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Narrative by: Captain Charlotte D. Gower, USMC(WR)
Fall of Hong Kong and Experiences
of Japanese Prisoners.
Sept. 1938 to June 1942.

Miss Gower gives a lengthy, detailed account of conditions in Hong Kong at the time of the Japanese occupation. She had many unusual experiences as a Japanese prisoner and tells about them fully.

Film No: 40
Recorded: April 7, 1943

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Rough Transcript: Meitzen
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S E C R E T

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September, 1938 to June, 1942.

FALL OF HONG KONG AND EXPERIENCE
OF JAPANESE PRISONERS

FILM NO. 40

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NARRATIVE by: GOWER, Charlotte D., Captain, USMCWR.
Fall of Hong Kong and Experience of Japanese Prisoners
September, 1938 to June, 1942

I would like to give you a narrative of my experiences in China from September 1938 to June of 1942. I went out in 1938 to teach at Lintan University in Canton, China. The campus of the University had already been bombed before I got there and there was no real security at the time, but no Japanese invasion was expected. It came in October, the middle of October, just six weeks after I arrived and the University immediately disbanded and went to Hong Kong. I remained and

(Fifteen words omitted here)

The campus changed rapidly from a university to a refugee camp taking care of about eight thousand Chinese civilians who were taking refuge from the Japanese who came in. They came in without fighting but they came in rather violently with a great deal of ill treatment of civilians. We had the refugees there for more than a year. I remained only a year and then was sent down to Hong Kong to teach at the reorganized university.

(One paragraph omitted here)

On December 6, 1941 we had a faculty meeting at the university and discussed what we might do to help Hong Kong in case of an emergency. At that time there was a question of whether we should send the students away, but the president said that having consulted the authorities there he had been advised against any alarm at that time, and so was keeping all the students, even the younger boys, in the middle school. This was the morning of Saturday. On that evening there was an alarm in Hong Kong, and the men were called to their ships, leaving, I may say, quite a number of ladies on the dance floor unattended. The next afternoon all civilian shipping, that is the freighters, etc. that were in the harbor, were ordered to proceed at once to Singapore under convoy. Most people in Hong Kong knew nothing of this at all. I heard about it first when I went to dinner that night with a man in British intelligence. He had his radio going and we listened during the evening to accounts of enormous fleet movements of the Japanese in the Pacific. They told me that war was almost certain by morning. I was rather interested because I had a rather difficult lecture to give the next day and didn't know whether to prepare for it or not. They couldn't guarantee war but it seemed it was exceedingly likely.

When I awoke the next morning, I awoke to hear a friend of mine taking a phone call which told her about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the bombing of Singapore. We went down to breakfast and during breakfast the first bomb fell on Hong Kong. They were bombing the airport across the harbor from the island. The detonation of the bombs weren't particularly loud, but the anti-aircraft guns above our heads made a frightful racket. A number of people even then thought that this was merely a rehearsal and quite a number of people out from the city had taken it simply as an air raid alarm, a practice. But there was no doubt for very long. That bombing of the airport destroyed the Clipper and destroyed the plane, the only plane that Hong Kong had had for defense.

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The house where I had been living had been taken over in case of emergency by the Public Works Department so I had to move out at once. To simplify matters I moved in with one of the vice-consuls who lived up on the hill. I spent Monday the 8th moving and laying in provender for an indefinitely long siege. That afternoon there was an air raid on when we were shopping. It was one of the few air raids when I was down in the crowded part of the city. People on the whole behaved very well.

This was Monday. On Tuesday I found that I could get a job as a pharmacist, so-called, with one of the first aid posts and I reported at that post at nine o'clock the next morning. They were rather bewildered and upset. It was a first aid post that was being established in the building of the department of education and nothing was ready for first aid equipment to be put in. I ran errands, and tried to get a line on what my duties would be, that day. During the day I managed to pick up a tin helmet which solved the problem of what to do during air raids. As a member of the medical staff, I wasn't sure but that I should go on walking around during air raids; but as a civilian I felt that perhaps I ought to obey rules and stay in. Most people seemed equally in a quandary, and there was a deal of moving around the streets while the air raid was on. With a tin hat I was safe to move any place I wanted to, at least I would not be stopped, and my personal safety was my own problem.

The cleaning up of the first aid post took Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday. Nothing particular happened during those days except the constant reports from the mainland of the Japanese advance, of British losses, not losses of men, but losses of territory in particular. The plan, of course, we had known always, the plan was to give up the new territory and establish the European community and as many of the Chinese as could get across in the island as a sort of fortress and just hold out. Reports that we got were that everything was proceeding according to schedule except on a rather stepped up program. It was much too fast.

On Thursday the last possible refugees were taken out of Kowloon and all connection of the island with the mainland severed, except I believe some military detachments got over after that time. Our family up on the hill received some more refugees from Kowloon, people who had been obliged to leave on the shortest possible notice and had nothing but what they were wearing at the time word got to them. This was Thursday of the first week. On Friday the Japanese were in Kowloon and from then on we were disturbed more by shelling than by air raids, but both continued. A week went on with the Japanese shelling the gun emplacements on the island, doing extremely accurate work and rather particular work. There is only one case where people have ever spoken of indiscriminate bombing of the city, and that was where bombs were dropped on the big market down in town and hundreds of people were killed. It was the one case of great civilian losses all at one time.

(Six paragraphs omitted here)

The hospital that I worked in, the first aid post, was shelled and hit, I think it would be about the 18th. The shell, two shells, hit, landing in room 13. There was a doctor asleep in room 12, and there were nurses at breakfast

just under where the shells hit. No one was hit at all. I had an idea that it was rather ineffective ammunition. We didn't have block-busters or extremely high-powered shells.

(One paragraph omitted here)

A couple of days after Kowloon was evacuated our household up on the hill was increased by the arrival of a Canadian Battalion who took over the house for quartermasters' stores. We were all moved upstairs and the military moved in down below. This gave us some chance to get acquainted with the Canadian Army, and a very good chance to get the house blacked out fairly and get ourselves equipped with gas masks and things like that. The Canadians took extremely good care of their civilian proteges and were very nice fellows. We were inside the battalion area and I had to have a pass to go back and forth. This was one of the battalions that had arrived in Hong Kong sometime in November. They were the Winnipeg Grenadiers and had seen no service except guard duty in Jamaica

(Twelve words omitted here)

Some of their equipment got sidetracked and left off in Australia, so they were neither particularly well trained or equipped. They were moved up into this area where I was, I think, because it was a quiet area and they were more or less reserve troops.

Unfortunately, on the 18th or 19th, the Japanese made a landing on the island. The first I heard of them was when I was going over to work in the morning

(Twenty-one words omitted here)

I went over to work with the feeling that the Japanese were just behind me and had no notion that I could get back that night. I went back that night and there was no particular difficulty, and we continued to live, sort of, within a mile or so of the Japanese and of the front, from the 18th or 19th as I said, until, well, I got out on the night of the 22nd. The men were going up from the house and the area around the house and fighting, and there was one time when a group of them got out and were stuck forty-eight hours without food or relief and came back in pretty bad shape. Because we were in a battalion area, we also got a good deal of attention from enemy shells and airplanes. The Japanese on the 20th began to use trench mortars and one shell hit in our yard that morning. Things became so bad on the 20th and 21st that I couldn't get over to work and was reported missing. Quite fortunately the report didn't get official, so it didn't get out to this country.

On the 22nd I did get back to work and found that my first aid post had been hit again and the building above it had been demolished. I thought that everyone had probably been killed, but I went down to see how they were and they were all washing stockings and sitting around waiting for tea. No one had been injured again.

(Three lines omitted here)

I resigned because I said it was too difficult to get back and forth, and obviously they had no room for me and no need for a pharmacist. My resignation was accepted and it was agreed that I should go down town and report to the medical services for a new job.

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On my way home that night I met a soldier, a British volunteer officer I believe, and asked him, -- one did ask while going along the road -- how the road was between here and there, and he said, "What are you going over there for?" I said, "I live there." He said, "If you live there, for heaven's sake get out." I said, "Why?" and he said, "Well, we are giving up that area tonight. My battery was down there (and he pointed ahead of us) and it is being moved over there." (and he pointed to a place off to the side) He said, "That's going to be no place to be this evening." I went home rather disturbed and stopped to see the Canadian headquarters, but that had been abandoned. There were only a couple of soldiers there who didn't seem to know much about what they were going to do.

I had taken refuge that morning the same place and they were clearing it out because it had become a very well marked target for the Japanese. They gave me a shot of rum and I went on home feeling a little more cheerful, got home, found everything going for dinner. The Canadians cooked in our garage, and no one was particularly upset about anything. I didn't mention the alarm I had heard from the volunteer and we settled down for the sundown cocktail.

(Seven lines omitted here)

We had dinner and I went to bed.

About eleven o'clock I was called. I was awake I may say because the noise was rather bad, and he said I think we had better move down to a civilian that is, a non-military house also occupied by an American consul; because if we are taken in a house that is half full of ammunition, our civilian status will be hard to maintain. So we got up, took blankets, I got my passport, put slacks on over my pajamas and went down. It must have been possibly a block to the other house and I think we were challenged by five different groups of sentries on the way over. When we got there they let us in and I went to sleep on some gunny sacks, -- sandbags that hadn't been filled with sand. We thought that house was pretty full of refugees and went to sleep. We were awakened by a frightful noise then because two ammunition dumps, that is, where they had stored ammunition in garages, both within a block of us, were on fire and it sounded like about six gangster movies being run at the same time -- a perfectly phenomenal noise. I thought at first that it was street fighting and then decided that there couldn't be that many men firing that many guns at once. We all got up and went downstairs and stood around shivering because some of the people who had been awake had heard the Canadian trucks go and had heard voices saying, "Come on if you're going," and they knew that the Canadians had withdrawn from their positions and were gone to another one outside of that area and that we were either in Japanese possession or in no-man's land; so we waited for the Japanese to come hoping that they would find out who we were before they hand grenaded the house. We got colder and sleepier and so we went upstairs and went to bed.

The next morning when we awoke it was perfectly quiet, no sign of life anywhere, no Japanese, no Canadians. We stuck our heads out, and finally got into a car, three of us. I was still intending to go down town and we started off down town and the only thing that happened to us was one shot from a Canadian sentry. We were coming through the lines and he had every reason to suspect that the Japanese might have borrowed one of the cars, but we managed to make him know who we were and we got through and went on down town. It was very annoying to get downtown and find people reading in the newspapers that we had repulsed the Japanese

(Three words omitted here)

I was there with an afgham around my shoulders and my pajamas on under my slacks feeling terribly grim. I said that we didn't hold them, I came from there and it's nonsense it says in the paper.

I found that Medical Services didn't approve of my resigning my post of duty because after all it was war and one doesn't resign.

(One paragraph omitted here)

After they scolded me a bit for being so cavalier and I had explained that if they didn't need me any more than they needed anyone up at that first aid post, that I might just as well get off the payroll. Then they looked me up and found that I had never been on the payroll, I had never signed up, so they signed me up and said that they would give me a job but from then on I was to take orders. So, I signed up and they sent me up to a hospital. It had been a regular hospital that had been burned out and had been moved to a Japanese school on Kennedy Road, and it was a rather ill-assorted group. Chinese nurses were hospital staff, the British volunteer nurses, a few Americans who were in, one of them as superintendent of the hospital, men as runners. I thought I was going to be a pharmacist, but when I got up there they took one look at me and said, "Go to bed now, dearie, you're on night duty." I was a nurse. In this hospital we had about thirty male patients and six or eight females, all Chinese civilians who had been wounded as a result of the shelling or bombing.

(Seven lines omitted here)

There was a certain amount of friction in the hospital, No one seemed to like the superintendent, and the Chinese nurses didn't particularly like the volunteer nurses and the volunteer nurses were extremely suspicious of the Chinese nurses. But the amount of work that was done was remarkable. There was one doctor there in charge who did all the operating. They used to bring the casualties in in the afternoon about four o'clock, and depending on the crop of casualties, the size and degree of injury, she would work from then on until eleven; but one morning she worked until two the next morning, amputating for the most part because the people came in rather badly crushed.

(Two lines omitted here)

On Christmas day I ventured to take the morning off and go down to the American Club for Christmas dinner. I think Christmas went as far as mince pie and I think we did have coffee. There was no dearth of coffee at any time during this, I may say. Then that afternoon when I went back to take

my nap, suddenly word came that we had surrendered and that the unit was going to be broken up, the patients to be taken to a hospital and the staff should disperse to first aid posts nearby. This caused a great deal of alarm because we were very much afraid of what the Japanese would do when they caught us especially in one of their own buildings. The doctor in charge more or less went to pieces, and by going to pieces I think kept us from being too depressed. She said, "They are killing my patients." She had a rather marked Russian accent, and then, "I cannot have my patients moved, they will all die, and besides, what will we do without patients, the Japanese will rape us." It was sort of an odd mixture of, "We've got to have the patients as a protection for us." She tried to organize a minor battle of Hong Kong which was to be staged between the nurses and the ambulance men who came to take the patients away. Fortunately, there was another breakdown in plans and the ambulances never came. In the meantime, there was a gun, a British gun above us, that kept on booming. We knew there was no reason for it because the war was over as far as we were concerned. We would hear a dull thud and then think, "Oh! well, that's over, now he's heard." The telephone is ringing and he'll know, and then there would be another and we got the idea that perhaps he was mad, did know we had surrendered and was just trying to get rid of his ammunition until they came and took him. He kept on, it was tolling like an enormous bell, and rather exasperating especially to the Japanese because they dropped a stick of bombs which missed us by just about sixty feet, it fell just across a very narrow Chinese street. We were all knocked down. At the moment we were engaged in declaring a woman dead and we were mostly in the woman's ward which was the farthest point from the impact of the bomb. But, as soon as we got ourselves picked up we gathered towels, there had been some warning about gas and the smell of the fumes from the bomb wasn't very promising, so we got towels, dipped them in water and wrapped them around our faces and dashed in to see how the men were. The men's ward had been the school chapel with canvas cots laid out in rows. Each canvas cot was just neatly heaped over with broken glass and rubble. We went to each cot and turned back the blanket and underneath the blanket was a perfectly complete, living, and as whole a patient as we had left in the first place, thoroughly scared, of course. But the nice cheap cotton blankets that they had didn't let anything get through. There was only one man injured in this whole group of over thirty and he had a temporal artery cut by a sliver of glass but we got that in no time at all, everything was all right. But it completely spoiled the hospital, all the doors were blown off the hinges, all the windows were broken and we were faced with the problem of trying to get the patients someplace so we moved them downstairs, wondering whether we were supposed to be blackout or whether we could have lights showing, and knowing that if the Japanese came they would be on us without any consultation at the door. I stood watch ~~until~~ until twelve that night, rather wishing that more people would stay up than just the two of us who were on duty, but no one seemed to, so, at twelve o'clock the other girls came on and we went to bed.

(Sixteen words omitted here)

The Japanese never came. We were listening all the time for the tramp of feet the guttural barks but all we would hear would be an occasional dog or ruff of machine gun fire or the bite of a rifle, but nothing much, nothing we weren't quite used to. The next morning the Japanese came and weren't particularly unpleasant.

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We were ordered to leave the hospital at once but were assured of transportation. Trucks were sent for the patients that afternoon and took them to a hospital and other trucks came back and took the hospital staff complete.

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In regard to spies, there was a certain amount of spy talk around the Canadian Battalion area where I lived. One morning, I remember, they found a man with a map drawn on his chest showing all gun emplacements and battery locations. The report was that Indians had found him and had him pretty well cleaned up before the intelligence authorities got him and they were trying to revive him to get some more information. Any Chinese who did not stop when the sentry challenged him was shot on the spot, they were very jittery about the Chinese.

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Generally, I think though, the bulk of the Chinese was loyal. However, there was some more or less organized anti-foreign feeling in Kowloon especially. There was a great deal of rioting in the streets before the final evacuation.

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One case that I heard about was that of an Eurasian girl who tried to get out in European dress, stopped by a Chinese mob and stripped, went back home and dressed in Chinese clothes and finally got through to the island, dressed that way, mobs didn't bother people in Chinese clothes. I was warned against going downtown, this would be late in the first week of the war, because there were said to be unruly mobs in the streets, and it was not quite safe for European women. I doubt that because of a great many of my friends were downtown, and reported no particular difficulties, but there was rioting in the streets of the island. There was in our area at least one sniper. The road that I took home wound around a hill. At one point the sentry turned me back and told me I couldn't go that way because there was sniping on that road, so I had to take after that a short cut to avoid that particular sector of the road. I couldn't understand it because it was no more exposed than a great deal more of the road and the sniper must have been rather peculiarly located. It remained so that a soldier or so had been picked off on that stretch. The shooting must have been from some part of the island because it was not visible from any place in Kowloon. So, at the time, I was told that the shooting did come from Kowloon, I think to reassure me about any dangers from people on the island.

Picking up the narrative at Christmas day or rather the day after Christmas, we evacuated our hospital and removed to the medical concentration area. This was at the university where all the people who had been in medical services were brought in, put in dormitories, fed with such food as the medical services had been able to store up and had been able to bring in from outlying posts. The Japanese did permit them to salvage quite a bit of their food and bring it in. Some of us had jobs, there were housekeeping units there, some were Chinese civilians, some were military casualties. The popular jobs were the military casualties. There was a great deal of feeling among the British nurses there that the Chinese patients were hardly worth bothering about. The accusation made was that the most of them had been shot while looting. It may or may not have been the case. It had not been the case with the patients I had seen previously in the other hospital.

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The Japanese didn't interfere much with us, occasionally a couple of soldiers would come around just to watch the foreigners. Now and again they made gestures of taking something. Generally, they came more or less as beggars, looking rather longingly at bread that was being baked and would take the bread if we offered it to them but didn't insist on it. The main thing was that they felt perfectly free to walk through buildings at any time and go into any of the rooms, no doors were locked, and there was a complete lack of privacy but no particular incident. The Japanese officers were taking over houses and some of them were reasonably polite about it. We were in a great state of mind over the possibility of what would happen on New Year's day because according to Japanese tradition that is a time of general celebration and we heard horrible rumors that all military law would be off and the soldiers would have a chance to celebrate as they saw fit. We had been ordered to stay in and avoid going out of our buildings any more than we could help. As a matter of fact, on New Year's day I got a man to walk just across the campus with me to the job where I worked. At this time I was a scullery maid and I was graduating to being a dietician for the military wounded. He walked across and I didn't see any Japanese. I was perfectly safe, then the consul with whom I had been living during the first part of the seige walked down to bring me some clothes, remembering that I had left with practically nothing. I asked him how things were up on the hill and he said everything was fine, that he was back in the house, the house had been looted a couple of times, fairly badly broken up but he was living there and everything was quiet and seemed quite safe, no Japanese around. He suggested that I go home with him if I wanted to and I got a release and went off. He was rather a phlegmatic soul, realist, and as we started off he said, "Well, I suppose if the Japanese want to rape you there isn't much I can do about it," and I said that I thought that was about the situation and I advised him not to jeopardize his status as a diplomat if any incident came up. No incident came up, it was a very nervous trip over because this was the day that we had been told that it was completely unsafe to be out. I remember one truck that was picking up dead bodies but it had apparently been before us because we didn't see much in the way of that. The streets were rather badly destroyed, practically no one was out. We were stopped three times by sentries and searched. The search was fairly thorough as far as my bag went, but not particularly unpleasant and no attempt was made to take anything. Most of the people who spoke of being searched spoke of robbery, that is, watches being taken from them and jewelry. My jewelry didn't amount to anything and they didn't get a chance to see my watch because it was broken in my pocket. We got up to the house and it was in fairly bad state and I spent about five days there trying to organize our commissary. I figured out that we had food enough for two people for thirty days if we rationed ourselves rather thoroughly. The cook was still there and the amah and they still had the rice that we had gotten for them. They had managed to get together all of the stuff after the looters were through and we found that almost nothing was gone except of course a collection of gold coins which my host had. Of my things, I had lost a watch and fountain pen, a bottle of perfume, I think that is all except that they had taken my spare glasses and simply twisted them like that. The fact that no Hong Kong money was gone though I had had some there and that the glasses had been twisted and that a few Chinese curios were still around would seem to indicate certainly that this was Japanese looting rather than Chinese. The Chinese would have been more thorough in the matter of money and would have been a little more thorough in the matter of curios.

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Up there at the house I felt terribly insecure because we had all this Canadian equipment downstairs which was bait for looters. We got as much of it out of the downstairs as we could doing heavy cleaning and piled it on the lawn so that people could just come up and scrounge around the lawn without coming into the house. Occasionally Japanese came. I made a rule to stay out of sight as much as possible. One time they caught me cleaning, I went on cleaning and was not interfered with. When they came around to take census, all that my host said was that he was living there with two servants and a woman, and the woman was accepted without any particular question.

We tried to start gardening, we mended the windows and did odd jobs like that. Occasionally, the Japanese who came were friendly. There was one officer who presented us with a tin of milk. I was not there, he presented it to Mr. Hoffman and they had a pleasant conversation ending up with the fact that if Mr. Hoffman went back to America the Japs would see him again of course because they were going to come to America.

On the 5th of January, early in the morning, I received a copy of the announcement that all civilians, enemy civilians, were to report down town the next morning at 10:30. It was decided that I ought to go because I was definitely an enemy civilian, and all the people of the same status from that neighboring house were going down at the same time. We were allowed to carry personal effects. We had no assistance in getting down, it was a matter of walking clear down town, of a couple of miles, it seemed like five at the time, with all the luggage that we could carry with the idea that what we carried then was all that we would ever own. We were afraid of what was going to happen to us when we got down town, we were also afraid of the trip down because there was the problem of Chinese looters and also the problem of sentries.

Sentries stopped us and our stuff was gone through thoroughly again and they took nothing of mine because I had nothing worth taking, but in our party of about eight people I think that they got five watches and a few pairs of socks, a sweater or so. About a hundred yards further on a group of sentries wanted to repeat the process. The first group signalled that they had cleaned us, so the second group was rather disgusted by that. We had no more trouble after that on the way down, got down and found that the Japanese had started with some idea of an orderly registration of enemy aliens but as we had flooded in they just gave it up and we were herded together, lined up in fours and marched up the hill.

(Five lines omitted here)

We marched down the main street of Hong Kong. We saw some Chinese watching on each side, not unusually large crowds, it was about the group that you would ordinarily see. There was no sign of compassion among the Chinese that I saw at all. I did see some of the people crying and in one case a man darted out into the line and spoke to the man behind me saying, "I am very, very sorry, I wish there was something I could do." In other words I saw more expression of sympathy than anything else.

(One line omitted here)

We marched down and finally came to a very small hotel and looked at it and were marched in. The hall was completely black and it stank unbelievably. Fortunately, the hotel was full. A solid line was going up the staircase and I got into the hallway and found it completely barricaded, then we stopped in

pitch blackness and waited. Finally, it was announced that we couldn't possibly get in and we all filed out the doorway and sat on the sidewalk, sat on our luggage and waited for something to happen. A crowd gathered, we sat and were stared at and stared back and wished we had something to eat and finally found some tea.

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Then word came, and we picked up our luggage again and marched back down the street and here was a large hotel and we dashed in. By that time we knew what we ought to do, we ought to make the stairs as fast as we could and get as high up in the hotel as we could and try to get some air on the balcony. So, we were pretty well organized by that time and six of us, three women and myself and two men whom they had picked up while they were living around in peoples bathrooms, halls of hotels downtown. Six of us got two cubicles and were extremely lucky because the ordinary assignment to each cubicle was five people. We managed to pretend that we were five in each by moving back and forth rapidly. The cubicles were about six and a half feet wide, that would be the length of a short bunk which was made up at the end of the cubicle and about eight feet long. There was one bunk in each, which was an ordinary shelf, wood, about 40 inches wide with a rather dirty straw pad on it. No bedding, no pillows. There was furniture, a chest of drawers, and two chairs in each cubicle, all heavy black with dust, pretty dirty. Six of us managed to settle down in these two cubicles reasonably comfortably. There was some embarrassment the first night because we didn't know how we would sleep, we didn't have any bedding, it was cold, and the first question was whether the four women would try to curl up, or whether we could divide three and three. It ended with one of the men coming in and saying, "It seems unfair for us to have this cubicle by ourselves and if one of you ladies would care to joining us that would be quite alright, we are not undressing," and I said that I would join them. They were very sad about it because I was the largest of the bunch. It was extremely bad for we were all broadshouldered, we didn't have sense enough to try sardine fashion, but we did manage to keep warm by having three overcoats over us, one on the feet, one on the limbs and one that we could drag around our necks, but it was terribly close at first. I slept on the floor. Other people, of course, were much worse off than we were, because there were many cubicles in which the full five lived. We had outside cubicles, and in most of them were inside with no light, no direct light, no direct air. The light and air seeped through to the inner cubicles simply because the partitions were partly glass and did not extend clear to the ceiling.

(Seven lines omitted here)

There was no food given to us at all in this first interment for the first 48 hours, then we began to get allowances of rather dubious meat or fish and rice, occasionally some greens.

(Two lines omitted here)

In our particular hotel, the chow, the cooking was taken over by the Hong Kong police force, pretty well represented in the group. We had two servings of chow a day and one kept a water boiler going, so that we could get a reasonable amount of drinkable water. The hotel help had stayed on duty, but refused to do anything at all without rather exhoritant pay. I think that water during

the first few days was something like 50 cents for a teapot full. Tea was the same price. However, there were hawkers in the street, and when the guards were not too severe, we could manage to buy bread and butter and some other things from the hawkers in the street. We were not allowed out and now and again the ruling was passed that we could not even go out on the roof for air or sunlight. It was extremely cold. Sickness broke out, of course, some of the people came in sick, and a pair of doctors, one of them had been the woman doctor with me in the hospital. With the help of some men, we started a clinic, and we had sort of a hospital on the first floor which was considered too near the street to be safe for the prisoners. I served there as a nurse on duty in the afternoons, with not much to do. This same clinic ran a special food kitchen for children, giving them milk twice a day, except for very young children. It was an extremely strange life but this organization was rather fun and the fact that such odd people were thrown together had its pleasant aspects as well as unpleasant ones, because simply everyone was there hodge-podge and there was no segregation as to sex, nationality, or general position in life.

Someone said it was like a Russian novel -- I'm not much on Russian novels, -- but I think that probably was the description. We were there 18 days, hearing from time to time that we would be moved. During that time I think only one Japanese ever came into the hotel, and he was a young officer who came to make some special inspection of our reading matter. All of our reading matter, all papers, all papers, all writing materials were taken from us on one day, and rather to our surprise was all returned to us the next day. The people who had destroyed things in the meantime to avoid being caught were rather sorry. Then word came that we were to go out to Stanley, and the main group went. Able-bodied men were detailed to go out and try to clean up the place so that it would be ready for the rest of us. Stanley had been a rather major battlefield, during the defense of the island. And Stanley is the place where practically all Hong Kong atrocities were committed. Apparently they all occurred on Christmas Day and I've heard one explanation. I've heard that Stanley Fort did not get word of the surrender, and that when the Japanese sent out a detachment simply to take over the fort they were surprised and annoyed to have resistance shown, and in retaliation for that resistance, which they did not expect, they bayoneted the prisoners or the wounded in the hospital. They raped and killed three British nurses, killed a doctor who tried to defend the nurses, did a little bayonet practice on Canadian officer prisoners, and were extremely unpleasant to almost everyone they came in contact with.

At the mission which was near there, the priests, because they were not in civilian dress, were suspected as being military in disguise, and thirty of them were taken not in warm clothing, without any overcoats, and tied together and shut up in a garage for a time. The place was so small that they couldn't all lie down at once. They were kept there 36 hours without food, 48 hours without water, and the only communication they had were Japanese occasional insults, tossed in with the idea that they would get around to killing them very soon. These men were ones, I believe, who actually saw some of the mistreatment of the British officers.

All of this made Stanley rather a mess physically. The buildings to which we had been assigned were the apartment houses which had been built for the British prison officials, together with barracks or apartment houses, whichever you prefer, which had been built for the Indian policemen, who served in the prison, together with the building of the Stevens Boy's School, and in this area

there were also a few, possibly 8 or 10 private cottages. All these buildings were assigned to the camp and fell into an area of about a half mile square, I guess. The buildings, the Indian barracks were not particularly suitable, or not at least to the style to which many of the British had been accustomed. They had cement floors, and rather native style plumbing. For the people who went in there without any beds or equipment the cement floors given to dampness were a great hardship. The rest of us were in better buildings, except, of course, some of the school buildings which were highly unsuitable, but these buildings had themselves been injured quite a bit by the war. Some people were in rooms with the windows and part of the walls blown out, which was airy and again rather uncomfortable. We settled in after a fashion. We were fed, that is rations came out from the beginning. The group totaled altogether about 3,000 people. The food was given to us by the Japanese raw, and was cooked for us by our own people for special residence groups. That is the Indian quarters people, of whom there were 800 formed one residence group, and was served by one kitchen with a large volunteer force, or several large volunteer forces took turns. The American married quarters was another group, and that had about 200 or 250 people in it, and was served by a group of volunteer cooks who kept the work throughout. They had been the crew of the ADMIRAL WILLIAMS, a freighter scuttled in the harbor during the fighting. They did a very good job and, of course, were accused of stealing the food and living very well and starving the rest of us, but on a whole I think they rather more than earned anything they got. It was unpleasant work. Other groups were served similarly. I think we had on the whole the best cooking arrangement of anyone in the camp with the certain exception of the American bachelors group who had Jingles, an old Navy cook, who had retired in Hong Kong, and set up a number of hotels and restaurants, one of which was extremely famous. He knew how to organize a kitchen staff and how to make the most out of the food that was given him and managed to feed his people very well. He cooked for only 50, which was another advantage. The food given us was mostly water buffalo and Kongra eel for meat. The rice served at first was extremely bad, cargo rice, and pretty full of weevils. The greens served were usually alfalfa. We had, it was estimated, about 900 calories a day, some of the time up to a thousand occasionally at first. Later there was a marked improvement, we began to get bread and the calorie count went up to 1500, 1600 perhaps 1800 a day. But during the first month, from say January 23, when we arrived, up to the end of March, we were hungry all the time, and cold, of course, because of the weather and lack of food. It wasn't until May really that actual awareness of hunger disappeared. In the meantime, it was estimated that about a third of the people showed at least incipient signs of dysentery. There was talk of palagra, -- not dysentery, I mean beri-beri -- dysentery we had spells of -- but beri-beri was the one which was so prevalent. I'm not sure it was beri-beri-actually, lot of the people had the swelling of the ankles, etc., but didn't respond to vitamin D treatment, vitamin B treatment, and it may have been an endemical protien deficiency, the doctors weren't sure.

The Japanese didn't interfere with us much in camp, they sort of threw the food at us, and supplied a guard, not their own guard, but a guard of either Chinese soldiers, or Indian policemen, who stood around the barrier which was the barbed wire barricade. Occasionally Japanese would come on, sometimes drunk, occasionally admittedly looking for women. As far as I know there was nothing serious that ever happened on these occasions. A few men would sort of surround

the soldier, and there would be a deal of bowing and a little slapping, and the soldier would eventually be persuaded to go away. Meanwhile they tried to get higher authorities in case he got more harder to handle. They managed to take care of these situations pretty well. There was one sort of mass interference with our lives. We were all ordered out one morning, a rainy cold morning and kept lined up outside for a period of several hours while our rooms were searched. Some people lost quite a bit of canned food and that sort of thing during the search of the rooms, but in general it was not looting, it was fairly a respectable search. We were searched personally, too, at this same time, but the main disadvantage was having to stand around in the rain without having any cover. That was the only time really that they interfered with us much. Occasionally martial law would be put on, and we wouldn't be allowed to move out on the main street of the camp, but that would be for a very brief period. We were there until June. About the middle of May word came that the Americans were going to be exchanged. It was almost impossible to believe it. In fact, we made an effort not to believe it at first, for fear it should go wrong, because the Jap is easy enough to face staying there indefinitely when you didn't know, but to have a chance of getting out, then to have the chance taken away again, seemed almost unbearable. But gradually we began to believe it, and it was confirmed of course, by the time the Japanese allowed us to draw money from our bank accounts and provided us each with 100 yens for expenses on the boat, all of which, I believe, was charged against the American government and not charged against us. After we were sure of going, the Japanese tended to be very kind to Americans, I believe that all slapping stopped at that point, and we were warned very seriously about taking any maps, any photographs, any literature, any handwritten material out and were told that if our luggage showed that we were trying to smuggle anything of the sort we would lose our lives, certainly our repatriation and might jeopardize the whole scheme of repatriation. As a matter of fact, the inspection was thorough but the inspection was rather pleasant and there were no incidents at all. All of our luggage was inspected on Sunday, on Monday, around noon the Asama was in the harbor. We marched informally down to the pier, were taken in alphabetical groups and were put on small launches and the launches put us on ferry boats, the old Hong Kong-Kowloon ferry boats which took us out to the Asama where we were rather expeditiously assigned to rooms and found ourselves much better treated than we had dared to hope.

(Nine paragraphs omitted here)

Radio broadcasts, when we heard of them, were bootlegged. People in town spent a lot of time listening to the radio and there were reports, constant and unconfirmed as far as I was concerned, that there was a radio in camp over which people were getting BBC reports. But the reports that came supposedly from the radio were so fantastic that they must have been made up in the camp. When the Russian news began to be good along in the spring sometime we not only had good news from Russia but we had the Russian army in the Polish corridor, and a few people had it in Berlin. We tended to exaggerate every good report we heard and we consoled ourselves, the news at this time was for the most part bad, we got it fairly straight from the Japanese, so we always consoled ourselves that it was not that bad and that the Japanese were exaggerating. It was rather hard to get out and find out that they weren't.

(Three paragraphs omitted here)

There were about 300 of us in camp, and I believe that of that 300 some 50 to 60 elected to remain in Hong Kong. They remained in camp until we left and the understanding was that they were to be freed immediately after. The

conditions of remaining seemed to be that if a person could be supported or could support himself in Hong Kong he was permitted to stay if he wanted to. A number of the Catholic missionaries of the Maranol Mission both men and women stayed. One family of Protestant independent missionaries stayed, and three or four people who were retired Americans, seamen who had established Chinese families out there remained of their own volition. There were a few people who remained unwillingly, I think. Two were elderly missionary women who had never been picked up by the Japanese for internment, they had stayed quietly with Chinese friends and had escaped notice. They escaped notice so thoroughly that the American consul wasn't able to find them in time to get them on the list for exchange so that they were not put on the boat.

(Ten paragraphs omitted here)

The only time that work was given, they found Chinese coolies unsatisfactory in clearing a go-down near the camp and they called for volunteers among the prisoners and there was a large crowd of British and Americans who went out to do coolie duty loading food out of the warehouse onto trucks. They were paid, not in money but in food and got no regular wages, but mostly got the contents of broken cases. It was a fairly ignoble procedure and I believe the Japanese took movies of it for the glorification of Nippon.

(Three paragraphs omitted here)

Three groups of people escaped. The first two were a complete success. The first two groups went on the same night. One was a group of about five people as I remember.

(Six words omitted here)

One was Israel Epstein, a boy of Russian descent who had been brought up in Shanghai and had no passport except a Chinese passport. He had been clever enough during the fighting to get his death recorded in the newspaper and showed up in camp as an American by the name of Alex Stevenson who had regrettably lost his papers. Since he had done a great deal of writing against Japan he was particularly anxious not to be found as Israel Epstein by the Japanese. In camp he managed to maintain his identify as Stevenson to a point, and his connection with the Chinese Industrial Cooperative apparently was effective in getting them to fix up an escape for him and for two others. One was Elsie Fairfax Chumley and another one was an American by the name of Van Neff. Their escape was extremely well planned, I don't know the details of it but we talked about jumps. They got to Chung King in a fairly short time and broadcast and I think their broadcast had something to do with the improvement of our conditions generally. The other party that went out that night were Gwynn Priestwood and a policeman. Mrs. Priestwood is now in America and I hear she is about to go to England. She got to Chung King, it was reported that some of the time she walked entirely alone, she had lost her policeman en route and that was rather a feat as she knew no Chinese at all. They left on a rather mad venture without any preliminary arrangements but with some passes which had been forged for them by a student of Chinese with whom I was acquainted in camp. They very nearly went out with passes stamped with my personal stamp but it was decided at the last minute that that wouldn't be too good for me in case they

were caught. These passes were simply, "To whom it may concern: This person is extremely loyal to China, and if you help them you will be helping China." They bribed a guard and went out through the village of Stanley and up the hill to a water course, cement, that wound around at one of the middle levels. They followed that around the little harbor at Stanley, it made quite a long route with all the winding and they estimated that it would take them about 48 hours to reach the fishing village where they hoped to get a boat. They apparently did succeed in reaching the fishing village and in getting a boat because they got out. The fishing village was, a week or so after the escape, burned out by the Japanese and the people scattered, so the Japanese may have heard of this assistance or they may have been doing it only as a round about way of clearing out all possible aid to us.

(Twelve words omitted here.)

These escapes were roughly March 17, it was sometime in the middle of March. Then there was a later escape, four men, I think they were mainly from the Hong Kong police force, but not all, escaped and went across the island and were picked up on the island trying to arrange for boats to get off. Apparently their plans were very badly made, the contacts were not sure, and the Japanese got them, treated them extremely badly, we didn't hear or see anything of them, except that they had been caught, for a month or so, then they were brought back in a truck and one of them seemed to be unable to walk. The others helped him into the prison where they were taken and they sent a nurse from the internment camp to be an attendant on them, but I didn't hear any of the details on it.

(Four paragraphs omitted here.)

Joseph Alsop was extremely worried about me and at one time when he thought he would be going out early as a pressman he turned all of his food over to me and calculated that it would last me about two months. This was along the end of March. He said, after that, before you get starved, go to Slim Wiseman and tell him that you are to escape and he will take you out. I asked him about it later, if he knew that he had this difficult assignment and he said, "Oh! yes, doc, I knew. We had it all planned. We would have gotten out too probably, but it involved two swims, one a mile and a half, and the other one three miles and a half, the only trouble was, doc, you had to carry a submachine gun on your back." I mentioned that I wouldn't have made it. The submachine gun sounded surprising. He had very good contacts with practically everyone in camp, but particularly with the British police and the British police had been in the details that had gone out to help clean up the camp and they had managed to get together a fair supply of hand grenades, ammunition, and machine guns, and, I suppose, other arms. These had been wrapped up and buried and the places carefully remembered. Unfortunately, the moving of the boundary had meant that some of these places are just outside the camp limits, but their location is known and they could be gotten without too much trouble. I believe some of the police get in and out of the camp all the time, they have been very ingenious about that. They had this all ready and they had drawn up plans for what they will do when the Japanese power seems to break if from an attack from the outside or if the Japanese seem to be moving out. They want to get all the women and children and the older people into the prison which is there and which would make a very nice fortification to work from, and then they would get all their ammunition and armament and conduct a quiet war of their own. I am not sure just whom they were planning to defend themselves from, as a matter of fact, because talking to them at the Meetchau Hotel, when I saw quite a bit of them, they were extremely alarmed by the idea of being unarmed and having the Japanese move out and leave them unarmed with the Chinese population to

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administer. This may be, all this elaborate plan, may be to help throw the Japanese out, but it is very definitely with the idea that they will have to have arms to keep the Chinese under control.

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(Twenty-four paragraphs omitted here.)