

PHILIP DODDRIDGE

Experiences as a POW in the Far East

Interviewed by

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28 May 1989

Oral History Archives

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L8N 3Z5

Interview No. HCM 5-89

Charles G. Roland, MD:

Well Mr. Doddridge, I'd like to begin. Let me ask a few very basic questions such as your birthdate and birthplace. Now, if you would tell me those.

Philip Doddridge:

I was born on April the 2nd, 1922, in New Richmond [Quebec].

C.G.R.:

Your service number?

P.D.:

My service number was E29986. It's on the mat that my sister made for me.

C.G.R.:

Oh yes. Isn't that good, with the Hong Kong crest -- that's nice. OK, tell me just a few words about your parents: their names, what your father did....

P.D.:

My father was a small farmer. His name was Hugh Doddridge, an old family name. And my mother was Emma McWhirter, both born in New Richmond. Mom has since departed of course. My mother in 1975 and my father in 1951. Do you want me to go on about my education?

C.G.R.:

Before you do, let me just ask two questions. First of all, is the family an old New Richmond family? Has it been here for quite awhile?

P.D.:

Yes, my great-great-grandfather, I guess it was, by the name

of John, also an old family name from England and Scotland, came here in the 1820s. He was at one time Chief Magistrate of the town, I suppose you'd call it a mayor now, but that's way back in 1830, 1834, about that time. So the family had been here ever since.

C.G.R.:

Very good. Well, that's just about the time my family went to the St. Catharines area in Ontario, but we are scattered all over. We haven't stayed in the same place.

How about brothers and sisters?

P.D.:

I had two brothers and four sisters. My oldest brother John was drowned when he was a young man. And I have two sisters left -- the others have died recently. My other brother died just recently too. So there are three of us left of the family.

C.G.R.:

Were you the oldest?

P.D.:

No, I was the second youngest.

C.G.R.:

Well, if you would tell me something about your education.

P.D.:

Well, my education was, at that time of course, a rural education couldn't go very much beyond the 3 Rs, but I did go as far as Grade 10 here. That was all that was offered here then. At 18 I enlisted, and that was in 1940, in the Royal Rifles. From there to Valcartier for basic training and Sussex, New Brunswick and eventually Newfoundland, and then back to Canada in

1941 where we prepared to go overseas. We didn't know where we were headed but we found out soon enough.

C.G.R.:

Right, right. Now am I right that at the time the war was going on you were Quartermaster Sergeant?

P.D.:

No I wasn't.

C.G.R.:

What was your rank?

P.D.:

My rank was Lance Corporal eventually. That's what I ended my career as. But that was because I was a Company Clerk; I took that job in Newfoundland.

C.G.R.:

That's right, I remember now.

P.D.:

I was Company Clerk until the end of the war.

C.G.R.:

Right, right. Well very good, tell me a bit then about Hong Kong. Tell me your impressions of Hong Kong. You were a young man who was seeing something pretty exotic, I would suppose.

P.D.:

Of course a young 18-year-old boy, well I was 19 then, something that I've never been to the West Coast before, and you know from there, well, Hawaii -- pretty exotic, and Manila, and then finally Hong Kong. And we had our freedom there for about, well from I think it was the 14th of November we landed in Hong Kong. And on December the 4th or 5th, I guess, or maybe a little

earlier than that, we went to our positions in the hills. And of course, on December the 8th all hell broke loose.

C.G.R.:

Before we get into that, tell me how did you use your freedom, what did you do?

P.D.:

Well, for the most part sightseeing and just gawking at everything that went by from the ricksha, the ricksha rides too, that was very nice, and the Star Ferry -- well, I guess just behaved like tourists.

C.G.R.:

Sure, you were, in a major sense.

OK, if you would just go on a bit about the fighting, the three weeks or a bit less of fighting, and how you were occupied during that time.

P.D.:

Well our position, I was in D Company with Major Parker. Our company headquarters where I was, was at a place called Obelisk Hill, there was an obelisk there, and I guess that's what it represented; it was a tall spire. We were there when the bombing started on December 8th. That position we held until the Japs landed. The Japs landed at Lye Mun Gap on December the 17th, I think, or thereabouts. Of course we pulled out of that position and we retreated.

We were badly outnumbered as history will tell you. We had a few pretty bad experiences. I was not wounded but I was caught once behind the enemy lines when I went to deliver a message with a company commander and spent nights on the roof of a pill-box.

I didn't dare go inside in case they would walk in. So anyway I escaped from that anyway and I finally got back to join the Company. The last day of the battle was at Stanley Fort. Stanley Fort was on a peninsula, a high craggy place at, let's see now, it would be the western end of the Island, southwest end of the Island. We were ordered on Christmas day to go out and move out; what we were told was 15 of the enemy were in the cemetery at Stanley village which was down over the hill from the Fort. And there we suffered the most losses from our Company. We were 125 men went over the hill and 45 of came back. They weren't all killed, of course, but quite a number were, including a few of my very good friends.

So that was the end for me. I realized that we were pushed right to the sea and there was no hope of escaping or anything else. Of course the orders were to fight to the last man and that's what we were looking forward to. Then the Governor of the island finally called a surrender, because the Japs had cut off the water supply to the town and people were getting desperate for water. So anyway, that was the end of the battle.

After a few days I was not mistreated physically or personally. I learned to keep a very low profile -- I think that saved my skin on a number of occasions. I would see a fellow heading for disaster just by the way he behaved, and I caught on very quickly not to antagonize anybody. Anyway, should I go on to....

C.G.R.:

Please, yes; as I say, I'll break in as I have questions, but if you would just tell the story, that would be great.

P.D.:

OK. So I suppose about the first of the month or the New Year, maybe before, but somewhere between Christmas and New Year we were marched to North Point which was a refugee camp built entirely out of wood. And crawling with bed bugs and lice and all types of vermin. One the way we marched on something that struck me was the number of dead bodies lying along the road. I remember seeing, we had two Indian regiments with us there, Punjabis and Sikhs, and there were quite a few of them that had been just left lying on the road and they had started to bloat by that time and it wasn't a very pleasant sight. All the while we were marching behind the truck on which were perched two machine guns pointed at us. Not much of a chance of escaping anyway. But anyway, we spent some time in North Point Camp. Do you mind if I stop and go and get a sweater, I'm a little chilly.

C.G.R.:

Yes, you were just telling me a bit about what it was like there.

P.D.:

Yes, well the worst, of course, was the diet. We had rice and not much else. No proteins, a sort of cabbage that they used to bring in. Other conditions were pretty desperate too. I mentioned the lice and the bed bugs, they were awful. And crowded conditions. We had about 18 inches of floor space to lie on, and a concrete floor.

The disease hit us pretty early too -- dysentery and malnutrition began to take its toll. The camp was right on the

edge of the water and our toilet facilities were the water -- we had to squat along the sea wall; at the beginning there was all kinds of dead bodies floating by, men, women, and children who were casualties of the battle. There was no wonder that we had a dysentery epidemic, with conditions like that. In the winter time in Hong Kong it doesn't get too much below 40 degrees but when you're in a run-down condition and with very few clothes to keep you warm, it gets pretty damn cold and it was quite unpleasant to say the least. To get rid of the lice we devised a kind of steamer out of an old barrel of water, and we used to put our clothes in that, but with cold water showers and no soap it's pretty hard to get clean.

C.G.R.:

Right.

P.D.:

Of course as soon as you put your clothes back on they are lousy again. We were there for nine months.

Then we were taken across to....

C.G.R.:

Excuse me; could I just interrupt here to ask some questions about North Point, before we go across to the mainland?

When you got to the camp, did you divide up in any way? I mean, did D Company try to stick together, or did the RRCs stick together?

P.D.:

In general terms, yes. There were English troops there too, Middlesex Regiment and the Royal Scots and some Indians. Yes, we were pretty well segregated. I don't think nothing was really

mandatory, but that's the way it worked out, that was normal.

C.G.R.:

Now you had been company clerk, were you doing anything as company clerk?

P.D.:

Company clerking duties didn't extend beyond the first day of the battle.

C.G.R.:

So you didn't go back to that?

P.D.:

No, no. Although I guess I did a few little chores for Major Parker in the prison camp like providing him with lists. I had a pretty good memory in those days and I could, I could remember names and regimental numbers and that sort of thing, and I think I put together a list for him at one time.

C.G.R.:

OK, now if you want to go ahead then on to Sham Shui Po.

P.D.:

I just had mentioned that we played softball in the camp and the Japs used to get us out and make us do calisthenics, probably for local propaganda as much as anything else. Their propagandists were the wildest people that you can imagine, you know. We'd get reports of battles at sea, 15 American battle ships sunk and one Chinese junk or something like that (laughter), you know, it was outrageous.

C.G.R.:

Was there any contact with civilians there?

P.D.:

No. If you wanted to get your head cut off you could, but they wouldn't allow anything like that. One of the most humiliating things I've think I've seen people do is beg the Japs for cigarette butts. I was a smoker at that time myself, but I couldn't bring myself to do that. I guess I wasn't a very good smoker! But the Japs used to sit in front of the guardhouse and it had a can, a tin can out in front of it, and they used to throw the butts in the tin can. The most daring would make a race for the can. We used to call it "banging the can." And we'd get a few cigarettes after the Japanese had smoked. But I could never do it. Not that I was any better than anybody else, I guess I just couldn't bring myself to it.

Yes, it was in North Point Camp too where they made us sign a promise that we would not escape. Now, of course, part of your duty is to escape from prison if you can -- that was drilled into you from the first day you join the army.

Are you military by any chance?

C.G.R.:

No.

P.D.:

Anyway, Colonel Home said, "You'd better sign it because it doesn't mean anything -- contrary to the Geneva Convention and all the rest of it, so don't have any qualms about signing it." One of our fellows who went in was Jack Porter, he was an Englishman, and he was a veteran of the First World War. He refused to sign it. I don't know if you've heard this story or not, but they took him out of camp and we thought that's the last

we'll see of Jack Porter. He was gone for, oh, probably a couple of weeks, I guess, and they brought him back just skin and bones, and I guess he had been beaten. I think finally he did sign, but he resisted for quite awhile. He was not only stubborn but a little stout-hearted too, I think.

C.G.R.:

Did he get through the war?

P.D.:

Yes he did, but I think he's dead now. If he were alive he'd be in his 80s and all that.

C.G.R.:

Oh, of course, he was in the First World War, he'd be quite a bit older.

P.D.:

We worked at the airport, Kai Tak airport.

C.G.R.:

Now, was this while you were still at North Point or after you went to Sham Shui Po?

P.D.:

Both. We were taken across for a few days before we left North Point, taken across to the mainland to work on the airport. At that time Kai Tak airport was pretty small -- not much more than a landing strip. Then, and after we moved to Sham Shui Po, we worked on the airport. There was a hill that was near one end of the runway, and we undertook to cut that hill down with pick and shovel and little trolley cars on a track. Manual labor of the most primitive kind. We worked at that for, oh, a couple of years, I guess. Kai Tak airport, I haven't been back since but I

understand it's an international airport today.

C.G.R.:

I've landed and taken off from Kai Tak, yes it's a very impressive airport; and I thought as I landed that I was landing on work that you people had done.

P.D.:

Recently?

C.G.R.:

Oh yes, oh yes, this was just a couple of years ago. I was well into this study.

Now tell me something about your connection with Major Crawford. Do you remember how that began?

P.D.:

If you want I'll start at the beginning. Very shortly after we went to Sham Shui Po a diphtheria epidemic broke out and we lost quite a few. I forgot how many now, I have it in my book, The Royal Rifles of Canada in Hong Kong. Have you read the book?

C.G.R.:

Yes, I have one with me in the car, yes.

P.D.:

That will give you the details. So anyway, I wound up in the hospital -- while it was the Jubilee Building -- some kind of an administration building, I guess, in peacetime. Quite a large building, about three or four floors, that was converted into a hospital. Well, the hospital -- it was just place to put sick people, it wasn't really a hospital. I came out of there with a bit of a heart condition.

C.G.R.:

Now, you were in there with diphtheria?

P.D.:

Yes, yes.

C.G.R.:

Would you tell me a little about what it is like to have diphtheria? What were your symptoms?

P.D.:

You know, when I was a child my sister developed diphtheria once and we, all the whole family were immunized so I was sort of laughing at the diphtheria epidemic, but I came down with it. But I probably sort of fended off some of the bad effects of diphtheria because I wasn't really very sick. I was a little bit nauseous and had a sore throat, and it was diagnosed right away as diphtheria. And by good luck, I think the day after, the Japs had finally relented and allowed antitoxins to be brought into camp. So I was one of the fortunate ones. A number of our boys died, from 50 or 60 I guess, because they wouldn't bring in the, or couldn't or wouldn't anyway, and they didn't. So I was in the hospital there and then I missed the draft to Japan by a whisker. Then I developed, as I said, sort of a, it was called myocarditis. Is that the term?

C.G.R.:

Yes.

P.D.:

I went into the hospital again.

C.G.R.:

Excuse me, do you remember about how long this was after you

were first in? Do you have any recollections?

P.D.:

After the diphtheria?

C.G.R.:

Yes.

P.D.:

Oh, probably a month, maybe.

C.G.R.:

OK, good.

P.D.:

Yes, I recovered and at that time there were only about two or three medical orderlies and the big job to do because there was a lot of people sick with this sore feet. You've heard about that I'm sure. They were really overworked. So Dr. Crawford sort of pulled a fast one on the Japs and kept some of us, who were in a little better shape, in to help the other fellows. It was after that that Dr. Crawford asked me to go and help him organize his notes. If I remember correctly he had case histories, you know, just on scraps of paper. And I believe now, if my memory serves me right, that I transferred this material to three by five cards, index cards. What he did with them I don't know but he had a purpose and I'm sure he smuggled them back to Canada with them. But as I told you, I think in the letter, I haven't seen Dr. Crawford, except once, and that was at a do we had in Ottawa, oh must be ten years ago now. So I didn't have a chance to talk to him.

C.G.R.:

Well I can tell you that there are, in the Public Archives

of Canada, papers called "The Crawford Papers," and they are the records that he managed to smuggle back. So some of your work, maybe even directly in your own handwriting, certainly indirectly, is in the Archives in Ottawa.

P.D.:

I'd like to go see that some time.

C.G.R.:

Well they're there. I'll send you the reference when I get home. Not only that, but Dr. Crawford, at least as recently as a month ago, was alive and well because I had a letter from him. He's getting on.

P.D.:

Is that so? Is he still in Ottawa?

C.G.R.:

He's still in Ottawa. He has an apartment there.

P.D.:

He was, I think, the Deputy Minister of Health for many years.

C.G.R.:

For quite some time, yes.

P.D.:

Oh, he is a good man. I think fondly of Dr. Crawford. I'll look into that.

C.G.R.:

Tell me a little bit about him. What was he like at that time? What's your recollection of him from the camp?

P.D.:

Well, he got a beating up from the Japs. You may have heard

that story too. He, I guess it was over the diphtheria serum. He went to them and made a big noise, I think. And some little sawed-off stood up on a chair and beat him. [laughter] No, he was quite a guy, I liked him. I could see him walking through wards, great huge stoop-shouldered -- he was six foot, seven or something like that. Big man.

C.G.R.:

He's still a big man. He many have shrunk a little bit but he's still a big man.

P.D.:

Yes. He was a pediatrician in civilian life.

C.G.R.:

In Winnipeg, which is my home town.

P.D.:

Is that right.

C.G.R.:

So he was actually seeing patients? I mean he wasn't just doing the administering kind of thing?

P.D.:

Yes. And we had Dr. Banfill too from our regiment. A very quiet little fellow. Nice man. He went back after the war to Hong Kong and taught in the medical school at the University of Hong Kong.

C.G.R.:

Yes, I understand that.

Who looked after you, do you remember, when you were sick?

P.D.:

Yes, Crawford. I think probably it was Banfill that sent me

to the hospital in the first place with diphtheria. But then when I went back it was Dr. Crawford who looked after me. And there was a Dr. Gray too. Now, was he, somebody said he was a dentist, but I....

C.G.R.:

No, he was a physician.

P.D.:

He was a medical doctor, yes.

C.G.R.:

And he died about four years ago.

P.D.:

A heck of a nice guy.

C.G.R.:

Yes. I never did get to meet him unfortunately.

P.D.:

He was a real fine fellow.

C.G.R.:

And the other physician, the other Canadian was Reid.

P.D.:

Reid, yes. Now we had a Cunningham but he was a dentist.

C.G.R.:

He was a dentist. I've interviewed him also.

P.D.:

He lives in Edmonton or somewhere.....

C.G.R.:

No, no. At least recently when I interviewed him he lived in London, Ontario.

P.D.:

Oh he does?

C.G.R.:

Yes. Now he may have been in Edmonton earlier but he's now in London, Ontario.

P.D.:

Well maybe I'm thinking of Dr. Gray then.

C.G.R.:

Yes, he was in Edmonton.

P.D.:

He was a westerner.

C.G.R.:

Yes, he was in Edmonton. And there was another dentist too, but he's been dead for many years -- I think Leach, or some name like that. Anyway he was the other dentist.

Tell me a bit, if you would, while you were working with Dr. Crawford, what would your daily routine be? What did you actually do in a day?

P.D.:

Well, it wasn't a full-time job by any means. I just used to go there, I think you know, in the afternoon and spend a couple of hours putting together his notes that he had taken that morning, probably, while doing rounds. I can't recall very much of what it was, but I have a dim recollection of transposing his notes to these cards.

C.G.R.:

Were you doing handwriting, typing...?

P.D.:

I don't think he had a typewriter. No, I'm sure he didn't; it was all handwritten, I'm sure of it.

C.G.R.:

OK, any other recollections of this time in Sham Shui Po? You were starting off in another direction and I took you back to.... Did you go to Japan?

P.D.:

No.

C.G.R.:

No. So you missed all of those drafts.

P.D.:

I missed all of those drafts, yes. As I said, just by a hair. We were taken out of the diphtheria hospital to complete a draft and I fell in at the end of the line and they started numbering us off and then it came to about three guys ahead of me and they said, "OK, fall out." So that's how close it was for me. And I'm not sorry, because while it's an experience I missed, probably I would still have been in Japan like a lot of others.

But these sore feet, you know it had the doctors baffled because it was something, I guess, they had never been experienced before. I think that a lot of them were pretty skeptical about the pain -- we were ignoring it. I was, I guess, working and, being a small fellow, I only weighed about 130 pounds was all, and I think perhaps that might have helped me to come through a lot of that better than a big 200-pounder.

C.G.R.:

It doesn't seem to have been any advantage to have been big

in the camps. I've heard that from many people.

P.D.:

Well, you know, the least I weighed was about 100 pounds, I guess. But I know fellows that were oh, great big football types, 180, 190 pounds, that went down to 89 pounds. Just skeleton. You've seen pictures. You know what they looked like.

C.G.R.:

Did you have the happy feet?

P.D.:

Oh yes, and I still do.

C.G.R.:

Do you still?

P.D.:

It's a little embarrassing. I'll be oh, just sitting here, perhaps, and the first thing I would get a pain and I'll curse and jump up and stamp my feet and....[laughter], you know one of those things. It's still there.

C.G.R.:

How often would it occur now?

P.D.:

Well, not that often, but sometime on the days when it's maybe connected with arthritis too, I don't know. But it's there and it's the same pain.

C.G.R.:

One foot more than the other?

P.D.:

No.

C.G.R.:

No. Both feet?

P.D.:

Both feet. And hands too sometimes. My hands right now they are aching a little bit. But the worst was the feet. And also another thing too that I should have mentioned, but in North Point Camp we had, I guess it was a malnutrition, that the corners of our mouths would crack. Oh, it was very very sore. Our tongues would get very sore. And I remember my hands, the skin came off almost like a glove, just came right off. It was malnutrition and maybe exposure to the sun and a lot of things.

And of course eyes. Somehow or other there was a, I don't know where they came from, but we had a little bit of a library and I read almost all the books in it, I guess, and it didn't do my eyes much good, of course. Another thing too, I don't know if anybody has mentioned this to you is the condition of the testicles. Has anybody mentioned that to you?

C.G.R.:

I was going to ask about that, yes.

P.D.:

We called them strawberry balls. It was a, oh, a terrible itch. And of course it didn't help to scratch because the water would flow and then it would scab over and then the scab would fall off and the itch would start all over again. And you know I experienced the same thing. I can't take penicillin for that reason. Once, oh years after the war, I developed an infected ear and I went to a local doctor and he gave me a shot of penicillin. Well, it fixed my ear all right but I spent that

night walking up and down with a terrible itch. I blame the penicillin and I've never taken penicillin since.

C.G.R.:

Probably wise.

Do you remember, as you look back on the three-plus years as a prisoner, can you divide it up in terms of your own personal ill health? I mean, did you tend to be sicker more at the end or sicker more at the beginning or spread all out? Do you understand what I'm...?

P.D.:

Yes, I understand. I think we were sicker, or at least I was, more debilitated in the first year or two. In the latter years they started providing us with some fish and some red meat, water buffalo. I think it was better towards the end. And then of course they shot us full of thiamine, they called it. Thiamine, is that it?

C.G.R.:

Thiamine, yes.

P.D.:

In fact I got a depression in my arm here where they stuck a needle in there every day for about a year. I should have done it differently, but I still have a little hollow there where the needle broke a muscle down.

C.G.R.:

Yes, must have.

Now, before you started doing this work with Dr. Crawford, am I correct that you said you did a bit of work as an orderly?

P.D.:

Yes.

C.G.R.:

Tell me a bit about that. What exactly did you do?

P.D.:

Well, dispensing whatever drugs they had, and emptying bed pans, and just sort of helping make them comfortable. And of course we slept in the wards with the sick people, so you know we were on call at night.

Have you talked to Ray Squires?

C.G.R.:

Yes. I was just going to ask you, in fact, it was on the tip of my tongue was to ask about Ray Squires, yes. Tell me about your perceptions of Ray.

P.D.:

Oh, fine fellow. He was, I guess, the Chief Medical Orderly. He was a scientist, I guess. Well he was a good fellow to work with. Very kind and he knew his stuff, I think. He might have a little bit of medical training.

C.G.R.:

Yes, he had before the war.

P.D.:

Yes. I saw him two years ago out in Victoria, at our reunion there.

C.G.R.:

Yes. In fact I've had two or three interviews with him. He's been very helpful.

P.D.:

And there was also a Kerr from Winnipeg.

C.G.R.:

Reg Kerr.

P.D.:

Reggie Kerr, yes.

C.G.R.:

Haven't been able to track him down. I've tried.

P.D.:

I hadn't heard of Reg Kerr. And I'm going out there in September. I'm going to make some inquiries.

C.G.R.:

Well a couple of years ago he was still alive and he was still in the Winnipeg area. Although he spent a fair bit of time in Florida or somewhere too, or somewhere in the south. I just never was able to make connections. I've interviewed quite a few but I haven't been able to catch him.

P.D.:

You know it's strange, some of our fellows have avoided the organization, I suppose for their own reasons. But I always find it great to get back together with them. We tell all the old lies.

C.G.R.:

Who else do you remember who was doing orderly work at that time? Are those others that you worked with?

P.D.:

Marcel Doiron. He died just a year ago, or within the last year. He was a medical orderly in our regiment. Who else? Oh, Kenny Court, he lives up the bay here a little ways. Doc Savage

-- I think old Doc' is dead now; because we were all slept in the same corner of the hut. I can't recall anybody else. Oh, Tommy Thompson. I think he's a Winnipeg boy too -- Walter Thompson, he was from Shoal Lake, Manitoba. I'm going to try and look him up too when I go out there this Fall.

C.G.R.:

Tell me, how long did you work with Dr. Crawford? Did this go on through the rest of the time?

P.D.:

No. Until I left the hospital.

C.G.R.:

And how long was that roughly?

P.D.:

Maybe three or four months. Not more. I really, I don't think I did anything too important for him. I just transcribed his notes, that's all.

C.G.R.:

So early in 1943 then, that would have been over. I mean, you got diphtheria in the fall of 1942.

P.D.:

Fall of 1942, oh yes, yes, early in 1942.

C.G.R.:

Some time in the first bit of 1943. Now tell me then about your life after that, about the rest of your....

P.D.:

Yes. After, I think maybe the Japs might have caught on and put a little pressure on him, because we were finally sent back out of the hospital and went back to work to the Kai Tak project

and others -- digging holes in the ground. I don't know what for. We were told, I guess, for defense purposes, but tunneling into the mountain. We had to walk. In fact we were still doing that when the war was over. We walked out, I suppose, three or four miles to the job and worked all day and walked back in. The last fifteen days in camp I didn't see the camp in day light. We left before dawn in the morning and came after dark at night. And, you know, no time to wash whatever clothes you had and that sort of thing. Kind of hard going for awhile.

C.G.R.:

One of the things I ask about always is sex. What about sex? You were quite a young man. I don't know whether you were sexually experienced or not when you became a prisoner, but was this something that bothered you? Did you have sexual feelings?

P.D.:

Oh yes, a little bit, but not all that much. I guess if you set your mind to, you know to something like probably a monk would do. You know you realize that that was it and.....

C.G.R.:

Accept reality.

P.D.:

Yes. Homosexuality in the camp -- you know I didn't witness anything. There probably was but it was all very discreet. And if anybody was suspected of course, way back in the 1940s being homosexual, you know, you were ostracized at all levels of society. So if there was any it was very discreetly done because I knew nothing about it anyway.

C.G.R.:

No.

In the camp, in your opinion, were there people that you'd call bad apples? I mean amongst the prisoners. Were there Canadians, Brits, who...?

P.D.:

Well there was one particularly bad apple and that was Major Boone.

C.G.R.:

Cecil Boone, yes, I've heard about him.

P.D.:

He got the bum's rush after the war. It was funny to see they locked him in the crapper [laughter]. I can still see him yet. One of my friends from Matapedia was one of them. They ran him down the street and put him in the outhouse and locked him there. I guess he had to pay for it when he got back to Britain. I don't know what happened to him.

C.G.R.:

My understanding is that he was tried, and I think he was set free. I know they felt their....

P.D.:

Well he was a collaborator. No doubt about it.

C.G.R.:

That's my understanding at least.

P.D.:

Yes. Although another fellow too that they accused....

C.G.R.:

I don't care about names, incidentally, but I'm just curious

to know what your perception was of these happening. What kinds of things were people doing?

P.D.:

Nothing happened between the Japs, I don't think. We did a bit of trading through the fence with some of the Taiwanese (it wasn't Taiwan then it was Formosa), Formosan guards. The first guards we had were fighting troops and they were pretty mean. And then they were replaced by Formosans. We got along well with those guys, you know, startlingly enough. We traded whatever was, any kind of trinket, they would get rid of the paper money for anything. It kept them alive too you know.

C.G.R.:

So you would sell them something like a ring and they paid you in money.

P.D.:

They would pay us in money, which we were then able to use to buy salt and sugar and what not.

C.G.R.:

And where did you buy the salt and things? Where did you spend the money?

P.D.:

Well we dealt from them too.

C.G.R.:

Oh, I see. There was no canteen or anything like that.

P.D.:

Well, there was a bit of a canteen but it was -- you know, we were getting ten sen a day and we had to pay, for example, a yen for ten cigarettes. So you had to work ten days to get ten

cigarettes. And of course the price went up and up and up. At the last we were paying 100 yen for ten cigarettes. But it was all military yen so it wasn't worth the paper it was written on anyway.

C.G.R.:

Yes, I understand some people were sufficiently addicted to cigarettes that they would trade their food away.

P.D.:

Oh yes, yes, that's true. Really unfortunate too, some guys did that. The smallest butt was worth a lot to some people. I smoked throughout the prison camp. I stopped and smoked and....I guess I never was really addicted. I finally gave it up completely in 1960.

C.G.R.:

Now, you mentioned brutality in the early times, was there more of this later? I mean affecting you personally.

P.D.:

I never got the, as I said before, I kept a pretty low profile. I was never physically abused. The worst I got was a crack the back with a bamboo rod. I had it coming to me. I suppose under ordinary circumstances it wouldn't have been noticed but they called for a break and I just, instead of putting my basket down slowly I dropped it. There happened to be a guard with a bamboo stick and he let me have it. But that's the worst that ever happened to me. Some fellows were really brutally treated. If they caught you breaking the rules of any kind they would, they would have no mercy at all.

C.G.R.:

Now did you have to learn Japanese. I mean did you have to learn commands and....?

P.D.:

No, we learned to count and that's all. Some fellows got, you know, pretty good at Japanese. Well, I always kick myself ever since. Why didn't I learn when I had the opportunity.

[End of side 1]

A year or so ago there was a radio or TV crew came to interview me -- Radio Quebec. And right in the middle of the interview this little voice came out of the blue "it's 3 p.m.", [laughter].

C.G.R.:

The Japanese talking clock.

One of the areas I'm always interested in talking to people about is the area of coping, of making yourself survive a situation like this. And some people, as you know, didn't do that very well. I'm sure you have many instances, or at least some, where someone who seemed about as healthy as someone else and yet one of them died and the other survived. Do you have any comments about this?

P.D.:

I still sort of thank my lucky stars that I wasn't very well educated at the time and I wasn't very experienced in worldly ways. I think that helped me to cope. I can't really say how, but I had that feeling. Live from day to day and of course every day Chiang Kai-shek was going to come over the hill on his white horse and set us all free. And I guess it was that -- hoping,

you know, day to day, that something big was going to happen. We were all going to get loose and....We went on from day to day. And a bit of camaraderie in the hut too, you know. You get attached to people and make them very close friends.

C.G.R.:

What was the worst part of this whole experience for you? Can you single out any one part of it that bothered you most?

P.D.:

Well, I think the constant hunger. It didn't matter if you had a mountain of rice, which you never did, but you know it wasn't satisfactory -- it wasn't meat. You were never satisfied. We always dreamed about mother's cooking and all sorts of things, you know. And then the discomfort in the feet.

C.G.R.:

Did the feet bother you less later? Do you remember? Was there any change?

P.D.:

Yes, they seemed to, I think the first nine months in North Point were what really put people in poor physical condition because there we had, I can't remember of getting any food with protein in it for the first nine months. It was just rice and greens, rice and greens, rice and greens, twice a day.

C.G.R.:

And no Red Cross parcels.

P.D.:

Well, we got, I think, three parcels [altogether, in the whole time]. We were supposed to get one a week I believe. We got three. I think we had to share them too. I don't think we

got one per person, I think we had to share them. And by that time the raisins were wormy, and you know....And mail -- I don't think I got any mail. A couple of my cards arrived home and a letter too that I mailed to mother. The worst part was the hunger, the constant hunger pains.

C.G.R.:

Let me put this off for now.

P.D.:

Rather fortunate because my health was, compared to some of the other fellows it was good. I had a rather stressful job when I retired six years ago.

C.G.R.:

What were you doing?

P.D.:

I was in education. I was, well, I was probably called a school superintendent, here they called it the Director General. Coping with all the paper that comes out of Quebec City, and Bill 101, and all the rest of it. It was pretty tough on me and I was very glad to get out.

But I went just last week, in fact, to see my doctor. I've got a little bit of high blood pressure and I take a minimum dose to control it. And I had a kidney stone in the winter, oh a couple of months ago. I got rid of that, fortunately, without any trouble. My other doctor, my family doctor gave me an ultrasound and all my organs are in tip-top shape. Then I had an electrocardiogram last week and urine and blood tests and everything seems perfect. Cholesterol under control and the whole thing. So I really, at 67 years old, I feel fortunate.

C.G.R.:

Well that's good.

People keep asking me if my interest is the post-war effects of captivity, and it isn't. I mean, I'm looking at this as a historian. I want to know what happened during the war. And to be honest, I'm personally glad that I'm not trying to look at it from the view point of what's happened since the war. Because I have some very difficult questions. The people who are ill are convinced that it's because of this. And they're maybe right but maybe they're not too. But when we get to be 70 we start to have illness. It's a very complicated question.

P.D.:

I don't think anybody has the answer. I certainly don't. I feel the same. What the heck, a lot of people that never had experiences like I did are dead and gone years ago, younger than me, you know.

C.G.R.:

It's very hard to tell. Specific things, I mean your feet, that surely must be the same thing; but that isn't killing you either. It's annoying but....

P.D.:

No. I lead a pretty active life. I fish and hunt and skidoo in the winter, and I belong to more organizations than I should, but that keeps me busy.

C.G.R.:

Well, very good. I think I'll turn this off now. We can always put it on again if something comes to mind that we should

HCM 5-89

Philip Doddridge, New Richmond, PQ, 28 May 1989

get down.

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12
Box 55, RR 2
New Richmond, Québec
GOC 2B0
June 11, 1989

Dr. Charles G. Roland, M.D.
Room 3N10
Health Sciences Centre
1200 Main Street West
Hamilton, Ontario

Dear Dr. Roland:

Greetings from New Richmond on a wet and dreary Sunday. After you and Mrs. Roland left the day you were at our house, I remembered that I had intended to tell you of three situations that occurred in Sham Shui Po camp. You probably have record of these from Dr. Crawford's papers, but since they have always stayed in my memory, I'll relate them to you now for what they may be worth to you.

We had a chap with us who was probably forty years old, although he seemed older, who was infested with crab lice. This was probably not too unusual, except that we (orderlies) used to clean him up and fumigate his clothes, only to have him break out again in another couple of weeks' time. Strangely, he was the only one to whom this happened. His own attempts at personal cleanliness were, no doubt, ^{not} up to the standard most of us had imposed upon ourselves. He had a lot of body hair, which made the de-lousing job even more difficult.

Scabies was another scourge which we had to contend with. Fortunately by that time (1943-44) we had access to some very harsh soap with which we used to treat those whose scabies had got out of control. The treatment was to scrub the poor fellow with a floor scrub brush, very stiff bristles, and this strong yellow soap, until the sores caused by the scabie parasite would bleed. It isn't hard to imagine him standing with blood oozing from all these sores, some the size of a dime. We then would rub him down with sulphur lotion, which was supposed to control the scabies, but some guys would be back in a couple of weeks for another treatment.

A third case was that of an unfortunate fellow from the Grenadiers who was afflicted with boils. I am sure that he could have competed with Job of Biblical times. He had boils all over his body, on his head, on his fingers and toes, even under his finger nails and toenails, and at the base of his penis. The worst one of all was a huge carbuncle in the middle of his back at the belt line, in which there were, if my memory serves me, fifteen or sixteen cores.

I regret that at the time, I was not curious enough to delve into the cause of these and other irregularities. After the war I did, in fact, make an attempt to get into some branch of medicine, but fate decided otherwise.

I regret that I did not think to discuss these with you. You may have been able to get more information than by reading these few brief notes. I hope that they will be of some use to you.

Kindest regards.

Yours sincerely,


Philip Doddridge