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Experiences as a Prisoner-of-War, 1941-1945

Interviewed by
Charles G. Roland, M.D.
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Lucien Camille Brunet, Verdun, Quebec, HCM 40-85

Charles G. Roland, MD:

What were you doing before you joined up?

Lucien Camille Brunet:

I always seemed to want to go into the Postal Corps.

C.G.R.:

Well, even earlier than that. You were born in Montreal. Were you raised there, and went to school there? What did your father do?

L.C.B.:

He was a railway man. He was working for the [Canadian] National Railway. I went to school up to the 10th grade. Came out of school in 1935, started to work in a wholesale store for \$5.00 a week, six days a week [laughter].

In 1940 I was called with the mobilization program. I was one of the first ones, the first draft call at the time. I made a month's training. I started to work with the Canadian National Railway, in the freight shed in 1940. I had applied a few years before, applied with the Government of Canada to work as a civil servant. I was classified to work in the post office, and this is where, sometime after I had my training session with the army, I received a letter from the Post Office, asking me if I was going to join the Postal Corps, the Canadian Postal Corps, Army Post Corps, or the Navy Postal Corps. I didn't do anything about that at the time -- I didn't even know there was such a thing.

I had a brother working in Ottawa at the time, and I went to Ottawa and found out that they have a base there. He used to be

a chess player, so I played chess with one of the guys there and at last I found out from him; I went there to Ottawa, and this guy said, "This is the best place. Beautiful barracks." I said, "That will be all right." I found out about the army that way. Then we were, for a few weeks, doing some basic training at Lansdown Park. Actually, my training in the army was the month I spent in Huntington, Quebec, marching and...

C.G.R.:

The year before.

L.C.B.:

The year before, yes. One month training. Really, I was just doing some walking, and military drill, and we fired -- I think it was the Ross Rifle at the time. We fired a few rounds -- that's about the only training we had with rifles.

One day the Hong Kong draft, "C" Force, was organized. They were asking for three persons from the Postal Corps. They were forming a brigade headquarters, and I was part of it. Actually I was the fourth, I was only the standby in case one of them refused to go. You see, I was only the fourth man there. One of the three that were being interviewed, they were not told where they were going to go. I was told it was a secret. I said, "If this fellow would have known!" McDonald, he lives in Winnipeg, and the embarkation leave was so short -- it was only about three days you had. It was a fast draft, you see, you had to leave almost right away. MacDonald said, "Well, I can't. It would take me three days just to go home." So he refused. So they called me. If he would have known that they were going to Hong Kong -- because they went through Winnipeg -- he would have

accepted, of course; who knows, I mean, it could have been better for me. Who knows? The guys would have died somewhere else. So it doesn't matter. But I was chosen that way.

We left on the ship Awatea, as you know, the New Zealand ship. I remember the date that we left -- October the 29th or 27th, 1941. We landed in Hong Kong, November the 16th, 1941. We stopped at Honolulu, for refueling, and also at Manila.

In Hong Kong we were, oh, a good week confined to barracks. No one was allowed to go out of there. Incidentally, on the boat, they were giving an awful lot of drill. Our duties on the boat, for the Postal Corps, there was a few dispatches made in Honolulu, and in Manila, so we had to gather all the mail in bags and then give it to these people down at those two places, to be shipped to Canada.

In Hong Kong it was a very short stay, as you know. The war broke out on December the 8th. In Hong Kong we didn't do too much. We didn't do nothing. We were about a week stationed in Sham Shui Po with the troops; I think it was with the Winnipeg Grenadiers. We were all stationed in Sham Shui Po -- both regiments.

Being in the Postal Corps, [Charles A.] Clark, which was the Sergeant of our Postal Corps, he felt that we should have been on the Island of Hong Kong, and we needed an office. So we were sent to the China Command, they called it. We were given an office and we were just getting ready -- we bought some stamps -- and we were getting ready to set up a post office for the troops. And then, of course, the war broke out.

But what we did during this time? We went to movies, and we had....The time went so fast, we didn't even know the war was going to break out, anyway. It was supposed to have been only six, seven months later, but it happened a little earlier.

It was a real joke in the paper there (in fact, I have the copy here; I'm the one that had the original copy that I gave the museum in Ottawa; he gave me a photocopy). I remember when the 2000 troops landed that there was no mention of the number of troops, but they said, they've got to make the Japanese think twice -- war wasn't declared then. When the war broke out I was with my friend there from the Postal Corps. We were attending a movie on December the 7th. Don't forget it was December the 8th in Hong Kong. Well, it was December the 7th here. The war broke out, actually, in Pearl Harbor. It was while we were in the movie, and the movie stopped all of a sudden. I've never forgotten that. They stopped the movie, "All army personnel please report to your barracks immediately!" We stayed for awhile, and then [it was announced] again, and so we had to get out of there.

C.G.R.:

What was the movie?

L.C.B.:

I forgot the movie. My friend would know, but I forgot the name. So many things happened then. We were told to be ready. I guess they knew the war [had started], they must have known, because we were a good 7-8 hours ahead of Pearl Harbor. So they knew the war had broken out, but were not too sure. Then the next day we knew right away -- we were bombarded by the Japanese

there [on the mainland]. We had nothing over there, we had nothing. It was Hong Kong, you know, it was the second debacle of the war. There was nothing there, just big pillboxes that were knocked down with a few shells, and they were checking out there on the waterfront, at various places all around the island, they were just...for nothing! As I said, a few shells and they just blew them up.

When the war broke out -- it's hard to remember in my own case -- we were just a bunch of us, 14 to 16 army personnel there at Brigade Headquarters, attached to Brigadier [Pat] Hennessy. Well, he was Colonel Hennessy. He was what they called the second echelon, whatever that meant. And Lawson, Brigadier [John K.] Lawson, was with the troops. Our job was to dispatch between Colonel Hennessy and Brigadier Lawson. We would go around the island giving them the messages that we had to deliver. If we needed a car, we just took it. We just took it from where it was parked. You see, there was no one there anyway.

Where we were stationed -- we were moved there -- we were on The Peak -- 17 The Peak. They took a house there, which was empty, and this is where our headquarters was. We were right on the top there, and we were bombarded there! They were trying to get an antenna, there, right on the very peak. We were 17. The peak number goes by Number 1. Number 1 was right there where they had the antenna, and the Japs were trying to get it. They tried to get the antenna. They had plowed the field.

One morning -- maybe I should tell that story -- Colonel

Hennessey and Captain Davis went to see Brigadier Lawson. They had our driver, a man by the name of [David S.] Melville was the driver. That night Colonel Hennessey came back on foot; their driver, Melville, was shot right through the jaw. Naturally, he lost control of the car; he was killed right away. The car hit the cement embankment, and they walked home, evidently.

Colonel Hennessey was a man from the First World War. He was a distinguished man. He said, "Fellows, come here." He called us all to a kind of room there, and he told us the story about Melville, who had died. Then he got Ambrose Newsome, and Newsome eventually got killed also [21 December 1941]. The two drivers got killed. One morning -- you see, we were sometimes sleeping in some barracks not far from there -- we were doing some, if we were near some pathways. We were manning the place, and one morning they were serving a kind of a breakfast -- whatever we had, I forget, but they were serving it. You had to go to a place there where you could get something to eat. So all of us left except four fellows; Hennessey and Davis stayed there, and Clark, [Rene J.] Charron, and Bill [William J.] Overton -- yes, five of them. They were bombarding that morning something awful! They were after that antenna -- they could never, they don't want to leave you the antenna, you see. They were bombarding, so we were all hiding in some shelters. Clark and what's his name, they all went in the basement there, which was a good shelter. But Hennessey stayed there.

But finally, there is a fabulous story, but this is my story that I know. During the bombardment they hit an ammunition dump. Naturally the bullets in the ammunition dump were popping off all

night, and Colonel Hennessy -- he should have known better, perhaps, but this is supposed to be the story -- he said, "I'll have to go and see." Because he had heard that the invasion was on. He said, "Maybe the Japs are around here." He thought it was machine-gun fire. So he went on top of that house, which was sticking up and you could see it from down below; it was a three-story house but in the flank of the mountains, see, you could spot it right away. So he went with his binoculars to see if he could see any Japs. He went there.

If I recall, this is what Clark told us: shortly after Colonel Hennessy came down, they hit the house, our house. They hit it there, and then they knew we were being hit, so after the fire subsided they waited. They went upstairs, they found they were making big holes in the cement -- the houses, they were all made of cement stucco. They found Hennessy there, totally deaf from concussion, covered with dust and cement and bricks and mortar, and they could hear a moaning down below of Hennessy, "Help, help, help." They went there and Hennessy had been hit by a shell. Both legs, they were just hanging by shreds. This is when they came and got us, and we came back and we got a door. I didn't think I was there. If I was there, I would have helped with the door -- they said everyone helped, and I must have helped too. However, we brought Hennessy down and he kept saying, "Lift my leg, lift my leg, lift my legs." We put a tourniquet on.

Finally someone got in some kind of a so-called doctor. He was a Eurasian doctor. He came with a Chinaman. I don't know

how they managed, the road was all plowed up, but they came through. The first thing this doctor said was, "Turn the tourniquet, that's no good, take this off, cut that off and let the blood flow." He managed to put him on the stretcher. They went through some grass. Apparently he died going to the hospital -- he never made it.

Then we were transferred from another place to down below, and after that we had to move back again. We took some pokes, and we ended the war, where the China Command was, where all our men was gathered, on Christmas day. Incidentally, I have to tell you that we were manning the post area at some sandbags there and whatnot, holes in the ground, foxholes, and they are giving us some hand grenades that I had never seen in my life. We had all been given a tommy gun. I didn't know, I never seen anything [like it before] -- the only thing I'd seen was a .303 -- and it had a layer of rust. No one showed us how to operate it, those of us that were thrown in the basement. We were about 10 of us. One was from the first World War. I won't name his name, because he was feeling good, he was tight; I was scared that he was going to drop the pin. He just took the pin off, like there was no danger. There was no danger as long as you hold the pin. He just threw it and then ducked. We were sure that hand grenade was going to blow us up there and then. The tommy-gun, we tried it on a pole that was there. We didn't know how to operate the thing.

It was during the war, it was about, what I can remember as far as we were from one place to another, around the island. On Christmas Day, when the war ended, we were all called up to be

told to stop the war. Then we were around this big building near the China Command, waiting for some officers there, they were....I have to name them, I forget their names, but they had a broom and they had taken a white sheet there -- one of them was a Canadian too. He seemed to be happy.

What did we eat during the war? I don't even know what we....We must have had anything. Most of the troops then were around that China Command, where we could report -- the ones that were on the mountain. Well, the Japs were on the island, so we were right there, come to think of it, there was only this perimeter there that was not...otherwise we were getting killed there in the hills or on the road, wherever they were.

As a POW it was the beginning of the hell. At the time, I figure some of us would have preferred to die right there instead of going through the thing that we [had coming]. We had no idea too that we weren't going to get killed, because it was a known fact they never kept any prisoners and they don't surrender neither, the Japs. This is their own philosophy and thinking.

As POWs we went from one place to another. I think we were there under China Command, before they got organized, for about a good 10 days there.

At the beginning of 1942 they decided, We should send you to Sham Shui Po (the old barracks where we were in [in the beginning]). So we gathered whatever we could save. Lots of guys were bad -- I remember that, because I was one of them. At the China Command they had all kinds of booze there -- liquors in the Officer's Mess and what not, and they said, "Break all the

bottles." You wouldn't believe it, you could see all the drains there were flowing with booze. But some guys -- at the time I tried to carry what I could, but certainly not booze -- some guys had booze inside of their kit bags. Whatever they could save in their haversack. Not me, I tried to save a few tins of bully beef or canned meat or whatever I could. But some guys, they were after the booze!

C.G.R.:

Food seems a little more sensible.

L.C.B.:

I think they found that out later on. Maybe it kept them going better, I don't know. We marched there. We were transferred to Sham Shui Po by barge, by ferryboat to Kowloon, and we walked to our old barracks, we couldn't believe it when we first saw the place -- everything was removed, everything got busted -- the pipes was gone! There was a few pipes leaking, but the faucets were gone. All the windows and doors, they had stolen everything. Beds, they couldn't carry the beds because they were made of steel, I guess. They didn't have time, but most of the biscuits -- they called it biscuits there. I don't know if you have ever seen it. The English beds there were made of three cushions like this; they were calling them biscuits. That was all gone.

We were in that place for, we must have been there a good number of [months]. That's right, some Canadians were at North Point, others were in Sham Shui Po. They decided, I don't know the date there, in '42, "We should have the Canadians together in North Point." So we went to North Point. We stayed in North

Point. North Point, if you know the place, it was an old Chinese refugee camp. They had bunks there made of wood. These had been wrecked too, but it was, I don't know which was worse, that place was full of bugs and bedbugs and flies, millions of flies.

No sanitary place; you had to do all your business on the seawall until they finally got a place. You had to do your business right there, on 2 x 4s. There was something comical there about that, it lasted a good two months or a few months. Why they didn't put any guardrails so the guys wouldn't fall off? You could squat there three at a time [laughter]. I wasn't there, but apparently one guy got in the center having his crap there, lost his balance and, "Where did he went?" The three of them fell right in the water, right in the ocean. This is the *** of it, which wasn't far from the....they swam back to the shore. But I guess the Japs decided to put some railings so no one would fall any more. That's comical but that's what it was. This was North Point -- a filthy, lousy place.

And in North Point -- I'll talk about some sicknesses. For about two or three months, the one that I had -- I saved some, many saved more -- you survived there with a can of bully beef.

Incidentally the rice that was given to us, I have to mention this all. I forgot that. The rice was a condemned rice that they got from the warehouse. That rice was foul, and I'm telling you you couldn't give anybody that kernel of rice and the maggots -- that was all those white worms -- and weevils, the weevils like small black specks, full of it. When we saw this -

- the white worm with the black head, you know -- I said, "I'll never eat this in my life. Never, never, never." I was trying to but I exhausted my....but eventually you didn't even look anymore, we could care less. That's what it was.

But I knew of one, and I have to mention Pierce, he never ate it. This guy, an air force sergeant, he changed [traded] his ration of rice, and within three months he was dead. He had to eat something, somewhere. But that was the lousy rice that we had then. They were not equipped -- maybe I'm jumping again the gun there, but I remember in North Point, when we were transferred from Sham Shui Po to North Point within a couple of months, do you know how they were cooking their rice there? They didn't have no Japanese pot there, or no Chinese pot. They had an old bathtub. They had dug a hole in the ground and they put their fire all around it, plugged the thing so the water wouldn't get out, and they baked it. They had a shovel -- the shovel had been washed -- to mix up the rice with the water because that's all we had -- put water on rice. Put that much rice, that much water in. So we had to cook the rice for a long time, that was cooking in that bathtub there. I wonder if someone remembers this? Someone must have mentioned this somewhere. When we meet [laughter], that was quite a place. I'm surprised they didn't use it for something else.

In North Point, disease started, oh, about a month or two after -- we had to get like the beriberi, which was unknown. In fact, I think, our own doctors were not too sure what it was -- beriberi. You talked to some guys and it was awful. They had two kinds -- a wet beriberi, in which your legs were swelling,

and then you pressed it, which was not painful; if you had the dry beriberi, it was extremely painful, what they call the "hot feet." Some fellows that I remember, they said, "Well, you know what I do, I put my feet in water." Some people were putting their feet in water. Well, one man did -- the doctors at the time, they didn't know much better, they told the fellows to do this. I've seen some guys were doing it day and night. Apparently one of them got gangrene out of this and they had to amputate the leg. Then the doctors told them to stop doing that practice. Some of them, they were walking, they were like a walking skeleton. You see, they couldn't eat, they were suffering so much! I had it later on but I never had it like some fellows had it. Oh, like my friend there, oh my gosh, he had it bad then. Some of them were hit almost immediately. Why, I don't know.

C.G.R.:

Which kind did you have, the wet or the dry?

L.C.B.:

The dry beriberi. It lasted there about, we had it forever until the end. In fact after I came back I had that for a long time. Today I don't seem to be having it anymore, I don't think so.

Then the diphtheria. They had malaria -- the malaria just started. I was caught with malaria, I got malaria. I had an extremely high fever, and it went on and off, on and off. Finally the diphtheria came and I thought -- I don't know if it was diphtheria I had or sore throat. My throat was swollen and I knew I had very bad tonsils at the time. I had this malaria, you

know, I remember Captain [George M.] Billings, he thought I was going to die. You were always afraid to lose someone, whether it was me or anybody else. My fever, I had that malaria for quite some time and then he said, "He's got diphtheria. We'd better send him to Bowen Road right away."

He sent me to Bowen Road Hospital, which was the old military hospital. The only thing they did over there was swab your throat. I remember the doctors, the first thing you do in Canada is get your tonsils removed. I don't know how, but I'm going to tell you seriously, we were four in that room, three died, and when I came out of there one [laughter] he came over there, and he said, "Why?" I was there for a number of weeks and then I came back from Bowen Road. At that time they had switched to Sham Shui Po again. We went back and forth -- Sham Shui Po and North Point.

This was the disease I had in Hong Kong. Oh! another one that I got in Hong Kong was the pellagra of the mouth. This was all sores in your mouth. You could do nothing; what can you do? They didn't have the medicine. But for malaria they had, what was it, quinine, you get for that?

C.G.R.:

Quinine, yes.

L.C.B.:

[For most diseases,] nothing at all. Diphtheria -- nothing at all. The only thing, they'd swab your throat. Why they sent me to the hospital? Because I had malaria then and they were afraid that I was going to die, I suppose, and they sent me there. Normally, they were sending the diphtheria cases, we had

a hut for them. We were isolating them right away. Here's why they sent you to Bowen Road -- on account of malaria. I wonder to this day if it was a sore throat I had or was it diphtheria? It starts from the throat, eh?

C.G.R.:

It's usually in the throat. It's bad in the throat, yes.

L.C.B.:

They had this pink stuff, and they were swabbing it, and that's all they could do.

C.G.R.:

They didn't give you any injections with needles or.....

L.C.B.:

No, no, no injections, nothing at all, nothing at all. During the diphtheria epidemic there, it was at Sham Shui Po. I don't know if you were told about this. They were losing five to six Canadians a day. That's an awful lot of men when you only have about 1500 left in the camp there. Captain [Major John N.B.] Crawford said -- in fact, I have the letter here, that I copied, that Major Crawford wrote, because his secretary there, he was in our barracks and I was friendly with him. I showed it to the fellow from the museum there. When the Japanese doctor came that day there, when they started to reprimand him, they had us all lined up, everyone that could walk, that was not sick at the time, or anyone that was sick, lined up just the same. You had to be almost legless not to line up over there.

The doctor, Saito (I haven't forgotten the name), asked Crawford if everyone was doing his best to prevent the Canadians,

to prevent the people from dying. He was asking that question to Crawford. He said, "We're doing our best with what we have. We don't have anything here. What we need is quinine, and we need..." not quinine, for the diphtheria, what other medicine?

C.G.R.:

The antitoxin? For diphtheria?

L.C.B.:

Yes.

C.G.R.:

Yes, there's an antitoxin that they inject.

L.C.B.:

Yes. There was another name there.

C.G.R.:

Serum, maybe or.....

L.C.B.:

You see it's made out of the...they said they could make it from the animals.

C.G.R.:

From horses.

L.C.B.:

From horses, yes, that's right. He said, yes, the horses we can some more, anyway. The Japanese did not accept that line at all. In fact he slapped Crawford a few times, you know, and they were trying to get him there. Anyway, there was quite an argument. Saito was asking Crawford and his orderlies -- his orderlies were lined up separately. They were just a few guys that were doing a job, trying to help out. There were about maybe 50 of them. They were lined up separately. He asked them

if they were doing their job, if they were doing their best to save the Canadian prisoners from dying and they said, "Yes." Finally he said, the Japanese said, "Anyone that still thinks that he's doing his best, I want him to step forward." They all stepped forward. Have you heard about what happened here, about this story, or not?

C.G.R.:

Well.....

L.C.B.:

That was repeated two or three times. Finally the Jap got mad. He took his sword. He said, "If you still believe that you're doing your best to save the prisoners from dying, I dare anyone to step forward." The people got scared. Only one man, he was thinking that the others were going, he went forward, only one man. The Japs took him. They said, "You come with me." He went along, with a couple of guards, Japanese guards. They went to the end of the field. We thought they were going to kill him. They gave him a package of cigarettes [laughter]. It's kind of stupid, eh? They thought he was brave and he was doing his best. Now, this is about it for Hong Kong that I remember, as far as I can remember.

Yes, we'd been jumping again. This happened in North Point. You knew about the four people that escaped, eh?

C.G.R.:

Yes, I've heard.

L.C.B.:

They escaped and they were captured after a few days and

they were shot, the four of them. And worse, they forced us, and we were there all night. It was cold, bitterly cold. Not like here, doctor. It was raining and guards were out there around 9 o'clock and they were wanting us to sign a form that we will not escape. All the officers, they didn't want to. They refused. We were at attention all night, all night until 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning. Finally the officers, after a meeting between themselves, they decided well, what's the use. Sign it, like we were forced to, or something. We had to sign the form, everyone. No one ever escaped afterwards.

But actually the best place where, if we would have known the territory at the time, and an awful lot of Englishmen that had been there for a number of years, they said they knew Hong Kong along with China, they really knew the city, they had all kinds of contacts. At the beginning there was no fence, nothing like at the China Command. When we went to Sham Shui Po, the week after there, there was no fence built. There was only one Jap there patrolling. What can we do? We didn't even know if we were going south, or north, we had no idea, no nothing at all. We didn't know the territory. We hadn't been there long enough. I know many of the Englishmen did escape, and without any problems. Some of them traveled at night, some of them could speak even some Chinese, and just keep with some Chinese people.

C.G.R.:

Yes, and they had friends to help and....

L.C.B.:

Yes, they had friends. Some of them had boats where they could cross, and they traveled at night so they wouldn't be seen.

Once you were beyond Canton, which was about 90 miles, or 100 miles -- it was north of Hong Kong -- you were almost in the free territory there, in China.

When it came to the big draft, the big draft to Japan, they wanted to have a thousand people there. They got their thousand people there. The only officer that came, as I told you, was Captain [John A.G.] Reid. We traveled, fortunately, on the fast ship from Hong Kong to Nagasaki, southern Japan.

C.G.R.:

Did you say it was a fast ship?

L.C.B.:

It was a fast ship -- three days we were there; some of them were 45 days. It was the biggest ship, the Tatuta Maru, which -- I remember the ship from before the war. She was sailing between Vancouver and she was a cargo ship.

C.G.R.:

What was the name of it?

L.C.B.:

Tatuta Maru.

C.G.R.:"

Tatuta Maru?

L.C.B.:

T-a-t-u-t-a, Tatuta Maru. They had about 20,000 troops on it, the Japanese troops on it there, with a big Red Cross -- it was supposed to be a hospital ship. We were in the bottom of the hold, in the stern, right below, about maybe, I don't know how many feet below the water line, I don't know, right in the... you

couldn't move, you couldn't move an elbow, because you lost your space! You see they were all over. So you were trying to sit in the stairs, going out, to go to the deck but you couldn't go through the stairway. They were going to the stairs to sit, you had no space. So, if you move your elbows, or something, you would have to sit like this. And people had diarrhea. Incidentally, diarrhea, I was fortunate, I didn't get diarrhea in Hong Kong. I had dysentery and all that. I had chronic diarrhea at the time. But dysentery, that was another common disease there, an awful lot of people died from that.

C.G.R.:

Well, what happened when you got to Yokohama?

L.C.B.:

We traveled by train there from Nagasaki to Yokohama. We were there for about two or three days. And the barracks they were separated -- 250 -- two huge barracks like a barn. Just wood planks there and no stair, and some shingles on top, and cinder floor. There was no floor, cinder floor. We were 50, we divided into sections of 50. And a long table. You slept seven on boards that were about that high from the floor, from the ground. You slept on this, seven there, and there was a board about that high there and the other seven across there from head to head, just a long board and they had a straw mat. Not a mattress just a straw covering. Then they were divided by a wood strip, you know, for your space. You only had one blanket each. So the only way, because in the winter it was cold, we had to break the ice here, it was cold!

C.G.R.:

Yes. Tell me something about the work you did.

L.C.B.:

Over there we were divided into various groups of twenty or twenty-five. My group, was what they called R2, that doesn't tell you anything. But this was the gang of the air chisel people. What was air chisel made, it's a chisel with an air gun. That was used to cut steel. The Jap would come to you, the boss there, you had to carry your hose with you, your bag of chisels, different kinds, and there was a piece of steel here, I guess maybe 15, 25 feet long, and they were not cut properly, so you would line them up and then you would just puncture them like this there, so you had to cut the steel this way. My job was to cut the thing, where it was marked. They were checking it and the boss was coming back and forth, and we were 25 guys, they showed us how to do it. We were on both, and then even doing the, what they call the caulking on the plate. So the plate of steel, when you have one on top of the other one, of course, it's an inch thick, you're half an inch, you have to drive a chisel like that in, you see.

Over there, how could we sabotage? But we sabotaged, we could break our chisel, we'd cut the hose. The thing is you had to do this at least once or twice, once or twice a day. They were mad! Why were you doing this? You had to walk about half a mile to get your chisel sharpened. We had to wait for the Japs over there and then they sharpened your chisel, and you lost an hour here and there. But you were watched at all times. You were slaves and there was no way. I mean, you were not only building

freighters but war ships, frigates, destroyers, they were building everything there. Everything contrary to the Geneva Convention. They never approved of it.

C.G.R.:

No.

L.C.B.:

Over there there was a ration very like in Hong Kong, it was rice and rice.

C.G.R.:

They didn't give you any more food?

L.C.B.:

No. It was so many kilos. You see, we were apparently paid, the company we worked for, the Nippon Kokan, which was supposedly the name of the company, was paying the army. So if we sent 500 people there they would see what, if you sent 250 people to work, they would give you so many kilos per people that worked. The ones that don't work, don't eat, but they still were in camp sick. You see, we were listed 500, if you were only 400, you were only getting ration for 400, or 300, but you had to feed more because that was an incentive -- even when you're sick you can work, eh?

I know a guy there, he's a friend of mine. I can remember when he said, "I wasn't going to go." He had a lousy job too. So he didn't look and with his hammer, he hit his finger, split it. OK. The next thing was back to work! He bandaged it and he split his finger. That's Bill Overton [laughter].

You had to walk, you had to walk, oh, it's about a mile and a half, back and forth. You lined up in three's or four's there.

I think there were four's. People looking at you. You were exposed to the street. It was in an industrial center.

C.G.R.:

Were the people friendly? Unfriendly?

[End of side 1.]

L.C.B.:

Some of them were not that bad. But some of them were so cruel, that they'd beat you for no reason at all. I'll give you an instance. In our gang, the R2's, three of us were caught not working, so we were brought into the mess hall and we were beaten. Their beating was to slap you across the face, you see. They asked you to stand at attention and then they asked you some question in Japanese. You didn't know what they meant. Then they start to slap you back and forth, and then on with the next one. So we stood there until they finished working. They lined up. I said, "What do they want to do with us now?" So the men lined up to go home then. The Jap, one of the Jap guards there, well, there was different guards hey, and not an army. It was a guard there, you were ex-army soldier from the China War. Some of them were fat and crazy and whatnot, shell-shocked. They start to, they had a rope. They fastened the rope around your neck, you see, and they tied up your hands at the back. It was rough around the neck. So they tied the three of us there together and we marched at the end of the line, we marched right to our camp like this, tied to the rope. When we got to the camp, everyone lined up and we went to the end and he said, "Come to the end there." We waited there, we waited about half an

hour. I think we were still there, tied up, and no one saying an order. What's going on. It was dark then, you see. It was around 6 o'clock. It was dark. So we started to talk among ourselves. Maybe they forgot about us. We started to untie ourselves and we never heard about it [laughter]. This stupid thing. I don't know why nothing happened.

So they went around again and we were caught again and I remember a time we were caught again, a couple of guys. I think they are some weird. You tried to do the least -- you knew who was the boss, so sometimes you had to adjust, some of your men were doing nothing there. Somebody would tell them, you see. So we were caught again, but this time we were paraded in front of the...we were slapped again. Slapping was just about every day [laughter]. We forget the nature, but it was their way of disciplining, you know, with a slap across the face. We went to the camp commandant, and we had an interpreter there and we said, "We were waiting for him." We didn't try to tell anything. "We went under that place there, and we were waiting for our foreman. He was not around there to tell us what to do." Then there was a kind of discussion going on. The camp commander, that guy had a tough time to talk -- we used to call him "Mushmouth," that Japanese. He wasn't a bad Japanese. He said, "The next time," he said, "when you don't do nothing, don't hide like this. Go into the shack, don't go over there instead." The Camp Commander told him to see this, but we got off pretty easy that day again there. But there was no proof, I suppose, you know.

I have to tell you, we had no shoes there; they were scarce, so we had no shoes. You know the Japanese, they all have small

feet. Maybe your foot could fit, you've got them small [laughter]. So one day we received a pile of second old, old, Japanese shoes, army shoes. They were old, but they didn't fit. I don't think they fit...there was only pair that could fit among ten men, they could only fit one man out of ten. So there was a fellow there, he had this pair of shoes, he didn't know what to do with it. We had over there a fellow by the name of Sergeant [Ernest M.] West, he was quite a guy. He was a, he made some arrangement, he had all kinds of connections. There are guys like this in camp, like something like you wash, not Stalag, something....

C.G.R.:

Hogan's Heroes?

L.C.B.:

Not Hogan's Heroes, but Stalag 17.

C.G.R.:

Oh sure, yes.

L.C.B.:

You see that guy there, what's his name there, the famous actor there? He died just recently there.

C.G.R.:

William Holden?

L.C.B.:

Yes, Holden. He's a conniver, and he was for himself. West was exactly like this. So Soroka spoke to West and said, "Sure I'll sell. I'll sell to you. How much do you want for them?" I forgot how many packages of cigarettes he wanted for,

but anyway, they got a deal. West went over. He sold a pair of shoes, Japanese army boots. Only to a Japanese worker, OK.? Although in Japan there was hardly any new civilian wearing shoes or boots there. They would all have clogs, or those split-toe shoes there, running shoes. He sold it and that chap was caught. He came to work, and he was asked "Where did you get those army boots?" They accused him of stealing it from the army. So it was divulged. He had to tell them what happened and he told them, "It was from this guy West." Naturally, we were there for about, oh, four or five days, every evening after we came back from our work party. We had that rice ration, we ate the rice, and we lined up. There was a Jap who was going to try find out who sold the pair of shoes. He knew it was West because the friend told him it was West -- the Japs. West did not say who it was, you see. For about four or five days every evening, "Who sold them?" the Japanese said, "You sold a pair of shoes there, who sold the pair of shoes, who sold the pair of shoes?" Then he was balancing his sword above West's head. "We're going to cut his head off if you don't step forward." West was hoping this guy Soroka was going to step forward, he never did. Yet we paid for it, we had to, we suffered for this on account of Soroka.

But fine, me and West went to Soroka, on the side, we didn't know who it was, and we told him, "You better come tomorrow, forward. If you don't, we're not going to stand up for more." Finally, they forced him, they got beaten. Soroka was sent to the prison camp for a number of weeks. West was tried, and he was tried by a Japanese court, and they said, "Anyone that goes

in a Japanese jail never comes out of there alive." OK.? So we lost West for about seven or eight months. After seven or eight months West came back to camp. He was fat like a son of a gun. What happened to him? He did the same thing over there, bribe someone, you know, and he got out of it. That's the way it was.

In Tokyo, while I was over there, I developed some disease. I had a kind of, it was analyzed as an anal fissure. I thought it was a hemorrhoid, but Captain Reid said, "We can't do nothing about this." "You know," he said, "Maybe if I send you to the Shinagawa Hospital," which was at one of the little camps near Tokyo, he said, "Maybe there's some American doctor there. Maybe they could find something." Because the only thing they were giving me then was...he had some kind of petroleum there, vaseline. He said, "Put that in your rectum." I didn't. I'll tell you where I put it. I put it on my rice, and I ate it on my rice. It was good! It made it kind of an oily rice and it helped me too, because when I passed the stool it was not so sore. But every time I was trying to get a stool, I was bleeding, I was bleeding very badly. I went to Shinagawa and of course the doctor, the American doctor, I think it was Major Bowles, Bowles, if the name is right. Maybe I'm wrong there, maybe the name shouldn't be mentioned. He examined me and said, "My dear friend, there's nothing we can do. We have nothing to do any surgery here." They had nothing at all. He said, "You have to wait until the war is over. See you in the meantime." Over there it was worse because no one worked and actually the ration was less and they were getting less and less. Oh my

gosh! that was when we were all in a little hole there. I stayed there about a good six or seven weeks. They would keep you there that long.

C.G.R.:

At Shinagawa?

L.C.B.:

At Shinagawa, oh yes, I was there that long.

C.G.R.:

That long.

C.G.R.:

Yes. Because it worse there than it was in the...you were supposed to be in a hospital. You hadn't a thing. They could have a fellow with a regular headache, I don't think they had any aspirin or not. Because I was still bleeding. I was bleeding until I came back.

C.G.R.:

Why did they keep you so long in the hospital?

L.C.B.:

Well I guess they were waiting for someone there to get enough to go back to the camp, I guess, at the same time. Maybe it was transportation, perhaps, and they felt maybe they would give me a break, maybe -- "at least when he's here he's not working anyway." It was a break that way. But for us it was terrible; food was worse there. As you know, in prison camp your weight, my weight was around about, oh, 100 to 105 pounds. I wasn't a big man when I joined the army -- I was about 130. But the thing is a big man who was 6' 2" was about my weight. The same weight as me -- just skin and bones.

Mrs. Brunet:

You should tell Dr. Roland how that breathing had all started when you eat.

L.C.B.:

That's not what I eat that started that. It was there already, that's why I went over there.

C.G.R.:

Any other....?

L.C.B.:

Yes, when I was over there, to this day I still have this jumping, and that started around 1943 when I went to see Captain Reid. I was having some -- today I still have that, every night. It seems that everything's stuck when I'm falling asleep. I'm trying to get my breath there, and then I'm out of breath. I've got this seven, eight, I don't know how many times. I told him, in fact I've been telling my own doctor about this, and he said, "We've tried everything." I said, "I know, but..." I thought at the time I was having a heart attack. That's what I thought. Captain Reid told me, no. He tried to explain to me that it was when you go to your subconscious giving you a jump. This was when I came back.

Mrs. Brunet:

He jumps right up sometimes [laughter].

C.G.R.:

Really?

Mrs. Brunet:

Right up. Sits right up, you know, because he's choking,

he's really, he's.....

L.C.B.:

Well, trying to get my...see whether I'm going to swallow my tongue or something.

Mrs. Brunet:

He would scream at the same time, you know.

L.C.B.:

But I'm baffled, I don't know what....

C.G.R.:

Speaking of that, after the war, did you have trouble with dreams, or nightmares, or anything like that?

L.C.B.:

Oh yes, oh yes. Even to this day, I still have some nightmares.

C.G.R.:

About the war?

L.C.B.:

Oh yes, oh yes, to this very day. But not everyday, but I sometimes...the worst is when I'm talking about this. I know tonight I may have a tough time there because I'm coming back, I'm trying to come back to my past here.

C.G.R.:

I'm sorry for that.

L.C.B.:

Well, it's not the first time. Sometimes, with someone else, we talk about it, and even when we got to our reunion, which we will have very soon.

C.G.R.:

What kind of dreams do you have?

L.C.B.:

Well, some of them were not too good. Something like I caught my family in...I remember once there, I had my wife in one camp and I could see me son over there, I was trying to go to them, you know, which was not my case. I wasn't married at all. Thank God I wasn't married at the time, because I feel that the married men must have had an awful time there which some of them do. I had many friends there.

The worst over there was the starvation. We dreamed, you know what we dreamed, we dreamed of the food over there. That's what we talked about. Talking about a recipe like women -- what we're going to eat, what we are going to...you become an animal. There was no cigarettes. Cigarettes were nil. The only thing you could get these in Tokyo, and we'd pick up the butts there from the, it was a huge shipyard there. There was thousands of people, and you'd pick up their butts, break them all up and make cigarettes out of the toilet paper they had. It was a short piece of paper about, it was like sandpaper, it was very rough. It made a very good cigarette and they stayed together. So you'd make your cigarette with this. I have eaten garbage. I used to go to a garbage, like, sometimes the Japs used to throw a rice ball there. They didn't like it. Fish heads, we used to have, an awful lot of fish heads and fish tails, and you'd cook it over the...you'd go to the forge where the rivetters were and you'd just put it on. Then you'd chew it. You felt you were getting some oil out of it. You'd get some kind of a protein of some

sort. You had tangerines, you had lots over there, but they never gave us any. But we'd pick up their peels.

When they were launching a boat, we knew all the gimmicks. I not only eat, everyone eat. It's the first one that would be there, the next one....Before they would launch a boat, the boat would be tied up there to the, to the shore, of course, after that, but they had a party there on board that ship, a luncheon. So the first thing in the morning was to make a beeline to that place. There you would pick up all kinds of good things to eat. There were oranges, and butts, some long butts, you know.

C.G.R.:

The remains of the party.

L.C.B.:

Yes, the remains of the party. You'd become...We couldn't care less, you know, if the Japs.....That was, you know, you were like that because....They had said it many times when they were winning the war, "We were forced to reduce every..." -- they were talking about the Americans, where we were just about like Americans, like they were any white man -- to reduce them, to the lower, and the lower, and the lowest coolie in China. And they got it to that, we were just about that. Because we had become just like I said, an animal. We were so weak. When you were walking in line to go to your working party, you were walking, if you just step on a small stone that would twist you over, you lost your balance for nothing.

Mrs. Brunet:

Why don't you tell him about the story of you falling on a track.

L.C.B.:

That was in the coalmines. We were still in Yokohama. Well, we'll come back to Yokohama. We were transferred to the coal mine. We had some terrible air raids there. The B29s, they just...

C.G.R.:

Fire bombing and....

L.C.B.:

Yes, Tokyo in February -- that was the best thing that we....And they shot down, unfortunately they shot down quite a few too, because we'd see the plane on fire, because they would fly at an altitude of 8000 feet. I read the story, we were on the box there [TV], a few years ago, about that famous raid they were talking about, and they wonder why they had done it because the B29 was a very accurate airplane. They could have flown it at 35,000 feet where the anti-aircraft couldn't reach them. But they had waves, waves after waves, some at 8,000, 9,000, 10,000 feet and they were waves after waves and they leveled Tokyo. It was a mess. We were three to four days without working. We couldn't go to work. But they just bombed because of the civilian. Their houses at the time were only straw houses, eh? At that time that's what they had, straw, just sliding doors, straw house and wood and straw. Straw mat, you'd live on the floor, and you'd sleep on it, and like you were living there. We had the same way. I think it was 11 when we went back to work, it was about the third day there, leveled as far as the eye could see to the horizon there. The only thing you saw was a smoke

stack or burnt tree or piece of tin. I don't know if this is why we couldn't work, it wasn't too close.

Shortly after that, about a month, around March or April, we were sent to the coalmine. We traveled, which was about 300 miles, like from here to Toronto. Oh, way up north. We didn't know where we were going. We thought we were going...just pack into a train there. It was a passenger train though. Packed, it was packed. We left around 7 o'clock at night, we traveled all night. We were there at 5 o'clock in the morning. We saw all the beautiful farms. We said, we're going to work on farms. We said, "We're lucky now, we're going to eat something." So when we got there at 5 o'clock, we were totally...They told us to line up there, put what we had in front of us, now they said, "Strip naked!" Totally stripped. That was the first inspection we had like this and to be searched. The Japs went through everything that we had. Some guys had bullets. They were keeping this as a souvenir. This guy was questioned. They said, "What are you doing with a bullet?" He had nothing, just bullets. I had binoculars that I had got from scrounging, and they were hidden in a wad of clothes. They took all the wad of clothes, and they put it into a pile there, so I lost my binoculars [laughter]. They never found the lens though. We were for about two or three days, slept together in a small little hut there. We had some terrible shifts, there were in groups there. The shift there started at, they had three shifts there, 10 to 5 in the morning, 10 to 1 in the afternoon, and 10 to 9 in the evening. And you were gone there, if you were on the afternoon shift you had to be lined up away ahead of time. Then

you were gone from the camp about 14 to 16 hours a day. You were in that coal mine there, hot, but you couldn't wear no clothes, just a G-string. Some of them worked totally naked, and a pair of split-toes, and then in water up to your knees there.

They had some Javanese, they called themselves Dutch, but they were Javanese, because the Dutch was, you know, when occupied it was a territory, it was a Dutch territory. They looked like the Japanese. They had been there quite a few years, a number of years. We thought we were in bad shape, but when we saw the poor, poor Limeys, the Englishmen, they were skeletons!

It was so, so, so hot. Apparently in the winter it was like if you go up to northern Ontario or something like this, it goes below zero there, and you got out of that steam, and you go into the cold, I guess those guys must have died from pneumonia - - this is what they died of. They were like they were just walking, their eyes wide open, they didn't know where they were. When you worked there, you see, you had to walk there, you walk over there for about a mile and half, again, up to the mountains, and you went right to the, it was a shaft, where you went right down to the mine in a hole under the Pacific. But talk about, kilometers, it was about a couple of miles down which it doesn't matter, if your one mile or 500 feet, or 2000 miles, it's the same thing, you're underground. I was scared at the beginning. That's the end of the earth, the end for sure.

C.G.R.:

Excuse me, how did you get down into it?

L.C.B.:

By just a trolley, a car, with a bunch of trains that you sat in there, and it's pulled by a pulley, by a cable. You went down to, there was a couple of levels. You had the rock level, you changed to another train. Then the place to change it, you had to go through a hole just dug through a trench, you had to crawl through that thing there. It must have been a short-cut that they had, because you followed them and you went right to the coal face. The coal face was just, oh, I could touch almost to the roof.

C.G.R.:

About six or seven feet.

L.C.B.:

About seven or eight feet at the very most. According to some Englishmen that were there, some of them were former miners; they said, it was a mine that should never have been tapped. The coal wasn't good enough, you know, it was very soft coal. So you had to fill up a.....so dynamite, we drilled that thing. They had very obsolete drilling -- a long drill about six feet long. They had those Javanese there doing the work. We never trusted them. We thought they were fifth columnists -- no, not fifth columnists -- that they were pro-Japs there.

C.G.R.:

Spies or....

L.C.B.:

Yes. We couldn't say too much because we were afraid, you know. Of course, they were not suffering like we did because they just were, maybe they were eating better than they were in

their own place. They had, eating their rice, they were solid, all muscled, you know, and maybe they were getting better rations, I don't know. But they had experience and they were drilling, we were helping them to hold the drill. They were doing the fitting, putting the dynamite and setting up for the blasting. You had to do so many cars a night, or so many cars per shift.

I was beaten there, for a reason, and I was badly beaten by the Japs, because over there I had blood poisoning in this hand. It was right there, you see, a chip of coal had gone in and turned it. Many of my friends had that same problem.

C.G.R.:

Into the palm of your hand.

L.C.B.:

Yes. I couldn't do proper work. They put me on the rock level. What you do, you pick up the rocks. I don't know what they do there, to tell you the truth. . I think you were sleeping there most of the time. Then they were picking you up. Well, anyway, we had to line up that night. We lined up for the roll call and I lined up and it was my first time. I moved. And even we had our, there was some light there but they knew we had our lamps on and I moved and the Japs there came to the next guy. They started to bawl him out, you know, he started to beat him. So I said, "Hey, I'm the one that moved, not him." I used some very rough words. Maybe I shouldn't, maybe I should have just....I told him, I said, "You yellow bastard," I said, "I'm the one that moved, not him." He was tough. He was a Jap with a

beard; in fact he was called "Black Beard" or "Black Prince," they called him, "Black Prince" with a heavy...very few Japs have a beard. He backed up when I started to shout. I yelled at him like this after slapping the guy for nothing. I didn't know why he was slapping. I said, "I'm the one that moved." He backed up and wouldn't even look at me. I should state it as it is. Slapping, as I say, was a form of their, it was a form of playing, for them.

The next day (or was it the same), he called me. There was three Japs there. He started to tell me, he said, "What's wrong with you?" I said, "I can't work." He started to slap me. The guy started, he had his pick, you see. But he didn't hit me with the pick, he hit me with the handle. It was a long pick with a small blade, you know, a small pick, one of the miner's picks. He hit me across the back and I fell on the rail. Finally I was -- I was young, but I was totally hopeless. He got a good beating on me that night. I still got that scar because I fell on the rail and I busted my shin. It even turned into blood poisoning. So they could just bandage it and that's all.

So they sent me out of this, I had to walk to the mine there. It was quite a trek to walk. So we got out of the mine and they brought me to camp. I was off for a couple of days in camp and then I was going back over there. Then I went back to the coal mine. After the war, when the war ended, I looked for "Black Prince." I was going to kill him, I was going to kill him because he had done this to many. I said, "If I see that man, I'm going to kill him." I would look around because they were camped there. The miners were living next to our place and we

could see it when we walked by. They were all given some houses. They lived there in just the shacks. I never found him. But apparently, an Englishman -- there was about 50 of them there -- they were working there too. Henry was a big man compared with me. He's supposed to have done the same thing to him. He was a real miserable Jap. e beat him up eventually. He beat him up very good too.

But the coal mine, if you were there, you could sleep there. If you were in the daytime, let's say you came back from the night shift, at 10 minutes to 9 there, you were in camp, and the next morning around about, oh, you were lucky if you were there from 9 to 11-12 o'clock. So you were in camp, but you had to go and empty all your washrooms there because they had no sewers over there. You had to empty all those washrooms, you know, carry that bucket of crap there. You'd carry that, two men on a pole, you'd go to the other mine. They had a garden there and they would spray that into their garden in the mine on the side of the mountain. When this was emptied you had to go back. Sometimes you could sleep, because you were beat, you see. And days off -- I don't know if we had any at all.

That was the end, because this was the end for me and all of us. Because if we passed the winter there, well, I wouldn't be here. I would have been a dead man, because that was finished, kaput there. There was no way back because death would have come sooner; in fact we would have preferred to be dead than alive then because it was totally impossible to work under those conditions. Very impossible. The Japs were rotten there. They

were trying to do everything to hurt you, hit you with anything, with a shovel. I seen a guy, he hit him with, not the sharp edge, but he hit with the flat right on his back. He almost broke his spine. Fortunately that lasted only, what, three, four, or five months?

We couldn't see out because we had no, there at least until we heard the few odd rumors. You had rumors and talked to a Jap here, and then you pick up a Japanese paper, and you had map on it, you could see something, that they were doing something even if you knew that the map -- where it was. But over there it was just like you would go from here to the wilderness, and a totally different culture and different people, and no news was, everything was nothing.

And the rumors, well, the rumors we had BS rumors from the beginning and it was still to the end, even when the end of the war came on August the 14th, when the end came in we were on the afternoon shift at 10 minutes to 1. We came back from that shift around, what, 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. We met people who were on the morning shift, in fact they were all lined up. You see you had to line up way ahead of time. "Hey, the war was over, eh." It was supposedly true. So the next day, it was the 15th, the rumors persisted that the war was over. So we had to go, in the morning we had to go and pick up our ration to bring to the mine. You see, you went there to pick up a bucket of rice, and you put it in your mess tin or whatever the container you had, to bring it to the mine. That was your lunch.

So we went to the kitchen. We asked, "What about this, is

the war over, is it?" He said, "I haven't been told anything and I cooked your rice. You guys had better come and pick up your rice." We went there, and went to work. Sixteenth, went to work. But the 17th, which was three or four days after, the rumors were, the rumors were always getting stronger and stronger. On the 17th, even, the ration was ready to go. In fact we had picked up our rations to go to work, but Captain Reid, who was with us then, was called by the camp commandant around 11 o'clock in the morning. He was told by the camp commandant that the Emperor wanted to talk over the....that he said it was the end of the war because of the atomic bomb. That's all he said. "We stopped the war because of the atomic bomb."

That was not a rumor anymore, it was bedlam there. Oh! It was beautiful. It was beautiful. Eleven o'clock there, ration of rice. Then we were 2-3 days we were getting almost hardly anything. We were going to make a riot to open that store over there. We said, "We are going to get the food out of there." These are Christmas parcels. But the officers, there was Reid, and a few American officers, and some English officers, there was a couple of Dutch officers there, they wanted to calm the fellows. Hey, don't do this; first of all the Japanese, right now they are totally disorganized. He said, "We may be here for months. If we go and eat that the first thing we won't have nothing left, and then we'll starve. What are you going to do?"

But in the meantime we were located by the....How they found out our camp, I think the first thing that MacArthur did was to ask where was the location of the camp. OK. Where is the

location of the camp? He knew right away where they are. Some airplanes from aircraft carriers came over our camp. He dropped some pamphlets, he dropped some notes, and they dropped some food there, their own food. Some of them dropped even their cigarettes, the package half-opened. That's what they did. They said they were going to come back but they said you know that our planes are kind of small. They were small because they were little fighters and little bombers from the U.S.S. Lexington. They came back and dropped some fresh bread. But not too much; a few cigarettes and chocolate bars. But they came one day, they dropped a note that they were going to send some B-29s. They asked us first of all if we could mark so that the B-29 can locate us. I said, "No, they are fast and we are badly situated." We were between hills in a valley that very, very, treacherous place for a airplane to come to. And for the big airplane too. They asked us if we could mark "POW" -- put it someplace where it could be seen. We didn't have any cloth but we took all the black curtain --we had black drapes that we had in each of the huts there that were put there for the blackout. We got some white, some white cloth there, and were given some needles and thread, and there was quite a few hundred men on this. It was huge POW letters -- from here across the street -- POW. We put it on the side of the hut. The B-29s came the next morning. Before they came, some airplane came. They said, they're going to come here at 12 o'clock. The time was 12:05. There wasn't a time, you know. They were at 12:05 right above the camp.

They were telling us to keep out of the way because they dropped the food in drums attached to parachutes. There was two or three that the parachute didn't open. You know when you see a couple of drums coming together. "Oh boy!" they said. You'd see this coming at you. It was smashing to bits against the rock. All of the cocoa and milk were in double drums -- 45-gallon drums, welded together. When they picked that up they were too heavy for the chute, and they broke. One of them they dropped in the paddy field. It went right down. They got men, they got it out of there because it was important food. They got medicine and clothing and all that you wished for. That was the end. It was beautiful.

C.G.R.:

It must have been a wonderful feeling.

L.C.B.:

Ah! Wonderful.

C.G.R.:

You mentioned the name of a ship that the planes came from, did you say the U.S.S...?

L.C.B.:

Lexington.

C.G.R.:

Yes.

L.C.B.:

She's still around.

C.G.R.:

A famous ship.

L.C.B.:

We got out of there, Rene Charron said it was September 9th. There was no Americans there. They were too far in....The Americans only landed, the occupational troops were only around the Tokyo and Yokohama area. That's all they did. In fact we knew this from the....the planes that came they dropped us some...I've got some copies here.

C.G.R.:

Yes, I'd like to see them very much.

L.C.B.:

Would you like to?

C.G.R.:

Oh, very much yes.

L.C.B.:

Gee, I'm going to get some upstairs, because my friend is coming tomorrow night. He's going to be here again, from the Museum, he's coming from Ottawa.

I was also over there. Over there it was a survival of the...you tried to survive. I was a partnership with another fellow. That's the way it works. So I sold everything. We sold this watch. I wasn't smoking at the time and I started to smoke in the prison camp where there was no cigarettes.

C.G.R.:

Who was your partner?

L.C.B.:

Charron, Rene Charron. He just went to the hospital just lately for an eye operation.

C.G.R.:

Is there anything else we ought to talk about before I turn this machine off?

L.C.B.:

Did you want to know about the end, how it ended up, or is this sufficient now?

C.G.R.:

No, no keep going. No, that's fine, yes. Carry on.

L.C.B.:

Because, you see, like I said, now we're liberated. They were told where we were, the camp where they were by the Japanese headquarters in Tokyo at the time. Not at the Japanese headquarters but at the American headquarters. They must have been told "send us such and such a camp today." So on the 9th -- there was a railroad track not far from our camp, just for, not for passengers but for a train -- so they backed up a train there, a passenger train. The Japs gave us some kind of a ration of rice. It was packaged, you know, and some fish and a can of tuna fish. We traveled by train to Tokyo.

In Tokyo, everything was prepared. The Americans were there with trucks. They knew we were coming in, you know. There were trucks waiting there, all kinds of trucks. Nurses, you know -- it was the first time we saw an American woman, a North American woman. We were piled into a truck. We were transported. We had been there only just a short while, they had seized or taken the big hanger somewhere. They transformed this into some offices and everything was divided with partitions here and there. You went through, first of all you had to go through the doctor.

The first thing we did, you know, all the clothes we had, of course, all the clothes they had dumped over our camp there, "Throw that away." They stripped us right up. We took a shower. We were disinfected. We go to the doctor and he gave you a shot in the bum there. I don't know what it was. Then we were issued new clothes, of course. And they sent a telegram. They asked us if we were Canadian. They knew we were Canadian, but where? We had to fill a form.

We stayed there, we had a supper there. It was just a cold supper, the first supper we ever had -- the first good food. It was all the prepared food, you know, something like those fast foods. We had that, and that night we slept on a barge, landing barge. We were brought there by boat or by truck, it wasn't far, maybe we walked, I forgot. Anyway, we must have gone by truck. So the barge was right there and we slept there for that night.

The next morning from that barge we were transferred to another ship the U.S.S. Iowa. She was the sister-ship of the Missouri, where the armistice was signed. It's the biggest battleship they had at the time. Two ships of the same kind. A huge ship. We were 95 Canadians there.

C.G.R.:

Ninety-five?

L.C.B.:

Yes, 95 of us. We arrived there. We left from this landing barge, which was a landing tank barge, I guess. We arrived there around about 10 o'clock in the morning. We lined

up on the deck there. The navy people were all staring at us. It's a ship. It's a city! The Captain came and he said, "I don't know how long you're going to be on this ship...."

[End of side 2.]

...but in the meantime make yourself at home," he said, "and you're welcome." He was really nice. I don't know if someone, someone must have spoken to him -- one of our men, you see. He said, "You people have no breakfast yet?" Because someone must have said, "Well, what about something to eat?" or something. He called one of the officers. He just said something. We didn't know what he said. "OK." he said, "follow us." We followed him. We went down below and everything was ready. We had never seen anything like it. Bread, eggs by the dozen.

In every ward there was cartons of cigarettes. Not packages, but cartons, complete. Boxes, complete boxes of chocolates. We must have eaten about how many eggs, some guys ate them until they were sick. But the thing is, all day there on that ship, everyone took us, they felt sorry, they took us as if they were trying to capture us. "Come on, come with us, come have a piece of our egg." We couldn't eat, you know, and we were full like we couldn't eat anymore. They couldn't do enough for us. I became friendly with an American there. He brought me to where he was tending a kind of a pom-pom [gun]. I became very friendly with him there because we visited each other. To this day we still correspond.

C.G.R.:

Isn't that nice.

L.C.B.:

I went to his place and he came to our place with his family. He's living in Sarasota in....

C.G.R.:

In Florida?

L.C.B.:

In Florida, yes. He was in Chicago then. That night on the U.S.S. Iowa, we were watching a movie on the deck there -- we were all there, when they stopped the movie, like when the war broke out. They said, "All Canadian ex-Prisoners of War, please report to the M.I. Room." [Medical Inspection] This fellow American that was with me, he said, "I'd better go with you because you'll never find this place."

So we went to the M.I. room, the doctor over there, said, "You want to leave tomorrow?" I said, "By all means." "I'm going to ship you home by plane." I said, "OK." "So we have to give you a little examination first just to make sure that you are fit to travel." So they gave us the examination. OK.

The next morning we took another launch there, a boat there, we must have gone by truck, I guess, to the airport after we left. We left the same day, and we left for Guam. We stayed in Guam 12 days, 10-12 days in Guam in a hospital there, all the time being fed and being treated. We were always segregated, though, because they didn't want to mix POWs up, they were afraid. They issued us with clothes. We were fully clothed. All kinds of American clothes. Shoes, I don't remember how many pairs. We got, "Come on. We're trying to get rid of their stuff. We don't know what to do with it." They didn't say, "Go

to the canteen," but. "The canteen is yours -- take a box of chocolate, a full box of bars of chocolate." They didn't ask you, they said, "Here, take the box not the bar." So we stayed there.

Again we traveled. We went to Honolulu. We stopped at Kwajalein. We stopped there just for fuel and to have dinner. Then they issued -- it was the old C-54, it was about the biggest plane they had, transport they had in the United States. We went to Honolulu. I never seen nothing of Honolulu -- we just went in the truck, into a hospital. We never got out of the hospital. We were there three days, and again we went to Oakland, California. That was the end of our traveling by plane.

In California, incidentally, we were always in three planes. The 95 men traveled in three planes together. We were about 35 per plane -- not too many. And the last, it was a shell, the plane was empty, just a stretcher on the side where you could sit or lie in it. Only the last lap there from Honolulu to Oakland we were on a passenger plane with seats.

This is where I was bumped. For what ever reason, it always happens to me. Because the friends of ours was then....I was really friendly with them, we had been together all during the war and during the prison camp. We went to different camps together, and we happened to come back together. So in Honolulu they called my name, "Brunet." I went to report to the counter there. They said, "You can't go on that plane," they said, "there's someone that has to go to Washington today, right away." I figured they took the first one "B" Brunet. So I was dropped

to the third plane, which I knew these people but not as much as the others. When we went to Oakland, these two planes they went to San Francisco and us we went to Oakland. They went to Oakland, just the same, but they were put into a hospital in San Francisco.

Us, when we landed in Oakland they didn't know, it was 5 o'clock in the morning, nobody knew about us. They asked some military people. They told them that it must have been that place there. They asked them someone and it was a girl driving the bus, an army girl, and she didn't know where to go. She asked someone on the street, army people. She said, "They must be going to McDowell Island." This island was next to Alcatraz, because we stopped at it.

We were put on a barge, we stopped at Alcatraz; they discharged some food there for the prisoners that were there, and we went to the next island. This is where we could see the Golden Gate Bridge goes by, and this island there's a...today it's not the same name apparently. It was a discharge post, there was thousands of troops, civilian troops there because it was where they discharged people. We were put again -- they didn't know -- they were not expecting us. It was nice. They put us into a barrack there and we stayed there three or four days until, finally, we left by train to Vancouver. In Vancouver we were well received by the Canadians there too, very well. The officers couldn't do enough for us -- couldn't do enough. We were only 24 hours in Vancouver.

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