

ANDREW ALLEN HENRY

*Experiences as a Prisoner-of-War, 1942-1945*

Interviewed by

Charles G. Roland, MD

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Oral History Archives

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Charles G. Roland, MD:

If you wouldn't mind giving me a bit of your background, I'd be grateful.

Andrew Allen Henry:

I was born in Lewiston, Idaho, November the 14th, 1919, and I spent the early part of my life in Lewiston. Moved to Moscow about the time I was 12, and on to Spokane by the time I was 15. I lived in Spokane, Seattle, and Ketchikan, Alaska. I was part owner in a fishing boat, in the year I was 17; I went up to Alaska to fish and I opened a restaurant up there. I come back to the States about a year later and joined the navy in November of 1939.

CGR:

Why did you join then, could I ask? The US wasn't in the war.

AAH:

Before I went to Alaska, two friends of mine were going to join the navy, and I went down with them when they were getting their physical, and I could get a free physical so I got the free physical. Out of the three, I was the only one that passed it. Sixteen months later I came back to Spokane, and a letter was waiting for me at the hotel I used to live at. It just seemed like a good thing to do at that time. The war was actually on in Europe at that time and so I went ahead and joined the navy.

I was stationed aboard the [USS] **Saratoga** to start with, and then went to one of the squadrons. Then, in January of 1941, I was transferred to the Asiatic Fleet. The ship that I went to

was the **USS Canopus**. I served on the **Canopus** the balance of 1941. They might not have known it in the United States, but we knew that we was going to war out there for sure, because all the previous years the ship had gone up to Shanghai and spent the hot summer months in Shanghai, and then come back to Manila for the winter. The year that I was on there, the whole fleet went down to the southern islands of the Philippines and went from one place to another, just to keep the Japs confused about where we was at. Then, in the last part of October, we came back up to Manila and went into the navy yard to have extra modifications put on. They put rings around the guns to protect the people who were on the guns, and a lot of things like that.

While we were in the navy yard, they got some kind of a directive, along in the last part of November, and from then on we manned our guns all the time, and even though we had let people go on liberty, we still had the guns manned continuously. So we knew that the war was coming and, of course, on our December the 8th, war was declared.

We stayed in Manila until the 24th of December. At that time they were getting ready to make Manila a free city. I was a quartermaster on the ship. When the war started they wanted a radioman on each one of the boats, so I went into the boats. On the 24th of December they called up all the boat crews and told us that the ship was getting underway under sealed orders and didn't know where that they was going. They wasn't supposed to order the orders until after they was under way, and we was to take on extra 55 gallons of fuel and top off our tanks and be sure we had water and food aboard. To follow the ship as long as

possible, and then proceed to Australia if it was possible. It was an impossible situation. We only went out to a Bay called Marvelas Bay, which was two or three miles from Corregidor; there, we put the ship up alongside of a mag. This was a large ship. It was a submarine tender and had the biggest machine shop in the Far East, at that time.

On the 29th of December we got bombed for the first time. The bomb went right, all the way through the ship and hit the shaft and exploded on the shaft, killing a number of men on the ship. Then we camouflaged the ship a little bit, but they come back and got us another time, and they got the gun crews that time. A bomb exploded on the stack. From then on we stayed off the ship during the daylight hours. We lost quite a few men on these two bombings, and at the same time we organized a naval battalion, and the navy men were fighting the Japs.

On the night of April 8th I, as a quartermaster of the watch, got the word from our Captain -- and I've never seen him since then -- to make preparations and start scuttling the ship. We scuttled the ship that night and went to Corregidor. A number of our people were injured that night with the bombing and explosions and stuff that was going on. When we got to Corregidor we became beach defense for Corregidor. All our navy marines that were on Bataan, they got to Corregidor and ended up on beach defense. On May 6th, Corregidor fell. We were right in the midst of the fighting; probably 150 of our crew got killed on May 6th on Corregidor. That was the day we were captured.

We stayed on Corregidor for approximately two-and-one-half

weeks, maybe three; then we were put in boats and taken in to Manila, and forced to march through Manila for a victory march for the Japanese. Then we were put on boxcars and taken to Cabanatuan, and then we were marched from Cabanatuan to Camp 3. Starting this march, everybody wanted to fill up their canteens and the Japs were at the one faucet and there was 6,000 people eventually got to Camp 3. I don't know how many was there then -- way over a thousand, anyway. They would just let us get about 3 ounces of water in the canteen and then you'd have to let somebody else in. Some people didn't even get any water. The weather was hot and they had us marching. That was when the first weaknesses of the people started showing up. We were not in too good shape anyway, because we'd been on such short rations on Bataan and on Corregidor. Then, being without water in this long hot march, some of the guys were just diving into the carabao wallows to get some water. This eventually killed a bunch of people, I imagine.

After arriving in Camp 3 they split us up into groups. They had the navy marines in one group and the army in another group, the civilians in another group. The food at Camp 3, to start with, was strictly rice. A lot of it was full of so much junk that a lot of people couldn't eat it in the daytime, it made them so sick. And disease was very bad. Everybody was losing some weight; our ration at that time, at the beginning of it, was rice and a gravy made out of flour and water. Later on, they learned how to make yeast, and we had a biscuit with our rice and gravy. Got two meals a day.

Malaria, dysentery, pellagra, all of them became rampant.

Everybody would have these; there was very little medicine. The only medicine, to my knowledge, that they had was what the doctors were carrying in their field kits. A number of people were being buried continuously. We stayed there until October of 1942, and in October of 1942 we were transferred from Camp 3 to Camp 1. At that time, we found out that they was going to ship us out to Japan to work, and that anybody that weighted 100 pounds was big enough to go to Japan to work. They did give us the opportunity to get a new pair of shoes in Camp 1. However, the pile of shoes we had to work with, a number of them had been laid on their sides and lined up in a row, and a bullet hole shot through them. So they all had holes in the soles and the tops of them. When you needed any extra clothes, when the only clothes we had was the clothes we had on our backs when Corregidor fell, which in my case, and most of the cases, consisted of torn off pants to make shorts, and shirts without any sleeves in them. That's the way we were shipped out to Japan. If a guy had a canteen he was very lucky. If he had a canteen cup he was luckier. If he had a spoon or a fork, you know, he was extremely lucky, by this time.

We found out in Camp 1 that many of our former shipmates had died there. They had a burial detail of 25 or 30 men that worked continuously, all day long, just burying people that were dying.

They transferred us to Manila, and onto a ship headed for Japan. It took us almost a month to get to Japan with the zig-zag courses. One time we were shot at by an American submarine. We finally arrived in Japan and landed in

Nagasaki, and took a train from Nagasaki to Osaka. When we

arrived in Osaka we were marched to a prison camp called Yodogawa Bunsha. They were in the process of building a place for us to stay by putting a floor in the upper part of a sheet-metal warehouse. In the meantime, in the first month we were there, we slept in a big foundry-type warehouse, where the floor of the warehouse was dirt. It was very, very cold, and the only clothes we had, as I said, was shorts and torn off sleeves out of the shirts. We started in losing people quite rapidly.

CGR:

How large was the camp? About how many men would have been in the camp?

AAH:

About 400 men in the camp.

CGR:

Four hundred men. So there was nobody else there before you. You were the first.

AAH:

We were the first to get there.

CGR:

OK.

AAH:

There was 400 men in the camp, and the numbers don't quite bear that out because when we got to the camp they found out that we had no medical personnel whatsoever in the camp. They transferred four people in and transferred four out; of the four they transferred in, one was a doctor, two were corpsmen, I guess maybe three were corpsmen. Two of the corpsmen died within the first six weeks we was there. The other one, if he was a corps-

man, I'm not really sure, he turned out to be a doctor -- Dr. Orberon. He continued to help Dr. Richardson, but the medical supplies that we had were very, very slim. On the ship going up I picked up a bottle of potassium permanganate crystals, and this was the main thing we had for cleaning any wounds. The only other medicine we had was what Dr. Richardson had in his field kit. About once a month a Japanese doctor would show up, but he was so limited on his supplies that he didn't have hardly any to give us either. It was almost a year before we started getting anything in medical supplies at all, and that was very minor. In the meantime, people were dying very rapidly.

For a short time I worked as a corpsman. My biggest job was getting food to the guys that were down, and cleansing the feet of the people that had beriberi that were having their toes fall off. Beriberi was very bad at this time. There's two kinds of beriberi, there's the wet beriberi and the dry beriberi. The wet beriberi causes you to swell up and kind of rot, and the dry beriberi makes your feet so hot that they would be like they were on fire.

During the first three months we was there, from pneumonia, beriberi, malaria, and dysentery, we lost a 109 out of the original 400 men that arrived there.

They had a small room, probably about 15 by 25, used as a hospital room. There was no beds in and there was no equipment in it. There was no bathroom facilities in it -- just a bare room where they could lay somebody down and give them water. They didn't have to get up for inspections or anything.

Most of the people who died, died in this room. Now, I



remember some of them died up in the bays [the sleeping areas in the barracks]. I remember several times helping them carry somebody out of the bays to lay him on a bench so that they could be picked up and taken to a cemetery somewhere, or whatever they did with them. I presume that they cremated them because that's what they did in other camps.

While we was there our diet consisted of a small bowl of rice three times a day and a very sparsely made vegetable soup. Most of the time it was just cabbage and radishes in the soup. One year, several times we got fish during the summer -- probably six or seven times. One time we got eggplant, but otherwise it was basically the same thing, except the two times they made an experiment -- one was, we were given some roll similar to a small hot-dog roll for lunch. another time they gave us soya beans that had had their oil extracted from them, but when everybody started losing more weight they stopped that and went back to the [regular diet]; 700 calories, I think it was, a day, that they figured that the food was.

Working in a steel mill, with the various jobs that go on in a steel mill -- we had people working in the foundry, we had people carrying poles, metal, from one place to another, we had them working in the smelting plants, on the steel rollers, on the cutters, making metal for helmets, and making matches. We had them unloading coal barges. At this time there was always a number of people, 20 to 30 people that was running a fever. If you had a fever of over 103, you stayed in the barracks. If you had a fever between 100 and 103, you were on what they called the *byoki* detail, which meant the sick detail. You went out and

picked up coke out of the ashes. The rest of the people that had less than that 100 temperature were forced to work, which made it very difficult because everybody was weak from dysentery at that time.

CGR:

Do you know, was there an exact number that had to go to work each day? Did the Japanese say there have to be so many who worked regardless of how sick people are?

AAH:

No. Anybody that -- in this camp that I was in, anybody that had a temperature of less than 100 went out on a regular work detail.

CGR:

But they didn't make people go out of the hospital if they needed more workers?

AAH:

No.

CGR:

They did that in some places, that's why I asked.

AAH:

I don't think there was room in that hospital for more than about 15 men. So the people who weren't in the hospital were the ones that were working in one place or another. Even Japanese guards, even the people who were on the sick detail, were out working. They treated them pretty rough.

Of course, the language barrier was bedlam. And the opportunity of getting anything from the Japanese people was very limited because they didn't have too much either. The whole

ground area where we were was all in cinders, so there was no chance of having a garden. Like a lot of camps had garden, but we had no chance of having a garden. We received a Red Cross parcel each year at Christmas time.

CGR:

And no other time?

AAH:

And no other time. Never any other time. The Japs made promises with us, when an inspection was coming by somebody, that they would give us something extra. One time it was strawberries that they was going to give us after this inspection by Japanese ranking officers; when we got the strawberries it was 3/5ths of a strawberry per man. So if you ever had strawberry soup then I know what it tastes like. Another time we had two watermelons for 207 men.

They had a little room about 4 x 5 that they called the commissary. The only thing that was ever sold in there was pepper, and occasionally fish powder, which we think was fertilizer. We could buy this from the commissary. Privates made 2 yen 80 sen a month, and noncoms made 4 yen and 20 sen, which amounted to, with the exchange at that time, amounted to 1 cent a day for this hard work that we was doing.

We stayed in this camp for 2 1/2 years, and from the time that we went in to the time we got out, we lost about 200 men. In May of 1945 they transferred half of us north to a copper mine, and half of us south to a coal mine. I was one that went south to a coal mine.

CGR:

And that was at....?

AAH:

That was close to Fukuoka. I believe it was Camp 27. We were there when the war finished. They transferred us to a larger camp that had people from Australia, New Zealand, England, Holland, Java, and the United States. We stayed in that camp until the middle of September, when we were transferred to Nagasaki at that time and boarded American ships.

CGR:

Tell me a bit more about Fukuoka, would you? Was it a large camp, and what was the work like and so on?

AAH:

In Fukuoka it was a split camp. On one side of the compound was Australians and the English, and on the other side of the compound was Americans. There was about 80 Americans, and I would think probably the same amount of Australians and English -- less than 200 in the camp. We worked in a coal mine. We marched five miles each way, to and from work. If it was the day shift, you'd meet the night shift about half way in. You'd take off your shoes and give them to the day shift so that the day shift could go on and work with shoes on. This camp was, the food was very similar to the other camp except that the people who were on the sick detail were allowed to go up and collect weeds that were edible, and snakes. We would catch the garden snakes and cook them too.

CGR:

Was there a doctor there?

AAH:

No doctor. No corpsman either. The treatment in that camp was pretty tough. The camp commander at this one was extra tough. One of the men broke ranks on the way back from work one night and got a pear off of a pear tree, and the guard seen him and the guard slapped him around. When he got back to the camp he reported to the camp commander. They had built a jail consisting of upright 2 x 4s spaced about five or six inches apart, with a door on it. No roof on it and no sides on it, just the bare frame. He was sentenced to spend several nights in this without any clothes on, and the mosquitoes were terrible. He was just eaten up with the mosquitoes from being like that. This was an example of what to expect.

Going back to Camp Cabanatuan, to establish why nobody could escape. In Cabanatuan there were four men out on a work detail and got separated from the detail, and the Japs thought they were trying to escape. So they brought them back to camp and wired their wrists and ankles together and stripped them to the waist with no hats, in the sun all day long. About 5 o'clock, all of them signed a request to be shot, and they shot them. Immediately after that they re-numbered everybody in camp in groups of 10 and 100. The rule was at that time, the order, that if anybody escaped out of a group of 10, the rest of them would be shot. If the whole 10 escaped the other 90 would be shot. So that eliminated any thoughts in our camp -- of the camps that I went in -- of escape, because of that.

I think basically, doctor, I've covered a lot of things. One other thing I probably should mention here is that I've

talked to a number of people, and apparently our minds have forced out a lot of the worst things, however, memory that people cannot remember what actually took place at different times.

CGR:

Well, this is one of the reason why I'm interviewing as many people as I can. Because often you can fill in gaps. One person remembers one thing and has forgotten another, and so on. It's like a huge jigsaw puzzle.

I have a few specific questions, if I can ask those?

AAH:

Yes.

CGR:

What about your weight, did you lose a lot of weight?

AAH:

I weighed about 145 when the war started and when I went to Japan I weighed just under a 100 pounds. When the war was over I weighed 115 pounds; by the time I got back to the States I weighed 165 pounds. I wasn't alone in that. After the war was over, and even though we were still in a camp, we had the opportunity of scrounging in the neighborhood for food, one way or another, and people started putting on weight. Several of the men in the camp went to a Japanese commissary, and the only thing that was in the commissary was flour. They brought the flour back. Every time I seen them they was making hotcakes. They made hotcakes 24 hours a day, it seemed like. One of these guys put on almost 100 pounds by the time he got back to the States. But the food wasn't satisfying, and no matter how much you ate, the only thing you could be sure of is you were going to be sick

afterwards.

CGR:

Were there any bizarre foods that you ate or that people ate?

AAH:

I mentioned the soya beans that had the oil strained out of them. This is not much of a food, but it was, apparently, kept in a barn, because it was also full of horse-hair. Another time, in this little commissary that I mentioned, they had deep-fried grasshoppers. That went over real good, people liked those. But there was never enough of them, we had them one time when they brought them in. Another time they brought in sweet potato patties. We would liked to have had more of those but that only lasted one time. No bizarre food.

Some of the men were treated for backaches by taking some, like a punk, that you like a firecracker with, and put them on your back and burn them. Some of the men in our camp who had beriberi very bad were taken out to a military hospital and had the tendons cut so that the beriberi wouldn't.... When they came back their feet flopped real bad. If a toothache becomes very bad, Dr. Richardson would pull it out with a pair of pliers. If there was something seriously wrong, there was nothing he could really do about it. One of the fellows had a broken leg, and they went ahead and set it with the things they could find for splints, and that was all they had. I haven't seen him since but I understand that he ended up with a real crooked leg afterwards.

CGR:

During this time you were a prisoner, was sex ever a prob-

lem? Was it ever anything that crossed one's mind?

AAH:

No. I don't remember of anybody ever talking about sex. The first year, the biggest thing you talked about was food, and they talked about how to cook it and they wrote up, we had recipes on what they would like to have. Some of the recipes were written quite funny. One of them I particularly remember was how to make an ice cream pie: you make the crust and put the ice cream in it and you put it in the oven and bake it. I thought that was quite funny. Myself, the one thing I could visualize, any time I visualized a meal, it had peas in it. I don't know why it should be that way, but it was.

There was two times during the war when we got packages from home, or some people got packages from home. I never did get any. My mother and sister, each time that there was a chance to send a package, they sent them, I never received any of them. One navy chief got a small 4-ounce container of instant coffee. About once a week there was four of us got together, and he would give about an eighth of a spoonful of coffee in a little teacup with hot water, and we'd sit there and really enjoy the coffee. But people thought about food, talked about food a lot, but sex was never brought up. You was working hard and you was feeling so rotten, the biggest part of the time.

CGR:

Was there any evidence of homosexuality that you were aware of?

AAH:

No, none.



CGR:

No. Other people have said much the same.

AAH:

None at all. When we got to Japan, each one of us got one of these fine, thin, blankets, they were made out of paper. The weather was cold enough that it really wasn't enough to keep you warm, and some of the guys doubled up and slept together for warmth. But there was never any problem about that. There was a problem, if it was a problem, a couple of times, somebody didn't want to get up in the cold and urinated on somebody else because we were so close together, but never any homosexual problems. Never any talk about women other than, some men would say, "Well, first white woman I ever see, I'm going to give her a big kiss." I was probably one that said that. You know, one of the first white women I saw was a Red Cross representative, weighted about 210 pounds. Somebody said, "Hey, here's your chance now," and I said, "I want to pass that chance." [laughter]

CGR:

You went back on your promise [laughter].

AAH:

Yes. She gave me a Coca Cola, and that's the last Coca Cola I ever drank.

CGR:

Is that right?

AAH:

Yes. The things that they did for the Vietnam prisoners, when they brought them back, were tremendous, but when they

brought us back, the group I was in come all the way by ship, and they held us two weeks in Guam, and they held us in Okinawa. When we loaded up to leave from Guam, we still had the same clothes that we had when we was in prison camp. The ship that I come back in, I was very fortunate, the chief engineer of the night shift was off of the Canopus, the ship that I was on when the war started. He got me a blanket and a jacket. Then, when we got to Guam, they gave us some money and everybody went over to the Small Stores and bought a pair of pants and a shirt. We could buy the clothes but nobody thought about when you're in Guam, that you're going to need a jacket to go home in. They gave us a bunk but no blankets on the ship. So by the time that we got back to the States on the 25th of October, and we got into San Francisco, we could see all the lights but they wouldn't let us have liberty -- we weren't allowed off the ship until we landed at the hospital and I got a real good three-man inspection -- physical. Then they let us go ashore.

CGR:

In your group, in the various groups you were in, a lot of people died, and you didn't -- why didn't you? What was the difference.

AAH:

I had the determination to live. I think that was the whole key to going on, was this determination to live. And being optimistic that the war wasn't going to last too long. Some of the people just gave up. I, personally, am a fighter. After I was out and in the service in 1955 I had polio. The night I went to the hospital with polio they told my wife I wouldn't live

through the night. Then they told her that if I did live 72 hours, it would be in an iron lung. I was going to fight that and I did fight it. I don't even walk with a limp any more. I did that for a long time. No, I'm a fighter, and I'm an optimist, and I think that had a lot to do with it. At Loma Linda recently, I was at a POW meeting there, and this type of a question was asked. There was about 20 POWs there, and Marion Squires asked what we thought was the biggest thing, other than food, that brought us through. The consensus of the group was, having a buddy, somebody that would help you and look after you, and you did the same thing. Like the old miners' partners. I think that is probably a big thing, because everybody that I've talked to since then, they agree. The people who were loners just didn't come through.

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