. Of course, we had the cigarette barons, too, who managed to survive by trading cigarettes for rations. A lot of this went on. Some people could get a little edge this sort of way, you know, and it would just give them enough to....Another thing which mattered, of course, in our camp was the very bad

weather. But some of the jobs were good. The jobs which the Americans were at were mostly, I would say, better jobs, from the survival point of view, than the ones which most of the Canadians were on. That's purely a matter of luck, I think, again. Back to the same old thing again. But survival, any psychology, any particular thing you could do, as an individual, I don't think there was really much an individual could do himself except try and keep out of the dysenteric thing. That always struck me was the nub to the beginning of the end was when somebody got bad dysentery. Because they just became useless, of course, and when he was on the knife edge, anyway, it was enough to tip him over.

CGR:

Yes. Another thing I wanted to ask about. I'm sure there's an obvious and I'm sure an easy answer to this, but the logistics of feeding the working people more than the non-working people, how do you do that? I mean, do you have two kitchens, two dining rooms, or is it that the non-workers are all in hospitals, do they get their food there?

WMS:

Well, yes, I think that they used to take the food out to the working people, you see, and they could just take more out.

CGR:

Ah, I see, OK.

WMS:

They took their mid-day meal out and we got a very, very skimpy meal back in the barracks. That included not only the sick but it also included anybody who's a non-working person,

non-external working person.

CGR:

You were not considered a working person?

WMS:

No, no.

I think we're nearly finished. A few more questions.

CGR:

Pretty close yes.

Can you tell me something about things like...you mentioned the 4th of July, and Christmas and so on. Was there any...?

WMS:

We mentioned a bit of this church-going and religion. We tried...Major Fellows tried to get some short services going from time to time. The Japanese weren't very keen on this, they didn't like any formal sort of assembly. Nor were the men, they weren't interested, to be quite blunt about it. I never saw anybody doing any praying or doing any...or ever heard them talking about any religion, you know, or any hopeful, hope for any religious support, which may seem a bit strange but there it is. There were quite a few good Catholics amongst them, because there were a lot of French Canadians and there were quite a few Mexican boys too, who were mostly Catholics. But it didn't seem to be important to them. I have no doubt some had their own thoughts but they kept them very private, anyway, and they didn't get together in groups to deal with this. Not that there was much of that, getting together in groups.

CGR:

How did this all end for you?

WMS:

Oh, I think I told you that we were out that morning and they tried to devise a new system to get more people out to work, and a single plane flew over. I think I told you this.

CGR:

Oh, that was the very [last] day at the end!

WMS:

That was the last day, yes indeed. And it flew over and we'd seen single planes fly over, mostly taking photographs and they didn't disturb us particularly. But this time the Japanese all went for cover, which struck us as being very odd. And the civilian workers who had come up to take the gangs away, just took them away and we took the sick back to the hospital. So that was that. And then later that day, about mid-day, we had an interpreter, called Rance, I think you probably know of, who was....

CGR:

Rance, R-a-n-c-e.

WMS:

Yes. He was very good, actually.

CGR:

I've got a photo of him, I think.

WMS:

Yes. Now, somebody came into the medical room and said there's something very odd happening in the Japanese office. So we went out and more or less peeked, from a distance. The Japanese staff were all lined up in a best gear, with swords and

the rest on, and there was a great stertorous voice coming out of a radio, and they were bowing 90 degree bows. Rance said, "That means only one thing. That must be the Emperor talking." And it was.

He got some information very shortly afterwards saying that an armistice had been arranged; the war wasn't over, but an armistice had been arranged and the men wouldn't go to work tomorrow. Well, actually they came back from work that afternoon -- the first time they'd ever been in early in the whole time we were captured. So they didn't go to work, nobody came to take them to work the next day. The Japanese were very low profile.

Sometime around mid-day, somebody said let's push one of the walls down (one of the board fences, you know) and see what happens. We were beginning to put two and two together, so they pushed one down and the Japanese took not the least notice. And the chaps went out for a little walk around about. That was that.

Then, a few days later -- well, maybe the next day, within a few days anyway -- we got information to say that...it came from Japanese Imperial Army Headquarters...that all camps had to put up a large notice board to the north of the camp but facing south. Painted black with a yellow "PW" on it. (It didn't take us long to get that made up out of fences and things.) And that aircraft were to be expected anytime after the...that was the 15th, from the 20th on, we could expect to see American aircraft. Sure enough, 8:30 in the morning, bang, over they came. And that was it.

CGR:

Were there any reprisals?

WMS:

No. The Japanese, I think, were amazed that nobody took, nobody lopped off any of their heads, nobody even seized any of their swords, nobody took at least notice of them. They couldn't understand that either. But this was just the difficulty, you see, of making any relationship with them, because we were working on two different military cultures, and they didn't understand us and we didn't understand them. They had absolutely no regard or respect, and were taught to have none, for prisoner-of-war status. And they wouldn't have had any for themselves, so this was the nub of so much of the problem, really. You know, the background root.

Anyway that was that, and that was on the 20th [of August, 1945]. Then they got things a bit organized, and then the big B29's, they flew up from Guam, I think, and dropped various loads on all the camps. An extraordinary thing, actually. First of all they dropped them just free-dropping and it wasn't very successful, but then they....They came flying down, you know, two or three hundredweight of stores, cases of cooked beef, and so on, and they killed two Japanese in our camp and they didn't hurt any of the prisoners, which is rather extraordinary. There must have only been about 10 Japanese in the camp. Well, there it was.

After that they got organized; they welded a couple of 40-gallon drums together, which made it about the same size, I think, as one of the mines these planes had been dropping, and

put a parachute on it and dropped them down.

We got a lot of medical stores then too. Special medical packs which had been put up, not for us but for use in the field. And there was stuff in it called penicillin. We threw it out! It told us what the dosage was -- didn't tell us what to use it for [laughter]. But there was also stuff called DDT, which killed a lot of our lice and fleas.

Of course we were infested with these throughout; lice and....I might have mentioned the infestations we had -- bed bugs, particularly in the first camp I was in. Very, very bad indeed. We had...everybody had lice, and you had a delousing session every day. In the cold weather it was a bit hard to get your shirt off. There it was. We lived with them, and particularly in the summer, fleas were very, very...mosquitoes were problems too, and you got a lot of septic sores from these things. I think at one time we all had scabies, practically, early in the camp. This was from sharing blankets, you know, and living in the....instead of, you know, chaps would pool their blankets and four of them would try and snuggle together to try and keep a bit warm. I had scabies myself. I had everything.

We then found a great block of sulfur, about the size of one of these chairs, in one of the ships that they were working on, and they broke it up and carried it home in bits. We pounded this down into a rough, coarse, sandy powder. Cured all the [scabies]; mixed it up with some fat which, I think, was boiled off from some horse bones. We used to get some horse ribs in sometimes. And that made it, you know, made a good ointment. Not according to a pharmacopoeia, you know, but it worked. We

got rid of all the scabies in these camps. Rubbing this on.

So, any other bits I can...?

CGR:

No, thank you very much.

[End of side two.]

[Following is last few minutes of the first interview, most of which was erased in error.]

WMS:

...I don't think any of us are really worth that much yet.

CGR:

No.

WMS:

But it was the [kind of] decisions that had to be made anywhere. When you could say there was a [indecipherable] there, they were the ones to benefit from it. And those as well, with a bit luck, they'll pull through themselves. And some of the marginal ones you can maybe spread it -- instead of giving just to two, you can maybe spread it to four and hope to get away with it. But, very difficult.

Now, what else would have been important?

We moved camps several times. They were in a temporary camp. We moved. One particular incident: on New Years' night, 1943, one of the buildings fell down and killed a lot of people. Japanese buildings, they're huts with -- I think they had about 150 in each, with two decks, which really just were mattress platforms; built of timber, of course. Well, the central corridor and then the bunks on either side and two decks, and always with a very heavy roof of tile, heavy tiles. Now, these build-

ings were propped up with buttress props. At an inquiry, which came later, after this building collapsed (just a few hours after midnight on the 1st of the year, 1944) they said there was a night of high wind -- there wasn't really. I think some of the buttresses had got removed or dislodged or something, and the thing had just flopped over. That left us with heavy pylon beams which had caught the people in the upper deck and crushed their chest and pelvis, particularly. I can't remember, I think there were six or seven people killed at the time, and a good many fractured pelvises and chest cages.

CGR:

I've interviewed a number of those people.

WMS:

This maybe wasn't -- that was about the worst time of our camp. People were dying in large numbers, from other conditions, but this might not have been the worst thing that happened in the camp, though it may be strange to say. So I think the camp got a notoriety then, that may even have got back to the people in Tokyo. I think, a visit was arranged from some neutral other -- Swiss or Swedish -- who....and things were improved a little bit, for awhile.

Unfortunately, the basic ill-health was already planted very deep at this stage, and a lot of people were to continue to die for the next two or three months. They were just beyond.....So, that may have lead to an improvement later on because a lot of the chaps were beyond recovery at this stage, largely from edemas and pneumonias, and when I say edema I really mean malnutrition.

CGR:

Excuse me, you said you think that there was a visit by the neutral...?

WMS:

Yes, there was a visit. There certainly was -- I'm not sure whether it was the Swedish or...I think it was Swiss, actually. I think it may have been a Dr. Paravacini, in fact.

CGR:

Did you have a direct contact, did you have any input into that?

WMS:

Very little, no, very little. Nobody was allowed to speak individually to him, you know, to have any particular conference.

CGR:

What about Red Cross parcels?

WMS:

Yes, we got a very few. We had had some in the previous camp I was in. At this time we got some, but very, very little. Nothing at all compared to what I understand was the pattern in Germany. But some did come through. I've got no records of it. And some Red Cross medicine came through. It had been, I think, in bulk supplies, and broken down in Tokyo, I understood, and we got some of it. But a lot of it was until you've got your basic requirements of housing, clothing, and feeding, and a degree of security, your medicines are not....Some thiamine might have been, if it had been in adequate quantities or some sulfathiazole, that kind of thing would have been. And a little of this did come through. Unfortunately we didn't get it at the time

when we really wanted it most. It came through afterwards, you know, after we could really have done with it. But it was useful when it came. I would have thought, to a large extent, that and some food parcels too, were more a morale boost than of actual great value. Simply because the quantity wasn't enough and the timing wasn't right -- but very acceptable, of course, very acceptable.

There were some cigarettes always available. Cigarettes were a problem. The men got cigarettes outside too, occasionally, and we had cigarette barons; I don't know if you know cigarette barons? This was a very big problem with us in this camp. People who didn't smoke could trade a cigarette for a meal when the rations were very inadequate. Of course, they got fat, and addicted smokers, of course, they got thin. We tried all sorts of things to stop this swapping of cigarettes for meals, but of course, it was carried out at night, clandestinely, behind the latrine areas, or somewhere.

In the end we had about, we had more than one chap die simply from starvation. Although, we had been trying to meet with it, and we had to -- I think we selected about 20 persons who were in danger, serious danger, from this thing of swapping meals for a cigarette. We made them feed in the hospital, at least one meal a day, under supervision, and they had to eat it whether they liked it or not. So that we were breaking a bargain, I suppose, to some extent, that they had made with their cigarette baron. But we dealt with it in this way, and I think that, more or less, when this got around that we were going to continue to do this, this pretty well stopped it. That was quite

a big problem, though.

CGR:

Yes, I can see that.

WMS:

It was the kind of ordinary social thing that goes on even in prisoner-of-war conditions.

Now, what more do you want?

CGR:

Tell me something about the kind of work the men were doing. I think I'm correct that there was the Rinko, the coal yards, and Marutsu, and Shintetsu, was that part of the iron foundry?

WMS:

Yes, Rinko was a coal yard and I think the work there was largely pushing coal cars, you know, around a mini railway up high on trestles, and then tipping it into....it was filled from some chutes, I believe. I went out to see it and there were various elements in this, but largely it was a matter of pushing these coal cars and then tipping them into railway wagons. That was very rugged weather -- rugged job in hard weather. We must remember that some of these chaps had no footwear and there was snow on the ground. They were provided sometimes with footwear, but there were always people who hadn't adequate footwear. They gave them straw, woven straw shoes, boots, kind of leggings. That was very tough, and there was nothing to eat there. And it was cold, wet, miserable. Mostly there were Canadians, I think, on that one.

The other one, there was an iron foundry, too, and I think they were simply, pretty well slave laborers, you know, loading

rail cars up with pig iron, doing that kind of work. But there was, usually, a bit of cover to be had and some warmth, which is very important.

The best of all were the, the best off were the people working on the stevedoring job.

CGR:

On the docks, yes.

WMS:

On the docks -- because there was always something to be had extra. They brought home, under cover of darkness, various things; one particular thing they brought home was buckets and buckets of sulfur. Some of the ships they were working in had been carrying sulfur, and there was always a lot of chunks left around. This cured our scabies. That, pounded up with bricks and mixed with some fat which had been boiled off from horse ribs, I think they were, made a very good ointment for killing scabies. It is not right in accordance with the modern practice maybe. We all had scabies. And scabies are supposed to be almost a venereal disease, and certainly it's a close contact disease, but practically everybody was sleeping, you know, under very close conditions, and sharing, really had to share blankets for warmth.

And we all were lousy, of course. Universal -- 100 percent. In this particular camp we didn't have bed bugs. We had had it so badly in the previous camp I mentioned. But fleas were a big problem; mosquitoes too.

Now, what else?

CGR:

Let me just digress a little here. What about sexuality and homosexuality?

WMS:

I would have said none. Oh, there might have been the odd little thing.

CGR:

I've heard that from others too.

WMS:

I would have said none. When people are really hungry, these things disappear. And when they're insecure. But they will come back again, you know, very quick. But I would have said there certainly was no problem, no, no problem.

There was something I was going to raise into that, I've forgotten this moment.

About psychiatry?

CGR:

Well, yes, but just let me pursue this homosexuality, mostly for my own curiosity. In the British army before the war, was it a problem there? You mentioned 10,000 men and no women on the Northwest Frontier.

WMS:

No, no problem. There may have been a little bit going on, but people who were known to have any tendency this way were not acceptable in the army, and they would be punished heavily and kicked out, so the flame could never become a thing of any size. Oh, I have no doubt that there were bits.

CGR:

Psychiatry. Coping with all of this.

WMS:

I've made myself pretty unpopular with psychiatrists. When I came home, of course, there were psychiatrists, and all our wives and families (I was married of course, before this) and my wife was still waiting for me. She had had a pretty rough time too but she eventually got out of Singapore a couple days before me. Although they had many killed on the ship that she was in, she survived, and eventually got to India and to back home to London. Where did we get to?

CGR:

You were saying you had made yourself unpopular with psychiatrists.

WMS:

Oh yes. I mentioned "wife" because they had all been primed by, "Oh, your husbands are going to arrive home as wrecks, mentally in every way, and physically." This was after the German prisoners had come home, and maybe it was based on the experience on them. But I think the psychiatrists were terribly disappointed at those who came home from Japan [laughter] perfectly normal. Maybe they had been culled, you know, and those who couldn't manage didn't exist anymore. But I think, you see, under the conditions we had -- and it happened more than one time -- some chap would get anxiety or some psychiatric approach to his conditions, and he'd say, "I'm not going to work today." Well, some Japanese guard just came and gave him a good jab on the behind with a bayonet and he went to work with a sore backside as well as whatever other problems he had. It cured an awful lot of

psychiatric problems right at the very beginning. Maybe I'm being a little hard on the...still it's our social order of the day. But psychiatric problems were no problem under these conditions. None.

CGR:

How about yourself, your own health and so on. How did you...?

WMS:

Well, I've often been asked this, of course, and I say, well, I'm just lucky I never got bad dysentery. I had a lot of edema at one time, and when you can't get your footwear on, and you walk with your legs grating or your thighs grating together, and your feet are all swollen up, and very heavy in the butt, it is very unpleasant. But on the whole I managed to -- I've often felt that really the nub of nearly every problem was dysentery. You see, the chaps were hungry and they would...when they were marching into the workplace and they saw a piece of orange peel in the gutter, somebody would get it before they got very far away. It wasn't a very healthy approach. And he'd end up with some dysenteric thing.

We had a big outbreak of dysentery when we come out of that first camp. But if you could avoid dysentery, well, this of course, was a matter of avoiding the worst of hunger, you know, and being able to cope. (Of course, I wasn't doing physical work to the same extent as they were.) If you could avoid that, or rather I should say if you once got this dysentery, then such food as they were getting, of course, then wasn't doing them much good and just disappearing. Without any protection, any vitamin

protection they might have against that kind of malnutrition, was gone. So this was very often the starting point of the downhill run.

This happened, particularly, in that period I was speaking of just when I arrived in this camp. Then it was at it's worst. That was really about the only....I had a couple of go's of this edema, nutritional edema, whatever you like to call it. I've never been very satisfied with all the descriptions which were put up afterwards -- put up by people who really didn't see it the way I had seen it, anyway.

I was a single doctor on my own, with no textbook, not especially prepared for this kind of condition. And what the kind of thing you do....you asked about the Red Cross and the Geneva Convention -- well, nor were we particularly well prepared to deal with this kind of illness that you were now encountering. Particularly when there was a lack of adequate clothing and housing and feeding background.

I suppose, having been in the army, I had possibly more than many other people who had more recently come from civil life, in that I had seen dysentery in India. And by golly we treated them hard there; mag. sulph.

CGR:

Yes, I've heard.

WMS:

I think, now, looking back on it, these chaps were dying from lack of vitamins, you know, rather than from trying to control their dysenteric symptoms. That was before there was sulfa drugs and, you know, the magic things which arose in the

late '30's. Prontosil to start with. I don't know whether you remember the name?

CGR:

Oh yes, oh yes.

WMS:

Prontosil, that was 1935, was it, Prontosil?

CGR:

I think so.

WMS:

Prontosil white.

CGR:

'35 or '36. That was Domagk, wasn't it, D-o-m-a-g-k?

WMS:

Yes. Then, of course, it came out in tablets and then... those were all injections. But that was just when I was qualifying. I remember the magic thing. But then of course, we were eventually, when our camp was finished, you know, when the Japanese had surrendered and we had a hiatus for about three weeks. The Americans dropped things like penicillin on us, we didn't know what the hell they were. Or DDT for that matter. They meant nothing to us. They gave us a thing on dosage; that was clearly stated but what you were dosing, who knows [laughter].

CGR:

They never thought of that.

WMS:

Not that it mattered particularly to us. We were in good shape at the end.

All the other major ports in Japan and being bombed and

destroyed, practically enclosed. When they got to us, the one that was open, and we were importing all the new copra beans from the mainland, and our chaps were handling it. For the last four or five months we had that many beans that the streets of Niigata were knee deep [laughter]. Anybody who wanted beans just had them. Bring home a bucket. So we were, the last four or five months, well, we were in good shape -- simply from those beans. Nothing better than soya beans. A bit hard to cook but the new crop wasn't too difficult.

CGR:

Tell me about Ken Cambon.

WMS:

Well, Ken was one of the medical orderlies. He was very good, very good. A youngster, of course.

CGR:

An untrained orderly, as I recall. He hadn't been an orderly in the army.

WMS:

No, he hadn't been. But I suppose he'd volunteered for this work and he got pushed into it, and off he went. You can soon learn the simple things of nursing under those conditions. Ken, and Fred Drover, and Jose Quintero. There was several others whose names escape me at the moment. But they were all very good and willing, and of course it was a good job for them in a way. It was a protected job, you know, they didn't have to go out on the work....I think they did go out, sometimes, on the work details, but not much, not to the same extent, so it was good from that point of view.

Any other things that might be of any interest?

CGR:

How about your notes? How are we doing in covering the things you had?

WMS:

Well, I could go on a lot of things about the Japanese military system, which you probably know, and the whole Japanese social system, which was so foreign to our people. And we didn't understand it. I didn't understand it myself until after I came back, really. But, in brief, when a Japanese soldier is being prepared for overseas service, he's done his basic training and all that, and then he's going overseas, and he goes back to his own village for two or three weeks, and he says goodbye to everybody. If he comes back again, that's a bonus, it's not to be expected. And this is built into their whole system.

Thereafter as soon as he goes away, he starts a diary. And he records all his events and this diary goes back and he doesn't. I'm talking, maybe, in the wrong tense, it may not fit the same now, but this was the way they were brought up in those days. So the Japanese soldier looking at a British, Canadian, and American soldier, thinks of him in the same way -- that if goes back home, it's a bonus. There isn't much reason why we should encourage him to go back home.

They gave us all diaries, too, to start. These are not diaries, actually, but this is the kind of book that had been a diary of somebody who had died. Paper was always very hard to get. That was one of the things I had to try and impress on the

camp commandant, in the beginning, and in the end we got some books but they were all the records. You'd have to keep about two lines for each individual to get 650 sets, and having given about three books. Otherwise you couldn't record when the chap came on sick. You couldn't find a place to put him unless they had the complete list, and I think I allowed about two lines each in the original of that kind of book.

CGR:

Were these diaries and things, were they censored by the Japanese?

WMS:

They all disappeared.

CGR:

They just disappeared, yes.

WMS:

They were used...when there's no toilet paper and everybody's got diarrhea you couldn't leave a book like this down out of your hand, it would disappear. It's one of those things when you get into this state of depravity, almost. No hair cutting, you see, they were all around like highland sheep, highland cattle. No scissors. We tried to get campaigns to try and get people to tidy up but it was very, very difficult. They'd come in at night when they are wearing an overcoat tied around with a piece of straw rope, trying to keep themselves warm. That sort of condition, you know, makes it very hard to break through. Well, you can't, because there's still going to be snow all night, and go out the next morning, wet and miserable.

But, I think, the Japanese, the military system, which was

so ingrained into the Japanese made it very difficult for them understand our more liberal approach. Particularly the summary punishment, you know, slapping anybody's face just to encourage them. And there was the constant bowing every time you met a Japanese, which...but there it was.

So, I don't know whether I've really got anything which might be of any more...anything you want to ask me more?

CGR:

Do you think you've had any after-effects, lasting effects, of this experience?

WMS:

Oh yes, yes. I suppose it's a kind of thing which becomes a major feature in your whole approach to life, afterwards. It's not the kind of thing you go shouting about and boasting about or anything, but it would be silly to say that it didn't matter, if you've been in this sort of thing for three or four years. Living in this degree of insecurity, you see, was the complete thing. We had no idea how this war was going to end for us.

In the last month we were building a tunnel. You've heard this I suppose? We had just started; we'd cut the timber and pit-like, pit props, you know. And we were all going in there. They weren't going to have any trouble from prisoners if they had to defend the mainland. This had been admitted by... Colonel Suzuki said so, at the [War Crimes] trials. He made this quite clear. We were told that it was an extra air-raid shelter. By this time, of course, we didn't question things, we just did it. But, no way could we see how we were going to get out of this. And, of course, to some extent this certainly reflected on the

way people looked at their comrades dying, and the possibility of death themselves. Death had become, really, a biological effect -- no cause for any emotion, no cause for any [sorrow] -- probably was better off dead than alive. I think the rest of us looked at it pretty well the same, largely because no way could we see how it was going to end in our favor. The Americans and the Allies might have defeated Japan, but we couldn't see how this was going to do any good. Little did we know what the atomic bomb was going to do for us.

And of course Niigata was the alternative target for the first bomb. Not that it meant anything to us at all. It didn't mean a thing. Because we didn't know about that.

I don't know if I've got any other little bits.

CGR:

We probably could go on, and on.

Ken Cambon and Bill Stewart Interview

[Taped in British Columbia in August, 1985]

Ken Cambon, MD:

This is Ken Cambon speaking and we are going to be recording with Bill Stewart. Actually Bill is going to do most of the talking here, because I think you've already exhausted my limited knowledge but I'll add in where necessary. Now if you want to take over Bill.

William Muir Stewart, MB:

Well, I think we should explain, really, this is a duet between Ken Cambon and Bill Stewart, relating especially to the questions which were raised by Dr. Roland in his letter. This

was about the general morale situations or any comments we could make on it, and also about any particular incidents, particularly that relating to Rifleman Mortimer.

Now, I don't know what you feel about it, Ken, but I think that all morale questions were so much bound up with the way we were living. The over-riding thing being the shortage of food, shortage and inadequacies of accommodation, inadequacies of clothing, and particularly the total insecurity under which we were all living. Few of us could see any particular end-point where we could be released alive. I don't know what you feel about that or if you would agree with that.

KC:

Really, I wouldn't add anything to that at all, except emphasize the last point. I think anyone with two neurons and a synapse realized the odds of getting out of there were remote. This, I think, colored everything you did in every way.

WMS:

Yes, nevertheless, of course, there were ups and downs in our cycle as we lived. Some days, within a very limited relativity, were happier than others. Maybe that's not the right words. It probably would be better to say that some were more bloody miserable than others. To my mind the outstanding thing I remember about it all was the inability to forecast, any day, what was going to happen on the next day. This led to complete insecurity, or any planning, or any thoughts which we could really give to the future.

KC:

Or even where any meal was coming from. Perhaps that was

important.

WMS:

Yes, that was very important. And when people are always hungry, it really had a very important effect on everything.

KC:

I think the low point of everybody's morale was just about the time you arrived, actually. Not that you caused that [laughter].

WMS:

That's the time when I arrived in October....

KC:

Of '43.

WMS:

October of '43, the end of October. And as I recall it then you'd had about seven or eight people died, and quite a few others on their death point. Mostly from....

KC:

Pneumonia.

WMS:

Yes, resulting, really, from the onset of bad weather.

KC:

I think the situation was never quite as hopeless again as it was then, and for the next few months.

WMS:

Yes, well, I think it went on over, from there on we began to get snow and rain and really very miserable conditions for the men to work. And sometimes without any boots or shoes.

CGR:

The turning point, oddly enough, was when the building fell down and I think then Tokyo, perhaps, took a little more interest. At least that's my interpretation. I think, with some exceptions, things from then on improved in general. But then again, ups and downs. Do you agree with that?

WMS:

Yes I would. The building fell down, actually, on the 1st day of the year, 1944, sometimes about 1 o'clock that morning. It was, of course, blamed on high wind, but in fact there wasn't any wind. I think it was just faulty construction.

KC:

It was poor construction, certainly.

WMS:

Anyway, we had six or seven people killed at the time and quite a few serious chest and pelvic and abdominal injuries.

KC:

As a matter of fact I had an interesting experience about then, because I went to the little local hospital with two or three of them and stayed for -- I just forget how long, but I think it may have been a couple of weeks. That was some time after. Remember the three fellows with the pelvic, broken pelves? As a matter of fact I met one of them in Victoria at that reunion. I forget his name.

WMS:

Alive and well?

KC:

Yes. He reminded me of it. I think I had forgotten about it.

WMS:

I'd forgotten that part. Presumably as an interpreter and general orderly.

KC:

I didn't...they didn't do anything there, they just lay there [laughter]. Anyway, it was something different, I suppose. But as far as morale goes in general I can't think of anything significant to add to what Bill has already said.

WMS:

Just to try and illustrate a point of low morale, I can remember well during some wet, miserable, snowy nights when the men returned from work, after trudging up from their work places in the dark, miserable in every way. The great hope they would have, of course, was that by coming to see us in the medical sick parade they might get a day off work the next day, or longer if possible. That would have been our wish too if we could have got away it from the Japanese. But I can well remember, still, though my memory is pretty vague as it's 40 years ago or more, but I can well remember still men coming along on this evening sick parade. They would just stand there and they wouldn't even talk, they wouldn't even say what was wrong, they'd just come like zombies huddled up in what clothing they had. Tied up with string around their middle, very often. They really had nothing to say. At this point I think that morale was really pretty low.

KC:

Actually there wasn't much to give them anyhow. Apart from

time off. As I recall, the only medications we had for diarrhea at the time, which was a main complaint, I suppose, was some brown stuff that they called bismuth, but I don't think it was. I don't know what it was.

WMS:

I remember the stuff but I never really knew what it was.

KC:

I don't think it ever did any good, anyhow.

WMS:

There was strange Japanese, what I would often describe in those days as native medicine.

KC:

Yes, I think that...you remember that brown stuff we used to fold up in paper things, and there was the occasional sulfapyridine that they called Trianon, we were talking about it the other day. T-r-i-a-n-o-n. But that was very limited.

WMS:

I think the dose they expected us to use was something like two tablets a day for a chap with severe lobar pneumonia.

KC:

The other medications might interest you -- they were great believers in intravenous glucose; just before a person died you were supposed to give them intravenous glucose. But this came in a little ampule, as I recall, of about 20 ccs. The other thing that they were great on was camphor. Camphor injections, and digitalis, oddly enough, too. Do you remember that? Other than that there really wasn't much medication to dish out anyhow.

WMS:

Well, nothing that we would have considered to be effective.

Yes, I would like to make the point here that, from our point of view, this was all set against the scene which had happened, oh, a month or so or maybe two months earlier, when Dr. Fujii visited the camp and, after some trial period when we thought things were going to get a little bit more reasonable in the way of excusing them of work when they weren't fit. We regarded them 100% as unfit, whereas they seemed to regard it that 100% should be out at work. But then, after awhile he came and dispatched everybody, pretty well, to work, so long as they could walk, or even, I think they took some out on stretchers. I think at least one person died out on the job and was eventually brought in on a stretcher; others simply were brought back again, alive but completely unfit.

Against that background we had this terrible juggling act. We tried to get as many people off work without raising this situation again where they would dispatch everybody to work. And this, indeed, dominated, from the medical point of view, our own thinking until the last day. It was always this threat that if we got over the top, as it were, in the numbers that were excused work, that would prove unacceptable again. Many times, indeed, we were threatened that this would happen if we didn't reduce the numbers. This was, from our point of view, certainly, the dominant and the most, really, in many ways the most distressing background against which we had to try and work.

KC:

Yes, I would say that's true. One little item that I don't

know if I ever even told you, Bill, was that, as you know, I think it was about the last year or so I used to do the [record] book in there with Takahashi.

WMS:

Yes, it was interesting about those.

KC:

No, not that, the Japanese one. And I used to always reduce the amount, the number of people that were in, and I don't think they ever had caught on to that, you know. Because they weren't very bright as you know, in the terms of their administration.

WMS:

Oh no, if anybody would do their work for them they would be quite happy. They were idle chaps.

KC:

Well, I guess, we are all the same [laughter].

WMS:

Well, they're just the same.

KC:

I think, perhaps, where they mention here, that Niigata was unique in the point that it had no outside amenities like almost all the other camps did, like some books, and it was only towards the end we had any musical instruments.

WMS:

It was regarded by them, of course, entirely as if it were almost a slave labor camp.

KC:

That's all. In fact I think you pointed out, Bill, that first, or perhaps it was...you weren't there, I don't think, old

Lieutenant Yoshida, who was a real bastard, when he gave us our inaugural address, if that's the term, when we arrived. He said, "Your here to work and for nothing else. And if you don't work you will die." Which was a great introduction.

WMS:

Well, yes, I got this, of course, the day I arrived, that the men were here to work and if they didn't work, then in the first case they wouldn't eat and if they died this was fine. It was my duty to see that they were fit to work, regardless of what the inadequacies of the provisions.

KC:

I think he was without a doubt a psychotic, I would think.

WMS:

Well, he was irrational; he was very difficult, impossible to talk to.

KC:

He was there for about a year, wasn't he? They took him out, I think, after the building fell down, didn't they?

WMS:

I'm not sure. Sometime after that.

I think we might say a word about the effect other people dying had on the general morale and the attitude of the survivors. And it was really remarkably little. At this stage, with morale very low, at its lowest ebb, death had really become what appeared to me to be regarded by the survivors as simply a biological fact. There was no cause for any great grief or mourning. There it was, it was something that was happening next door and it might well happen to any of us any moment. And

there was no great grief, no great display of....there was no point -- I think largely because our own future, as we could see it ourselves, was so tenuous; and we didn't know about the possibilities of atomic bombs. This seemed....any deliverance such as that seemed far apart, too remote to even think about it.

KC:

That's why we, perhaps, feel a little differently than the press about the use of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Talking about that, Bill doesn't remember this, but the common saying (it doesn't sound great now) was Matte, matte, chiisai hako which means "wait a little while; small box". And the small box, of course, was [what contained] the ashes of everyone who was cremated. I went down to the crematorium once, only once, just as a special treat, if that's the phrase, just to get outside the camp.

WMS:

Yes, it ended up in a box, about a 6-inch tube.

KC:

I don't even know if it was the original ashes or not that they put in -- probably wasn't. I don't suppose it matters.

WMS:

Well they might have but it doesn't make much difference.

KC:

No.

WMS:

There's one other item which I think I might mention, which had a big effect on the whole question of morale. And that was the deep sense of humiliation which so many -- every prisoner, I

suppose -- really felt. He wasn't there for any glorious activities in the past. And his condition, of course, was regarded by the Japanese as utter disdain. This, and a great difficulty in making any relationship with our captors; their culture seemed so different, their whole attitude to military service was difficult. To them, I think, anybody who survived an active campaign and come back to his home -- that arrival back home would be a bonus, he didn't really expect to get back home. We didn't look at things quite in the same way or anything like the same way. And with all this difficulty, added to the difficulty of language, where it was so difficult to make oneself understood. It led to misunderstanding after misunderstanding, and made for great difficulty and increased at all times the feeling of insecurity which we suffered.

I might mention here just a few words about the role of religion. I'm not a particularly religious person, but I do have great regard for the importance religion has played, and church has played, in our cultural background. There was never any demand in the camp for religious services. I never saw anybody taking any....expressing, I never heard anybody expressing any religious beliefs. There were a lot of the ordinary mixed bag that you'd get in a group of Americans and Canadians. Although I know Major Fellows several times did try to (Major Fellows was the Senior Prisoner in the camp) he did several times, I know, go to the Japanese and see if he could arrange something in that line, in an effort to try and assist morale. But I had the feeling always that -- first of all, they didn't particularly encourage it, and secondly he didn't feel that the prisoners

themselves were in any mood for any such activity.

Again I might raise the question of the different systems under which the captors and the captives had been brought up. At the very lowest level, and here was something which our people found the greatest difficulty coming to terms with, was the summary punishment by face-slapping, for something which the individual didn't understand what he was being punished for. This made it very, very difficult, indeed. Face-slapping, and of course every time one encountered any Japanese of any rank, either civil or military, one had to bow, and bow deeply. And if this wasn't considered an adequate bow then face-slapping was the next procedure. That was simplest of the....of course, there were other more brutal treatments than that.

KC:

Bill has asked me to talk particularly about Spears. I'm sure you've heard other stories of him. Spears was a young Mormon boy who unfortunately became psychotic. Indeed, he was the only case that I know -- perhaps Bill could confirm this -- of any psychosis. Oddly enough there were no classical depressions, I guess, perhaps, because everyone was depressed. In any event, Spears became terribly obsessed with food, in the first place, to the point of, really, sort of eating anything.

WMS:

And he broke out of the camp several times too.

KC:

Yes. Then he became obsessed with the idea that the Americans were 30 miles away, and broke out of the camp, and then, of course, eventually was caught by the camp commander and two other

guards. They, first they bayoneted him after tying him to a tree and then they cut off his head (which wasn't the greatest). But I mention this particularly because of all the people who are perhaps religious in camp he was the only one that I specifically remember that would ever mention God. Unfortunately he came to a rather bitter end.

WMS:

Yes, I can add a little bit to that. I would have said, maybe about three months before this actually, this final incident arose, he declared -- actually, in the hospital hut -- that if he wasn't released by the 4th of July, a very important date to him, he would break out of the camp and something would -- he didn't say how or where or what, but....And this he did. I think it was on the 4th of July. I'm not quite sure, I haven't got any means of confirming that at the moment.

You made a special mention of the case of Rifleman Mortimer, and I found, actually, that Ken and I are pretty at variance in our recollection of it. But as I recall it, he had got involved in some stealing of food and was "sentenced" by the Japanese to punishment. I think the punishment was largely as a display to the rest of the camp, because the main punishment apart from any beating that he may have had, which was probable but which I can't recall at all, he was tied up at the guard hut, at the gate of the camp, he was tethered to a post, he wasn't tied firmly to it but he was tethered so he couldn't leave it. And there he had to stand (this was bitter cold winter weather, with snow and rain) and there he had to stand day and night. Now, I think this went on for 10 days or maybe more, though I cannot be sure on

that particular point. There might be some corroboratory evidence. Ken doesn't recall it as being as long as that.

However, eventually his feet were very, very badly frozen and the tips of them were dropping off. There were bits of the bones of his toes showing. Occasionally he was brought in, not into the medical center, but into another hut. I remember, for sure, (I thought Ken had been there but he says he wasn't), I remember that Chief Pharmacist's Mate Dixon and myself, we went to dress these feet, or tried to, and a pretty sorry mess they were. All the toes were very badly frozen and some bits of the, in fact some bits of the toes missing, with the metacarpals, not the metacarpals, the phalanges showing, with the ordinary sign of frostbite, gangrene with frostbite. This went on for some time. I should think he was brought in three or four times. Each time we tried to make some impression with the Japanese how serious this matter was. And after a little bit of deliberation he was tied back on his post again. It doesn't seem very effective maybe that, but we did try. We were still dealing in that hopelessness which pervaded out whole attitudes.

Now Ken remembers the fact that he was brought into the, eventually brought into the medical hut. By this time he was in a pretty extreme state. Throughout the whole time he never complained; he reckoned he had made a mistake, and there it was. But, of course, people were dying around him at that time and attitudes were very different from what they are sitting here in Vancouver in 1985.

Ken would you like to say anything about him?

KC:

No, not really, I think that pretty well sums it up again, Bill. I think I told Chuck before, when he was out here, that the remarkable thing about Mortimer was that before he died he really was, I would say, one of the crumbs of the camp. And let's face it there were a good many, you know, people who really hit low, lost all their personal ego and all their pride. And yet, during this incident, and after, he became a real hero, you might say. In fact, as Bill said, he never complained once.

WMS:

That is so.

KC:

He was a remarkable man. What that goes to prove, I have no idea.

WMS:

I felt, even, that sometimes the Japanese had some respect for someone who behaved in that manner. But unfortunately it really didn't alter their attitudes and actions sufficiently to be effective.

KC:

Talking about personal pride again, and so on, you have to realize that, in a situation like that, a lot of our little veneer washes off and people would humble themselves terribly for a cigarette butt or something like that. I would say that -- I wouldn't want to put a figure on it -- but perhaps, half of all of us were that way and perhaps the other half were just the opposite. I don't know, would you go along with that?

W.C.M.:

Something like that, but very difficult to assess.

KC:

Yes, it's a pretty hard thing.

W.C.M.:

But Ken has mentioned the word "veneer;" one realizes how thin the veneer of civilized behavior really is and how quickly, with a bit of starvation, and privation in every respect, how quickly it disappears. At the same time I would like to mention that when conditions just eased up a little bit, how quickly that veneer came back again. It was quite remarkable, really. People started to chuckle again and joke about a bit. Conditions were still primitive, of course, but they were just a little bit better than they had been.

KC:

I think the big saving grace, as we mentioned, or probably you have told Chuck before, was that we had a good, fairly good summer of '44 and then in '45 when the Japanese finally realized that maybe dysentery was present, this was the best thing that ever happened. Perhaps you'd like to tell that story again, Bill, just in case you've erased it off the tape.

WMS:

Well, I can't remember really the details of how it started but it became fairly apparent that there were cases of amebic dysentery, and eventually we were loaned a microscope and I spent many happy hours looking at stools. And the fact they sent a team out from the University and they looked at a good many stools, and eventually found one with amebae crawling about all over it. So, this was really a breakthrough from our point of

view. I would have thought that that particular individual, if he could have known it, he could have sold the specimen of the stool at a very high price to all takers, who might then have produced it as their own. Anyway, we did examine a lot of stools and we found a lot of amebae, a lot of cysts, not so many active ones but the Japanese were impressed with this and in fact they sent quite a few of our chaps off to the hospital camp in Tokyo -- half a dozen or so anyway.

KC:

I don't remember that.

WMS:

Yes. I think they were more afraid of amebic dysentery getting into their own community than they were....

KC:

The thing I remember was that they quarantined the camp, and that was the important thing I thought because everybody went off work and it just happened to be a time of a big snowfall, which would have been....

WMS:

That's so. They were quarantined for about a week or so, 10 days.

KC:

I think maybe even more.

WMS:

Maybe longer.

KC:

I think that was the saving grace, because that was just in the middle of the winter and it gave that little rest that I

think people managed to make. At least that's the way I interpreted at the time.

WMS:

That as probably in the early '45.

KC:

Yes, yes.

[End of side 1.]

I just want to continue on that ameba thing, I'll tell you a story that may be a pocketful but John Stroud, whom I met at this recent reunion here, told me that while this ameba thing was on, a group of them discovered who had the ameba (of course that wouldn't be hard to do) and that they arranged to have some of the stool mixed up with the rice that the Japanese was eating. Now, I don't know how true that is but it's a great story anyhow.

[laughter]

WMS:

It helps in the morale situation.

KC:

Yes [laughter].

You might be interested in the fact that the whole medical system really, in the camp, was controlled by a corporal. His name was Takahashi. Takao Takahashi. He was, I believe, a dental assistant before the war. He claimed he was a dentist but that I find difficult to believe. He wasn't very bright. But he was a mean fellow. There was the occasional sergeant that came along, but Takahashi really controlled everything. He manipulated everybody. And any final medical decisions were not really in the hands of Bill, or anybody else, except Takahashi. I think he

-- I suspect, I can't say this -- that he actually diddled a lot of them, medical supplies and things like that. He was quite a dishonest person.

WMS:

Yes, one of the difficulties which we encountered was if we wanted to make any representation, which should normally have gone to the camp commandant, and maybe it should have gone through our senior prisoner. There were five American officers in the camp, but the Japanese gave them very little respect and very often wouldn't listen to anything they said. But if I wanted to make any representation to the Japanese camp commandant, I had to do it through this Takahashi. And I've know idea what representation he actually made to them. It came back, after maybe several pages I'd written and a lot of talk and the answer would be "no." And that was the end of that. So it was all rather discouraging.

However, we did make some representation from time to time, but without very much effect.

KC:

I think he was, just by nature, a mean bastard.

WMS:

But he was caught up, of course, like everybody else, caught up in the Japanese military system.

KC:

That's true, yes. He really looked at us with contempt, that's really what it boiled down to.

WMS:

Yes.

KC:

Now, oddly enough there was a very interesting fellow there for awhile, whose name escapes me; I think he was a sergeant, I'm not sure. He was technically senior to Takahashi. But he was only there a little while. But about two months before the war ended, I remember he came back to visit, just as a visitor, and he took me aside and at the time told me that Japan was going to surrender. Which was a very strange experience for me. I didn't quite know how to react because I didn't know if he was sort of a, you know, if it was a "come on" thing. I forget his name now. Do you remember the chap I mean?

WMS:

Yes, I remember the chap.

KC:

He was a sort of an optimist fellow.

WMS:

I should explain at this stage, possibly, that Ken, through his contact with Takahashi, and in fact doing a lot of Takahashi's work in that he compiled the books and thereby saving Takahashi a lot of trouble, had possibly more relationship with the Japanese than practically anybody else in the camp. To which he put very good use, you know, he tried to explain our point of view. But, great difficulties.

KC:

I can't remember this chap's name. I wish I could now because I'm going back to Japan, incidentally Chuck.

WMS:

You can't keep out of the place!

KC:

But I don't imagine there's anybody around there anymore. But it might be interesting. And the reason I'm going back is my daughter was in Niigata, and she asked where the camp was. She was told by the city hall that there never was a prison camp in Niigata. So I wrote to the city hall and pointed out that there indeed had been in Niigata and that I didn't think it was right that this misinformation should be passed along. I got a very nice letter back from the office of the Mayor and telling me that if I should come there they would be very glad to show me where the camp was and so on. So I'm going back.

WMS:

I'm sure you'll get a civic reception [laughter]. All flags flying.

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