

FRIEDRICH WILHELM KLUTZOW, MD

Experiences as a Prisoner-of-War in the Far East, World War 2

Interviewed by
Charles G. Roland, M.D.
2 May, 1986

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Hannah Chair for the History of Medicine
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Friedrich Wilhelm Klutzow, M.D., Rochester, NY, 2 May 1986

Charles G. Roland, MD:

Perhaps you would begin, then, by giving me a bit of background about yourself and your early years.

Friedrich Wilhelm Klutzow, MD:

I was the third child. There were four siblings. I had an older sister, and then the second one was my older brother. I was the third, and then there was a younger sister. My brother, at the time of the declaration of war with Japan, was already away from home. He was only one year older than me -- it's a long story, but he left home, for reasons I do not want to go into and are really irrelevant. He was, at the time of the war, in a reformatory, and then joined -- no. Correction. Until shortly before the war, he was in a reformatory. Then he turned 18 and enlisted and became a sergeant. I, of course, was militia, which meant we were called up on December 9 1941.

C.G.R.:

Yes.

F.W.K.:

Okay. At that time I was a senior in high school. I was one of those with the highest grades in the school, not just in the class. I was always an achiever. Whether that has any bearing, my brother was the exact opposite of me. But we live together, so I'll mention that.

Then, the short time that we were still on Java, prior to being deported from there by the Japanese, there wasn't very much

that was relevant, other than that we were constantly told by the Japs that they would send us home. That they merely would have wanted our address, or our parents' address, or that they would know where to find us, because in retrospect, that was, if we ever ran away, then that's where they would find us.

So then came a day -- that I remember clearly -- that we were told that by the next day noon, we should all have shaved heads. All hair shaved. That, of course, told us that then we were sort of marked; then that would be the end of it. That night, several people tried to escape, five of which were caught. Those five were executed, with all of us watching. So that was the first sort of encounter as to what we were dealing with.

C.G.R.:

How soon might that have been after the surrender? I mean, just roughly. Do you recall?

F.W.K.:

Some two to three months.

C.G.R.:

Right.

F.W.K.:

It was a while.

C.G.R.:

Yes.

F.W.K.:

Okay, in the beginning they let us out. Say, I got in through the garbage truck, and had to bring the garbage to the dump; the driver invariably brought us home and we spent some time at home. Come back. But after we were shaved, nobody got

out any more. From there on, we were captured.

Then there were various times that we were moved about from camp to camp. We were always notified close to midnight. Just pack your bag and you'd leave tomorrow morning 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, when it would still be dark. What amazed me was that when we'd leave the camp, the streets were lined by people. Somehow, they knew about it. On many such trips I got to see my folks.

C.G.R.:

I see. So this was all in the general Bandoeng area.

F.W.K.:

Yes.

C.G.R.:

Yes.

F.W.K.:

That was still there. Then, even the time that we were taken to Batavia [by train] (what was then Batavia is now Djakarta of course -- that's a harbour city), all along the railroad track were people. Yet we weren't told until [early that very day]. Anyway, the word got out.

I remember vaguely my dad coming to the camp [almost every day], at least as far as they could go, which was at a great distance, but we recognized each other. How could he see me among all the people standing there? But we had a way to say hello to each other. Batavia was -- fortunately we were there only a couple of days -- but Batavia was just about....I could imagine that the Germans were very nasty, or beastly, towards the

Jewish prisoners that they had. However, I don't think they could be any worse than those Japanese. That this -- those two days in Batavia were just -- I don't even want to go into that. Fortunately, we didn't see them much. I mean we were so happy when we left, and we were put in this little 8,000-ton freighter, unbelievable, some 3,600 people, driven into the loading places, the holds.

C.G.R.:

The holds?

F.W.K.:

Yes. The holds [cargo spaces. We were jammed together forcefully, with rifle butts]. You couldn't stretch. We were like this [sitting up with legs bent at the knees].

C.G.R.:

Really.

F.W.K.:

It took us four days to reach Singapore from Batavia. I had made that trip as a young boy -- when I was five years old, my dad could go on furlough to Holland, being the colony of Holland; usually, in peacetime, on a regular steamer, you leave Batavia at noon, and the next morning when you wake up you're in Singapore. In the harbour. It took us four days in the [Japanese] freighter, because we would sail six knots an hour, something like that, and zig-zagging because of fear of torpedoes, or whatever, in a convoy.

C.G.R.:

Now was this group of 3,600, were these all Dutch?

F.W.K.:

Dutch.

C.G.R.:

Yes. No British, or...?

F.W.K.:

No.

C.G.R.:

No.

F.W.K.:

All Dutch.

C.G.R.:

Did you have your officers?

F.W.K.:

Oh, yes.

C.G.R.:

Yes.

F.W.K.:

Each cumi or company had officers, yes.

C.G.R.:

So they left that intact.

F.W.K.:

Yes. They left it intact.

C.G.R.:

Because you know in some camps the officers were separated from the men.

F.W.K.:

Later. Later.

C.G.R.:

That came later. Fine. Please go ahead then.

F.W.K.:

Okay.

C.G.R.:

You arrived at Singapore.

F.W.K.:

Singapore, we were put in the barracks of what used to be the British forces, Singapore being a very strategic point. They had large barracks. We were in Singapore three months. In short, what we had to do was work in the factories in the morning. They loaded us in trucks, and we went to factories. We were treated rather well while we were at the factories where they made pineapple juice or whatever, and then they'd give us enough of it. Sometimes we just had to sweep the streets, right in front of all the people. Or, sometimes we had to go to the harbour, unloading ships -- always at night.

C.G.R.:

Yes. Now this would have been approximately when? This 3-month period.

F.W.K.:

We left for Singapore -- September [1942]. We were in Singapore three months. Retrospectively, I can figure it out because we left Singapore during Christmas-New Year. That I remember. So we arrived in [singapore sometime during] September, but actually, the Singapore episode, was overall a rather pleasant sort of thing. We were treated reasonably well. Food was adequate and fair. There was not -- I'm trying to remember -- any [widespread] disease yet. Well, just the usual

[colds, etc.].

C.G.R.:

Yes. Which camp was it? Do you recall? Was it Changi? Or Selerang? Was it a very large camp? Mostly British and Australian?

F.W.K.:

British. Only British. But we could see the U-boats, the, what do you call them?

C.G.R.:

Submarines?

F.W.K.:

Submarines, [going back and forth] right by the camp. So the naval harbour must have been just a little beyond the camp, and it was all occupied by Japs, of course.

C.G.R.:

Probably Changi.

F.W.K.:

Yes. That sounds like it.

C.G.R.:

Yes.

F.W.K.:

Then, I remember we had to go to Burma. That journey took 12 days. From Singapore to Rangoon. We heard later that there was a [POW] convoy that preceded us, which was torpedoed, and the one that followed us was also torpedoed. We weren't, and I think one reason for this is because we travelled over the Christmas holiday season. They wouldn't do it. Maybe. Whatever -- we

tried to rationalize.

We didn't have any outbreaks of dysentery or anything aboard the ship, fortunately. That did happen on one of the convoys, I was told. Then we reached Rangoon, and we were able to see the Golden Pagoda from aboard ship. But we were not allowed off the boat. We were transferred to an even smaller boat. That was an overnight trip, from Rangoon to Moulmein, Burma. Just crossing the strait, I think. The river.

Correction. I was in Rangoon. We were in Rangoon over New Year's. We spent New Year's Eve, New Year's, and another day in a prison. And uneventful. Then, in a small boat, we were taken to Moulmein. From there they made new companies. You see, they took us out of our old ones, and mixed people up. Thus we got new [company] commanders. The policy they maintained during the ensuing years, while we were building the railroad, was that companies were every so often taken out and others came in, so that we could never form a good union, or unity. They were afraid of that, of course.

C.G.R.:

Right.

F.W.K.:

They were always sort of straining, because they were far outnumbered by us. The guards.

Anyway, what I remember from the railroad, or what I do want to remember, I was sort of a loner. I've always been a loner. I never saw my brother [after I left Java]. Didn't know where he was. Eventually you would team up with one or two people in your company. They form their own groups too, and that proved to be

very important for survival later. Because if they were ever able to get extra vegetables or bought some sugar from the Burmese, or something like that, if one belonged to a group, then they would share what they had. If you were alone, then you were out. Later, when the trucks were unable to supply us with even the basic staples, you know, rice and beans, we had to act as a relay chain, and bring stuff in ourselves. If you belonged to a group, they had ways of dumping a little bit of stuff somewhere along the way. Then somebody else would pick it up. Also in a relay. If you were alone, it just didn't work.

So, anyway, during the various moves [from camp to camp], before the railroad was finished....I think it was more than a year before we reached the middle point. You see, they started the railway from Moulmein and from Bangkok.

C.G.R.:

Yes.

F.W.K.:

I found out later that my brother was working from the other end.

C.G.R.:

Oh, really.

F.W.K.:

Okay. By the way, in Moulmein, when we first started, in the first camp, that is where we sort of got initiated. We were paid ten cents a day.

C.G.R.:

Ten cents.

F.W.K.:

Ten cents a day. To give you an idea as to what that would do, one cigar was 25 cents. That's all you could buy. So you had to work two and a half days for one cigar.

C.G.R.:

Two cigars a week.

F.W.K.:

Anyway, I wasn't smoking at that time, so I just saved the money. You couldn't buy anything. You were in the middle of a jungle. So I don't know why they paid us. Besides, it was just paper money which they'd printed. Wasn't proper [not backed up], so nobody wanted to take it.

There [in Burma] is where we got used to seeing people die, because eventually when the people got tired and overworked; you had to do more than the body could take on the food you were getting. So then your resistance went down and so started the malaria and the dysentery [bacillary and amebic]. What killed was the combination of the two [malaria and dysentery]. There was no medication whatsoever, so the only thing you could get would be bed rest. Sometimes, the Japs beat you out of your -- out of the barracks, anyway, because they needed the people. Then they were just thinking that we were faking it, and all that. Sometimes, they let the doctor stand at attention for the whole day because he allowed too many men to stay at home, according to them. They are very primitive thinkers.

In the beginning that sort of hit us [demoralized us], because they always buried the people during the time when we were back in camp for lunch [after work along the track]. That

sort of spoiled your appetite, at least in the beginning. Eventually we got so used to it that it didn't bother us anymore.

So, slowly, you get used to seeing your friends go. You get used to the attitude [slogan]: "each for himself and God for us all." When you got sick and you had to get your food, you had to go to the kitchen and get it, that sometimes was half a mile down the road in the pouring rain and mud, and you just didn't feel like going, but you had to because of necessity. You had to eat something. So you go, but the guy next to you was too sick to go, and you would then offer to take his. Eventually they didn't even do that. They would even go as far as taking his food for themselves.

C.G.R.:

You mean the prisoners themselves would eat the food of the sick?

F.W.K.:

Yes. You'd get all kinds of things, and you'd begin to see that some people's civilization is less than skin deep. Even officers, to which I looked up at first. It's amazing at how low they will stoop just for food, which I wouldn't. But a matter of principle, a matter of religious conviction, or upbringing, or values, or priorities, or whatever you want to -- to some, that's all not important. That you get used to. You become hardened. That is, I imagine, a matter of survival, sometimes. If I was the same sensitive little guy that I was in high school, I wouldn't have made it. You become very hard-nosed. But I would not stoop to anything undignified.

[I now remember one particular camp, which I cannot remember ever having seen in broad daylight. We left the camp to walk to the work site in the early morning hours, when it was still dark, and we returned at night, when it was dark again. Fortunately we did not stay there very long. It was such a lugubrious camp.]

[Another camp leaving bad memories was called Jay, which means "rain" in Burmese. It rained non-stop during the two and a half months that we were there. Not very hard, mind you, but constant. Our bunks (the barracks were made of bamboo on stilts) just barely cleared the water, which stood about two feet deep, inundating most of the campsite. Only the kitchen stood on a slight incline, so the wood fires were on dry land under a roof. There were hundreds of dead, decaying frogs floating in the water.]

I was given the last rites twice. Once, in the hospital, to die. The second time, [I had been placed] in separate barrack to die. [Sick people were segregated] because they didn't want us to infect the other people, so they put us in a separate barrack, and [after a while] they moved the camp away. So we [the sick] were left behind. With nothing. No food, no nothing. No kitchen. But somehow I walked out of that [and joined them again].

So I happened to walk along and came to a group of Japanese soldiers. They saw my [POW] number, and they didn't get mad. Some of those were against their own regime, too. The Koreans, as was proven later, were very much against the Japanese, and these happened to be a group of Koreans, so they just -- one asked me where I was going. I said, well I'm catching up with my

"cumi", and was it okay? So here comes a truck. It was one of the few trucks pulling by and these three Koreans could hop on and they called me back in too, so I had a free ride. I reached my old camp, and nobody seemed surprised to see me walk in, but I didn't tell anybody that I was there for a while. I just rested to recover.

C.G.R.:

What was wrong with you those two times when...?

F.W.K.:

Dysentery.

C.G.R.:

Dysentery both times.

F.W.K.:

I didn't get malaria until later. The reason why I survived, considering everything, is probably the fact, in my way of thinking, that I had been a Boy Scout. I was able to recognize certain vegetables that I could eat, and I was able to make a fire without matches. I was able to go in the woods and find my way back. That sort of thing, which came in very handy. Because the Japs sometimes, especially after the railroad was finished, they had no use for us any more, and then that's when the food suddenly stopped. Completely.

Anyway, I got back [to my company] again; the railroad was almost completed and we were at the joining point, to make a long story short. At that time they needed 1,000 people. By then everybody was sick and weak and all that, so they just took very young ones, and I was among them. We had to go to what was later

called the Death Camp. That was -- it was solid rock, I remember. It was a cut through solid granite. [The site where the track originating from Moulmein (Burma) and that originating in Bangkok (Thailand) would connect. We worked with dynamite, and repeated blasting followed by clearing up all the rock debris. We had almost reached the desired level, meaning, with one more blast it would be finished. After placing the dynamite as usual, everybody went away and hid. However, when the blast was done and all the rumbling had stopped, we went back and found that the entire newly created valley (cut through) was filled up again, because one whole wall had collapsed! Yes, the granite had a -- you know, the line of the rock was this way, so this one would stand, and this one would go over.

C.G.R.:

Just slid right off.

F.W.K.:

Yes. That was major, because the Japs had already counted on it being connected [had committed themselves to a deadline date for completion of the railroad]. I have never seen that many high-ranking officers come to one spot. With gold here [shoulders] and here [sleeves], my God! it was unbelievable -- to clear that up. They even had the Koreans [guards] work too, with us; those were the days when a lot of people could no longer take it. It is -- I don't want to go in detail about just what we had to do, how we had to do it -- it was unbelievable. I'd say, we have thought about it -- I have thought about it -- as I'd say, if I ever survive this, I would tell people they wouldn't believe it. I don't think, even if you would believe it, you couldn't

imagine it. All the agony. We finished the breakthrough [and designated that particular camp as "Death Camp"]. Eventually got it accomplished. Then it was a matter of bringing the railroad, the tracks, the ties and the rails, and that was almost child's play, compared to the digging.

Afterwards, when the railroad was finished and completed, we had an episode whereby we were almost killed humanely, by the Koreans. Even this one camp commander that we had, he was only a sergeant -- here our commander was a full colonel -- he had to bow to this lowly sergeant. That's the way they did it, to humiliate and degrade us, and all that sort of thing. All through the years. But even the [Korean guard commander, the sergeant, with] a reputation that's worse than Himmler, he just let us be. We were trading with the Burmese, sugar, shirts for sugar, and all that, and he just pretended he never saw it happen. I mean, before that [we were not even allowed to talk to the Burmese or come] within a mile of them, for fear that you might exchange weapons or whatever, but now they let us just do what we wanted. That lasted for about maybe three months, and we saw trains going back and forth.

Than something changed. Later, we found out several things had changed. Number one, the Battle of Midway, which proved to be a turning point, which we found out much later. Number two, the Allied forces, the Marauders, I believe, in Burma, were gaining. The Japs were being pushed back. The railroad bridges were bombed. So now they needed crews to do repair work.

It was during that time that I became very ill, [largely

because] we had no food either. The railroad was finished -- they didn't [need us anymore, and felt that they didn't have any] obligation to feed us. As I said before, I had been in Boy Scouts, so I cooked food for myself, but then when I got sick, then I couldn't do it. I thought for sure that that was the end of me; many times I was asking myself -- why the suffering? You listen to some of the stories of those men, the older ones among us, a lot of them had prominent positions in private life before the war, and all the stories about the adulterous living and all the other things that they had done. But I had never done anything deliberately wrong that I could remember. I was this high school kid trying to keep up the best I could. You just never understand why, why one had to go through all this.

It so happened that at that time, apparently from higher up, they were taking registration numbers of people who were sick. I went to the doctor [for help, but all he could say was, "I'm sorry, I have nothing," but he took my number. Later, I found out that it was during that time that they [registered] the numbers and about two months later, at which time I had fully recovered, they put me on a train. Well, I was well by then, but they said, "You're going to the hospital camp." [Months after I was really sick,] you see. So you never know. That saved my life. Whereas at the time that I was to go to the hospital camp, there were other people that were sick [at that very time. But] they were just told to march, back to work on the railroad. Sick or not. That is how I got to Thailand, and landed in a hospital camp [where we had relatively good food and did not have to work. It saved my life.].

C.G.R.:

When was this? Do you recall? I assume late '44 or into '45.

F.W.K.:

No. It was '44. Kanchanaburi. Then I was in a hospital camp. There was not even a canteen there! But the Siamese people, we were still getting ten cents. No, no. We were not getting ten cents a day. The officers were paid. I don't know what they got -- 30 tical [Burmese dollars] a month. But we [privates and other ranks] weren't paid [because we weren't working]. So I offered to be the boy for the officers. They always had a boy [an aide or batman].

C.G.R.:

Yes. A batman or something.

F.W.K.:

Yes. So you would get the food. You'd go stand in line for the food and all that. Then they had money and said, "Buy me something at the canteen, and why don't you buy yourself one too?" That's how I survived.

C.G.R.:

Do you remember which camp this was, the hospital camp?

F.W.K.:

Kanchanburi.

C.G.R.:

Kanchanburi? Yes. I was wondering if perhaps it was that.

F.W.K.:

There is where I learned to know Mr. Oosting. O-o-s-t-i-n-

g. Which became very important later. Anyway, that lasted for almost a year. Then things got worse for the Japs, so then they slowly began to remember the Convention of Geneva, and so then they said, well, we have to separate officers from enlisted men. Well, I was enlisted for sure. Or I was Other Rank. Private, third class, but I had registered for the Royal Military Academy in Holland, because I always wanted to be an officer. I wasn't even the one that brought it up. Somebody else did. They said "Oh -- he belongs in the officers' camp." So I said, "Oh yes!" It wasn't the exact truth, but I got into an officers' camp. That was another fortunate thing.

I stayed in the officers' camp until the end. We'd better stop there for awhile.

[Pause]

C.G.R.:

So, please go ahead.

F.W.K.:

I was in a hospital camp, and then an officers' camp. And we thought, everything's just fine. Oh no! All of a sudden we had to make another move. That trip I can remember. That was at night, and we had to cross a big river. They put us in little boats, and we crossed the large river, all at night, and then we went on the other side of the river and then we had to walk a long time. All at night, so that we couldn't see where we were going. [It was raining all night, with thunder and lightning, which showed us some of the landscape during each flash.] There seemed to be no end to it. That was a rather grueling experience. When we finally got to where we were supposed to go,

I got sick again too. That was malaria, and I'd never had it.

That camp, we didn't have to do anything on the railroad. All we had to do was maintain the streets around it. I didn't. I was in the tool shed, so I just had to deal out the tools -- the hoes, and the axes, and the saws and all.

I didn't know what was going on outside, but I remember one time, when the people [workers and guards] were coming back, one of these Korean guards was crying. Loud and very uncontrollably, and he was talking Korean all the time, and lamenting about something, while [they were re-entering the camp]. We all watched, and this one Korean just walked straight up to the camp commander, who was a Japanese lieutenant, fell around his neck, and kept crying on his shoulder. Well, if that was under normal conditions, any lowly soldier who did that to a Japanese officer, would have been shot on the spot! But the Japanese lieutenant just stood there, motionless, and we had an idea that something [momentous] had happened.

Three days later (I'm not sure that it was three days, though -- it seemed like days later) our commander of the officers' camp, which was a full colonel, British colonel, Toosey -- T-o-o-s-e-y.

C.G.R.:

Ah yes. I know his name.

F.W.K.:

Toosey walked right up to the [Japanese] camp commander, and said, "I'm taking over command." Just like that. The lieutenant looked at him and Toosey said, "I heard it on the radio! [Your

Emperor ordered you to lay down your arms]" They had always suspected [us of having a radio, but they could never find it].

C.G.R.:

No.

F.W.K.:

Well, the British soldiers have a big water can, much bigger than ours. There was the radio; only the top part was left for water. The bottom part held the radio. The batteries were provided by the Koreans -- by a handful of Korean guards. They knew we had a radio in the officers' camp. We were given all the information a month later, which protected the radio; we knew -- I knew when Germany fell, when D-Day was, we knew all that. But we didn't know [ourselves who had the radio, or where it was]. [Toosey just said,] "I'm taking over. Your Kaiser [Emperor] has just surrendered."

I remember that many times the Japs had us, in the middle of the night, up, go to the parade ground, stand at attention, and they searched the barracks. They were looking for this radio, which they could never find. Only ten people knew where the radio was, and which Koreans were involved. I never found out.

Anyway, about a month later we were taken to Bangkok [in trucks]. We had to be disinfected [before entering the quarters in Bangkok]. I'll never forget that episode. We were taken in trucks to Bangkok, into the big city, and we were taken to the Sportsman's Club, which was nothing but a big building, swimming pool, and all this, and we couldn't get in. We -- the truck stopped at the gate, and they said "Everybody come off", and we had our sparse belongings. They couldn't have anything written,

the Japs wouldn't allow us, but we had oh -- just a few things that we had kept -- a pair of shoes or whatever. What did I have: I had an ivory [cigarette] pipe that I had gotten from somebody in the past -- pipe. You couldn't take it, though. They said, "You take everything off and you leave it all there." We had to undress completely, and leave everything behind to be burned. We walked naked across a spot where we were hosed down with something [a disinfectant. After drying off, the towels were also burned.] We were issued new clothes. Couldn't take anything. Couldn't take anything. Nothing. I said "How about my pipe?" "No, leave the pipe. Buy a new one."

Anyway, I was in Bangkok, and I was in the Dutch army, back in the Dutch army, but one of the officers I was taking care of in this camp put me in charge of the "supplies"; supply in those days was cigarettes, a can [of 50 cigarettes] a day, 2,200 cans of Players and all these British-type cigarettes, and I did not smoke! I never had so many friends, as in those days first of all they said "Oh, do you have a extra can?" One can was a woman. You could get a woman for a night, for a can [of cigarettes].

C.G.R.:

For a can of cigarettes.

F.W.K.:

Yes. I had already made up my mind to study medicine. That thought came in Singapore. But I wouldn't approach one of those girls with a ten-foot pole! I hadn't studied medicine yet, but I knew enough. So, one of my better friends, an officer, whom I

always thought was a real gentleman, got hooked on one of these lowly girls. Well, he got me this job, and forever grateful I am for that.

Then there was a British major -- Major Bangs. T.W.T. Bangs. I don't know. He was a plantation manager in Malaya before the war. He was in charge of a Malayan refugee camp, and he went to the Dutch camp one day and he said to me "Fred -- you really going to study medicine?" I said "Yes, but I know nothing about it yet." He said, "Oh yes. You have to be my doctor here." So here he took me back to this Malayan refugee camp, British. I got a jeep, and I had my own "boy" [aide], and all this, because I was treated as an officer -- a British officer. He probably told his "higher-ups" that he had a medical officer at his camp. I found out later that the 800 ticals a month, which a captain usually gets, he put in his own pocket. But [though not paid, I was treated as an officer,] and I had my own jeep and all that. In the meantime I was paid by the Dutch army, as a private. Thus every so often I had to come to the Dutch [headquarters] to pick up my pay cheque in my own jeep and all. Anyway, that was rather fortunate [and unusual]. Later, when he [Major Bangs] got called back to the plantation, he was succeeded by a young captain, a Britisher, who handed me the 800 ticals each month. That is why I know. He said, "Oh, this is your pay cheque." I never said a word. [However, this did not last long;] shortly after that, we were put aboard ship and taken to Holland.

Shortly before that, I was in camp, and I got a telephone call, "Your wife arrived." I said, "What is this?" "Your wife

has arrived in Bangkok harbor. Well, somebody, some female, with your name, is now at..., " whatever, I forgot the name of the hotel in Bangkok. I had my jeep, so I drove right out, and it was my younger sister. What was happening was that they allowed for one family member to join whoever was alive in Bangkok. So I found my younger sister had come over. So then she stayed with us, in the camp, in this British camp. Then later, when we were put aboard ship and went to Holland, she stayed with me for a while, and then married my best friend.

We went back to Holland, we were 11 months in Bangkok, 9 months of which I spent in the British camp, where I was, quote quote "the doctor." When we arrived in Holland, again, we were quarantined for a week. [Subsequently I was hospitalized] and then discharged. That was in June [1946], and in July, I became a medical student.

C.G.R.:

I see. In Holland.

F.W.K.:

In Holland.

C.G.R.:

In Holland.

F.W.K.:

And didn't go back to Java.

C.G.R.:

No. How about the rest of your family? Did they all come back to Holland?

C.G.R.:

No. My younger sister came. In 1948, I think, Indonesia got its independence. It was shortly after that that my parents and my other sister came. My brother had to go back to Java. He was enlisted, you see. He was not drafted like I was.

C.G.R.:

Yes. Yes.

F.W.K.:

He went back to Java. He was just a sergeant, but he became the personal chauffeur of the highest ranking officer. Commander of the entire army [in the Dutch East Indies, representing the Queen]. So he was rather well-off, but then got transferred to New Guinea. He had to -- I don't know what he did in the beginning, but he told me that briefly, about that time, he had some government position. He had a car, but he preferred to be in Holland. So then he went to Holland also.

C.G.R.:

Yes. Very good. May I go back and ask some questions?

F.W.K.:

Yes. Sure.

C.G.R.:

Thank you. Just a little tape on that side, but we can turn it over. What was your father's occupation?

F.W.K.:

He was an electric engineer, and was one of the people who are vital to the power stations in Bandoeng. Bandoeng -- you were way up in the mountains, and they had five power stations which almost supplied the entire island of Java, up from there. So when he was -- he was also drafted -- but he got out of that

camp sort of by a miracle. Do you want to go into that?

C.G.R.:

Briefly, yes.

F.W.K.:

Well, some Jap at the guard. My father was standing at the gate looking out, just wishing he was on the other side of the gate, and some Korean guard must have gotten a telephone call and misunderstood. He just walked up to the people there [standing at the gate] and he said, "You can go home." He opened the gate and he said, "You can go home." My dad just walked right out. The others went back to their barracks to pick up their belongings. By the time they came back, the gate was closed. Because there was a misunderstanding.

But he [my father] had gone. Then, when he got home, he never told me exactly what happened. However, he went back to work, and he got a band [around his arm, with Japanese characters]. But he worked for the Jap. He was vital [to the running of the power stations].

C.G.R.:

An armband.

F.W.K.:

Yes. He was vital. They needed him to operate the power stations. He worked three months without pay. Got no pay. Then he got a fifth of what his regular income was. But at least he was outside. He would never have survived those prisons.

C.G.R.:

I think what I'll do is I'll turn this tape over, because

it's just going to end.

[End of side 1.]

C.G.R.:

I thought, first of all, I'd ask if you could describe for me, if you can create for me, a typical day, when you were on the railroad. What time you got up in the morning, and what you might have had to eat for breakfast, and when you went to work and how long you worked. Just as I say, what was sort of an average day? Not the worst of them.

F.W.K.:

[Japanese reveille was sounded by a bugler early in the morning. I don't know what time. The Japanese soldiers had taken all our watches; they had been outfitted with very inferior watches, so they always forced us to hand over our watches. I would guess that it was about 6:00 a.m. We then slowly got up; no showers; no dressing (one slept in what one had -- usually a pair of shorts, no shirt). So you headed for the kitchen where you lined up by cumi, according to number, so nobody can go twice. All we got was rice porridge without flavoring or sugar. Very bad tasting. That was all.]

[Shartly after that, at a command of the guard, we left for the work site (part of the dike or valley we were working on), walking by the tool shed where one picked up a hoe, shovel, or pick; only one tool apiece. We then reassembled at the work site, by cumi, it see if we are all accounted for. Then we start working: putting dirt on the dike, or digging out an area that is above the track level. The level, the inclines, etc., were constantly determined by a different set of Japanese (engineers).

We worked non-stop until we got a command to rest, yasume; one 15-minute period between beginning and the lunch break. We then work again until we see the cooks come bringing the food in buckets hung on a bamboo stick, which they carried on their shoulders. We were given a one hour lunch break.]

[Then again a command to start working. About two hours later a 15-minute break. Then after another 2-hour work period, finally the signal to go back to camp.]

[Most of us then went via a river or place where we could wash up, and clean the tools also, before returning them to the tool shed. The idea was to get back to camp in time to line up for supper. You see, they always wanted you to line up according to number so that you could not cheat and go twice.]

[By then the sun had gone down and we went to sleep. You see, we had no lights: (1) nothing to read by, (2) nothing to read, either. Books were soon used up, either for toilet paper or to start a fire to boil water for oneself. We had no contact with the outside world, nothing to read. So after the first six months we had nothing to talk about.]

[By and large, nothing was said on the way to work and very little was said during mealtime or on the way home. A very dull, monotonous existence.]

[I believe that every night at about 6:00 p.m. "the last post" was sounded by the bugler for the POWs who had died that day. Several died every day. At about 8:00 p.m. the "lights out" signal was given, just as an official bedtime sign. At first we had to stand guard too, but after a while they dropped

that silly requirement.]

[This, I would say, was an "average" day.]

[The food at lunch and supper varied. At some camps food was better than at others. The usual diet was rice and green-bean soup (to prevent beriberi). If there was any meat, I'm sure the cooks themselves took care of that, and some went to the hospital patients. We rarely saw more than some strings of meat in the soup, once in a great while. That was all.]

That varied from camp to camp. In the beginning, I remember when we first came, we had to move three cubic metres of dirt per person. To put it on the dike, you see. The way that worked, of course, it was measured out carefully, and it was remeasured out, and what happened was that the younger people had to move more and that the older people moved less. That is why the younger ones died just as fast as the older ones, because you had to do more.

It wasn't until late, at the end, that I learned how to cheat the Japs; we were able to put less on the dike, and still say we moved three cubic metres, and they could measure it. I just outsmarted them. There were camps where that wasn't the case. That there was just no way that you could measure anything. Say, it was all mud, and the stakes would move anyway, and so then they just put us to work until it got dark. If you slowed the pace, they just kicked and beat you enough so that you would keep a certain pace. Then you got back to camp when it was dark.

The idea is that as long as we worked on the road, we never had any communication with the outside. We never had any

communication among ourselves. There was nothing to talk about, after a while, Dr. Roland; you got so, almost demented, because of avitaminosis and all that, that you couldn't even remember the name of the guy next to you who you talked to all the time. You'd say, "What's your name?" I still passed medical school after that. It's just something I'll never understand.

Anyway, there was a time there, if you do that for three and a half years -- of course, not all the time was on the railroad. We'd just, all you'd do was get up in the morning, get a little rice, it was nothing. Then sometimes we went back to camp; as long as you were close to camp, we went back for the noon hour, and we had an hour of rest, during which time we had something to eat, and then back again. As the railroad progressed, the camp stayed but we moved gradually away [and could no longer return for lunch; then] the cooks took food out to us. By the time we came home at night, you were so tired that you just went to sleep. Then, the next morning, you'd start all over again.

I remember one camp -- Burma, in the rainy season, can be very bad. Ye -- the word ye in Burmese means water -- and the river there, we built a bridge. Then we were almost, oh, it was better than a mile across, and rose 18 yards, not feet [in the monsoon season]. Yards. You could see it on the bank in the rainy season. That was just -- it rained three month without stopping. Day and night. We had to work in that. Moving mud. That was unbelievable. That's where a lot of them got ill, too. Even the frogs, they died, because there was too much water. They were just floating around -- it was just unsightly and

smelly, at that camp. I'll never forget it.

Then there were areas where we had solid rock, and granite, and they couldn't measure that either. You had to wait for the blasting, and then just try and move as much away as you could.

The last breakthrough, where the walls were like this, they had made very primitive ladders from bamboo and trees, with supports. Whatever. Every one of us sat on one [of these supports] and you'd move a basket or a rock [upwards to the man on the support above you]. Pick it up from the guy below you. Pass it to the guy above you.

C.G.R.:

Yes.

F.W.K.:

There was no way you could get off. You couldn't go to the bathroom. You couldn't do anything. Those rocks just kept coming. No stop, no rest. Because if you didn't move it, then the guy below you had to hold his, and then he'd do that. The whole day -- day in, day out. You dreaded going back.

I mean, this sort of thing, if you think of that, that was just unbelievable. As I say, the answer to your question, there were camps that we were done at two, three o'clock, because we cheated them out of dirt. There were camps that we couldn't do it, and we got home very late at night. Sometimes, when we said, okay, now we're done, and you'd go back to camp, only to be told to just pack your bag, and we had to walk to the next place without any rest. After you'd worked the whole day. Then when you got to the next camp, they first had to set up the kitchen. Thus, you wouldn't get food for another day, because there was no

kitchen in operation.

C.G.R.:

I think you said that when you were in Singapore, you had the idea that you would eventually like to become a doctor.

F.W.K.:

Yes.

C.G.R.:

Can you tell me more about how that came about? Why you made that decision?

F.W.K.:

I really can't tell you, because I was always going to be an officer. That is why I was already registered, I was a senior in high school, and after that I was going to plan and apply for the military academy of Breda in Holland [comparable to West Point]. During the time, between the capitulation to Japan, and the time that we were in Singapore, all my worries were, how do I get my high school diploma? Because I hadn't quite finished, quite graduated from high school. Here came the war, and everything stopped. You see, the longer this went on, I said, my God, I'd forget all the things that I was supposed to know. What am I going to do with the exam? That was all I was concerned about.

Singapore, however, we had time to think, and you were sort under constant surveillance. Singapore's all Chinese, and there's no way to run away there. Besides, we were still all shaven. Just one night. It just came like that. "You're supposed to be a doctor." Something like that. From there on

out, whoever, if you had to discuss the future, and that's all you could discuss, in prisoner-of-war camp -- the past and the future -- from there on out, I always said, well, I'm going to study medicine. But it came just like that. During camp time, and the suffering I saw, that only reinforced it.

C.G.R.:

Now you mention a Dr. Oosting. Oosting?

F.W.K.:

Oosting. A Mr. Oosting.

C.G.R.:

Oh he was a mister, not a doctor?

F.W.K.:

No. He was not a doctor. No. He was one of the four presidents of a very large [international trading] company. Owned boats, a lot of good ocean liners, going to Indonesia, and all that. And trade. It was trading and shipping. He was, I found out later, probably a homosexual. However, he never approached me that way, but he was always [helping me with purchases of books] -- I always informed him when I passed an exam and all that. And he'd say, "Well, what do you want? Give me a list of books." He said, "I don't want to shoot under the wings of your parents. I'd like to give you something." Well, he was seven times [a millionaire; I think he just approved of my going back to school after POW camp instead of just getting a job somewhere. He wanted to help me.] He was a very wealthy man. All through my medical school years, he came and visited me twice in Utrecht, and we visited things which I never visited before. Living in Utrecht, I mean you had to have somebody come from

elsewhere to see things.

C.G.R.:

Right.

F.W.K.:

It was -- I later found out, when I was in America already, that he had lung cancer. I offered him at that time to come to stay with me and go to the Mayo Clinic. At that time I was well to do, but he never took me up on that. But all through my medical school years, he made life a bit better for me.

C.G.R.:

I see.

You mentioned the possibility that this man may have been a homosexual.

F.W.K.:

I found that out later.

C.G.R.:

Which leads me to the general question of sex, homosexuality; was there homosexuality?

F.W.K.:

Yes. We had, especially in that officers' camp, I mean that hospital camp, we had a stage, and the Jap had us put on shows. We had Monty Banks. Monty Banks -- B-a-n-k-s -- and Sylvia Ray, and his name was Sidney Ray, but he became "Sylvia" Ray, and he was just, he always had a bra on, and all this, and he was just a woman, and Monty Bank was the male. They put on shows, mostly musicals, and all. They were very nice, but one day there was a whole gathering in one of the barracks. "What's going on?" "Oh,

they're marrying." "Say what?" "Yes, they're marrying." [Monty Banks and Sylvia Ray, complete with a minister, witnesses, the works.]

In the officers' camp, when we were later in officers' camp, one Australian -- 2nd Lieut., red-haired guy, forgot his name -- he was always around me, and I thought what's going on? This guy! Then he said, wouldn't you want to come to Australia after the war? You can stay with me, and all this. After I caught the gist of it, I said, "Look, let's just look things square in the eye, and I'll never go Australia. I'll never join you anywhere. I'm too much interested in the other sex." But yes, there was homosexuality.

C.G.R.:

Yes. One would assume that....

F.W.K.:

Oh yes. And they said after about one and a half years it was normal. You could expect that. Well, I didn't.

C.G.R.:

Was the absense of sex -- well, I don't know, do you mind if I ask? -- were you sexually experienced before you became a captive?

F.W.K.:

No.

C.G.R.:

So the absence of sex was not a....

F.W.K.:

No. No. Was not the major issue with me.

C.G.R.:

Did you lose a lot of weight?

F.W.K.:

Yes.

C.G.R.:

Do you have any idea what you might have weighed, toward the end?

F.W.K.:

I was never heavy. I was always slim. During the time that I had dysentery, of course, I couldn't really say, the weight, but I did lose weight. It took me many years -- in all my training as a physician, I never understood why when I was doing surgery, or even had to assist in surgery before I did surgery myself, I had to hold retractors, I could never hold them for any length of time. They just wouldn't hold. It wasn't 20 years ago, after I became a pathologist and I studied muscle, that I began to realize that in starvation, you lose the number two fibre. The red muscle fibre. Which is tonic [as opposed to the white muscle fibre, which is quick but short-lasting in action]. See, the number one fibre, for quick action, that stays, but number two's gone [after long periods of starvation]. Then it finally became clear to me why I couldn't even hold a suitcase; if I started walking with one, it would just fall out of my hand. Supposedly, one can change muscle fibres, eventually, by enervating constantly for a different job, but I don't think that has happened to any great extent [not in me, anyway].

C.G.R.:

Was there any -- were you able to celebrate holidays? Was

Christmas anything at all?

F.W.K.:

The last Christmas was 1942 -- I was still in Java. You know, it was shortly after we [had surrendered to Japan; we were interned and had a very nice service in one of our big stables -- I was in the cavalry. Big stables. It was [very emotional, away from home for the first time at Xmas], except the setting wasn't very impressive. That was the last one I remember, and then not until we got liberated [because all during captivity we were isolated from the outside world; we had no idea of dates or events until later, when we had the radio].

C.G.R.:

After the war, yes. Do you feel -- you mentioned this muscle thing. Other than that, are there, in your opinion, after-effects on you from this experience?

F.W.K.:

I'm sure that I, although I didn't have great difficulty in medical school, I would say, in all modesty, that I would have been a much more brilliant student, if it wasn't for [nutritional] deprivation for so long. Surely that was something. Also I think the diet of rice and beans, without any meat, for so many years, during a time that one is not fully grown yet, must have conditioned my body for that type of intake. Then, when I started eating normal food, you know, including, steaks, and especially when I came here, my blood cholesterol went away up to 378 mgm%. Cholesterol was way above normal. So that, I think, is one other thing. I had an angioplasty and all that. Malaria. I had two more attacks, in 1947, and none since

then. By and large, I think I look better than the reality of my years. Maybe it's imagination, but when I talk to Bill Fillmore over the phone, I will see him. I plan to go to Texas. But just listening to the conversation and sometimes she [Mrs. Klutzow] talks to him briefly, said to me, he's not with it any more. God, I hope, she's not going to say that about me, after a while. She never knew the man, but she has a very keen perception of people. You see, I'm in charge of the lab, I have been for the past 11 years. Two different facilities. She only comes once in a while; this is the wife of the chief. It's amazing how she sizes people up. Sometimes I come with some of my personnel problems, and I tell her, and she says, "Oh, don't tell him that." She says "Nothing." She knows. She has a sharp perception of them. Maybe because she's not too involved. She sizes them up.

C.G.R.:

You mentioned that some of the officers did not behave as you thought officers should have. How about the medical officers?

F.W.K.:

They were, I think, in a very difficult position, because they had no medicine. It must have been frustrating, at the least, to see people die, admit them to the hospital, and maybe they got a little bit more food than we did. Made sure they were no longer harassed. That in itself is such a relief, I think, and that alone would give one a little stamina. I can't say anything bad about the doctors. The commander of my cumi, [an

air force captain], was a gentleman all the way through. He waited, that we were fed first, and if there was anything left over he got it, whereas with others it was the other way around: they took first choice. The cook just deals out the food [by estimation] and there's only so much, and if he overdealt, then a few wouldn't get any, and if he underdealt, there was some food left over. No, he was very good, and we remain, I remain in touch. He was one of the few very good ones.

C.G.R.:

At the camp, at the end of the war, was there any revenge? Were people out to get the guards? Any of that?

F.W.K.:

It was amazing. We sort of always dreamt about that. What are we going to do? How will the tables turn? In the first place, when we got to that point, I was in an officers' camp. We weren't working on any railroad any more. They realized we were officers. There was only one young little guy there who was a nothing [private 3rd class], who was rather mean to us, and I was surprised that we didn't do anything to him at the camp.

When Col. Toosey took over, he said, "I'm taking over command. You must realize that they still have their weapons, and I'm ordering you [the POWs] not to misbehave, no revenge. I will give orders if anything has to be done. And I will take punitive measures if you do not do as I say." He had the authoritative sort of attitude, and he had the respect of us. That I know of, at no camp was there anything like that. It surprised me. But I will not buy anything Japanese, even today.

C.G.R.:

Well, that was going to be my next question. How do you feel about...?

F.W.K.:

No. Strangely, when I was practising medicine in Wisconsin, some of the GIs came back from Japan. Japanese wives. And knowing what my sentiment was, Barbara was wondering how I would treat them. I overcompensated. They'd never know. But I still won't buy anything Japanese. Well, it's just my way of taking revenge.

C.G.R.:

Yes. I understand. I understand. We mentioned, before we began taping, "The Bridge on the River Kwai."

F.W.K.:

Yes.

C.G.R.:

Tell me some of the areas where you feel that was wrong.

F.W.K.:

I remember one particular camp where we had an interpreter, who was a British -- British, what I call the typical Britisher. He was a guy from Oxford. Even in those days, I -- whenever I had time, I tried to talk to the British. When I was in the officers' camp, with the British officers. Just to pick up conversational English, especially my diction, which I still have problems with. They will not correct you, though. They always said, "Oh, you're doing well!" and all this, but this particular interpreter, I remember so well, because he, when he'd talk, he really used The King's English. He was sort of the type, he

looked like George V, or whatever, to me was the representative of British aristocracy.

He was caught reading. They found out that he could read Japanese characters. Which he probably had told them that he couldn't. He was put in such a cage as they described there [made of galvanized iron sheets] and he was put in there, and he never came out. He'd do everything in there [-- eat, sleep, drink, go to the bathroom]. I don't know how he came out. I always wondered how he did come out. I heard when he came out he was just like a mumbling idiot. This beautiful specimen of an officer, of a human being! I think the heat, and all the smell, the stench, all -- they'd never let him out. The treatment, as it was portrayed there [in The Bridge on the River Kwai], no way. It was far worse than they could ever portray. The way the captain in that movie was answering the Japanese captain. If Toosey'd tried to do it that way, he would have been beheaded on the spot, with the Samurai. You couldn't argue. No way that you could do that. That was far too silly.

C.G.R.:

Yes. Can you think of anything else? I'm running out of my set question, and things like that. Is there anything else that we ought to discuss? Particularly, as I say, the medical kinds of things.

F.W.K.:

I remember we were always coming home late at night, because it was raining. So then you have to work til it's dark, and we would then -- meat had come in crates. My God. Meat? Well it was full of maggots, but we didn't know it, and you couldn't see

it. But we were told afterwards. We didn't get sick from it. It's amazing. There were snakes that were eaten; they were clobbered to death. You eat anything. They ate rats. They ate anything. I don't want to go into detail, but it was just amazing, what people will do when they get hungry.

I remember one time that the group that I was talking of -- a group of people who stuck together, formed a little survival club, so to speak, which I didn't belong to; slaughtered a cow from a Burmese which was out grazing. They killed it with a pick, I believe, and then skinned it and cut it all up and buried it -- all within the time of two hours. I don't know how they did it. Because if you were ever caught, that would be the end of the whole camp, I think, or the whole cumi. But they got away with it, and they had meat, and then invited me once, which was also one of the highlights, and you sort of revived from that, and you can live another week or two in good health.

C.G.R.:

Do you have any feeling for why -- there are two people who seem identical. They're the same age, they're eating the same food, they have no obvious major medical problem, and yet one lives and one dies. Did you see that? Do you have any feelings about why some people survive better than others? Or why some survive worse than others?

F.W.K.:

Well, this becomes very personal. I do believe that -- now I'm talking as a physician -- that that depends on your motivation. Yes, there were a lot of people my age, just about

in the same phase, seniors, or just graduated from high school. In my day, and why I survived was different, in that I sort of always had a feeling that I was being protected. That is why it didn't surprise me one bit to hear that the convoy ahead of us was torpedoed, and the one after us also. We weren't. Somehow, I knew I would be preserved through all this. Once in a while I had the feeling that my grandmother was with me; that was the grandmother who lived with us for a while, and she and I shared a bed for, I think, almost two years. I was only eight years old I think at the time, and she always told me little bedtime stories. So later [after the war], when I was back in Holland and my parents had come over [from Indonesia, after they had attained their independence], after the liberation of Indonesia, and so I finally got to see my mother after all those years, and she said to me, "You know, I've always known that you would survive." "How is that?" "Well, you remember, grandma?" I said, yes. "She appeared in a dream, came to the front of the house, in a car, and then she stepped out of the car, looked at me, and opened the door, and you were in the car." Very strange.

C.G.R.:

Yes.

F.W.K.:

That same grandmother. That I felt this with me. This was told me years later. So that is my reason for my survival. I don't know of any other.

C.G.R.:

It's a good reason.

F.W.K.:

I'm sure motivation is...I didn't have that motivation. I sort of made a deal. You can't make a deal like that. But I said if there is something I have to do, then show me how to survive. So all through my medical school years and now, I always feel that I have a mission. It isn't just to make money. I've never asked for money. Never, when I've made a new start in a different town, I've never asked, "What is the rate for house calls or house calls? What do you charge for an appendectomy?" I never ask of money. Money is not important to me. I just ask, do they need a doctor? Are there many people sick? That sort of thing. With the government, now that I do not have patients. As a pathologist, I don't have any direct patient contact, but I'm one of the few pathologists who has had direct patient contact [before I became a pathologist]. My relationship with my patients was just unbelievable. As I said, they waited for me, even when they were sick, until I came back. They paid deliveries in advance and stuff like that. We had -- I felt so guilty when I left doctoring, because of this "covenant" that I've made. So now I feel obligated to train the young physicians. They all have the same books. All the same teaching. Whether you succeed depends on an awful lot of things.

C.G.R.:

Perhaps that's an appropriate place to stop.