

**Interviewee: Charles Forry**

**Interviewer: Thomas Saylor**

**Date of interview: 30 July 2003**

**Location: living room, Forry residence, Lancaster, PA**

**Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, December 2003**

**Editing by: Thomas Saylor, June 2004**

Charles Forry was born on 5 March 1919 on a farm in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. One of nine children, he attended the Hershey Industrial School in Hershey, Pennsylvania, graduating in 1937 with training as a printer. Charles then worked for Conestoga Publishing Company in Lancaster for four years before entering the US Army Air Corps in June 1941.

Charles completed Basic Training and in late 1941 was assigned to the 30<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 19<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, stationed at Clark Field in the Philippines. Soon after the Japanese attack on 8 December 1941 Charles and some others were relocated south to Mindanao, and there with a small group he avoided capture until late June 1942.

Charles remained a POW of the Japanese for thirty-nine months, in locations in the Philippines, on Formosa, and in Japan. Work details varied from farming and construction to railroad labor and kitchen duty. Like all POWs of the Japanese, Charles endured malnutrition, mistreatment, and disease. For the final eighteen months, April 1944 – September 1945, he kept a diary of events that carefully details the monotony and poor treatment.

Following his evacuation from a coal mine camp on the Japanese island of Hokkaido, Charles returned to the United States; he spent time in several medical facilities before being discharged in early 1946 with the rank of corporal. He was married in 1946 (wife Virginia), and returned to the printing business. For many years he was part owner of Forry and Hacker Printing, in Lancaster. Charles sold the business and retired in 1983.

At the time of this interview (July 2003) Charles and Virginia lived in Lancaster.

Charles Forry's POW odyssey (information from interviewee, and referenced with sources, however not 100% guaranteed correct)

23 Jun 1942	captured at Mindanao, PI (diary dates this exactly)
Jul – Aug 1942	Bilibid Prison, Manila, PI (stated during interview)
Aug/Sep 1942	shipped from Manila to Formosa (probably 12 Aug on <i>Nagara Maru</i> , w/ Gen Wainwright group; if not then likely 20 Sep on <i>Lima Maru</i> )
Nov 1942 – May 1943	“officer’s camp; stayed seven months” (probably Karenko, Formosa)
May 1943 – May 1944	Heito [Pingtung], Formosa (“one year and twenty days”—his diary dates this exactly)
June 1944 – Feb 1945	Taihoku [Taipei], Formosa (his diary entries date this exactly)
27 Feb 1945	Hell Ship <i>Taiko Maru</i> from Keelung [Chilung], Formosa to Moji, Japan (arrived Moji 4 Mar 45); train to Hokkaido
Mar – Jul 1945	camp at Hakodate, Hokkaido (“prisoners worked shoveling coal”); worked in kitchen (Forry diary, daily entries)
Jul – Sep 1945	coal mine, Hokkaido (name not clear, possibly Camp 3); worked in kitchen (Forry diary, daily entries)
9 Sep 1945	evacuated from coal mine camp by US forces

**Interview Key:**

**T = Thomas Saylor**

**C = Charles Forry**

**V = Virginia Forry, Charles Forry's wife**

**[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation**

**(\*\*\*) = words or phrase unclear**

**NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity**

**Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.**

T: This is an interview for the POW Oral History Project. My name is Thomas Saylor. Today is 30 July 2003, and this is an interview with Mr. Charles Forry, at his home here in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. First, Mr. Forry, on the record, thanks very much for taking time this very nice day in talking with me.

C: You're quite welcome.

T: We've talked for a little bit and I'm going to put into the record some of what I've learned from you. You were born on 5 March 1919 on a farm in Lebanon County here in eastern Pennsylvania. You were one of nine children and you attended the Hershey Industrial School, and that's the school started by Milton Hershey here in Hershey, Pennsylvania. You finished there in 1937. You had received training as a printer, is that right?

C: Right.

T: And I also learned that you then worked at the Conestoga Publishing Company in Lancaster City. Is that in Lancaster City?

C: Right.

T: Pennsylvania. From that time until you entered the service, which was in June of 1941. To skip ahead, you were discharged from the service in early 1946 at Fort Dix New Jersey and returned to the Lancaster County area. You were in the printing business after the war. In fact, you had your own printing firm, Forry and Hacker, and that was in Lancaster City. You retired from that in 1983. You were married in 1946. Your wife's name is Virginia and you have one daughter, that's Deb, who I met.

C: That's correct.

T: Let me go back to the focus of our interview, which is your experiences as a POW of the Japanese. Some information I know already—I'll include that as we go. You were captured in early, mid-1942 on Mindanao in the Philippines. I wonder if you

can describe the circumstances at the time that you were captured. Why were you on Mindanao, for example?

C: I was sent down there from Luzon. That's the island where Manila is. That's also where Bataan is. That's where I was. So after the first raid we lost our airplane. Shot up. So they picked six hundred of us that were in the Air Force to go down to Mindanao to set up the airbase from which MacArthur escaped. My last duty was standing guard for MacArthur.

T: He left the Philippines and you didn't.

C: He took the pineapples and the nurses.

T: Took all the good stuff with him too, it sounds like.

C: Yes.

T: By the way, for the record, you served with—you were a B-17 crewman, is that right?

C: That's right.

T: For the 19<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group 30<sup>th</sup> Squadron stationed at Clark Field, Philippines. Many of those captured in the Philippines were part of the now infamous Bataan March. You were not, because you were captured at Mindanao. How was it that you stayed, that you were not captured at the same time as the bulk of the US forces on the Philippines?

C: Because I was one of the six hundred that was sent down to the southern island of Mindanao to set up the airbase from which MacArthur escaped. I don't know how long, but we went to Mindanao to set up the airbase and MacArthur left in March sometime, I think.

**(1, A, 77)**

T: So you were there for some months before the Japanese moved down to that part of the Philippines.

C: Yes. They didn't even take us...the fellows that were on the crew, we stuck together and we were back in the mountains for some time there.

T: So you were not even part of the larger group of six hundred there for a while. You were with just a group of five of you.

C: Yes. Right. Because the other guys were put on a ship then. We had to go up there on a ship later. They took whatever was left of the six hundred; they loaded

up and shipped them out of there. Because they had their eyes on Davao, that's the southern tip of Mindanao.

T: I see. Now, how difficult was it for you and these four other guys to evade the Japanese for so long?

C: It wasn't too hard. We just went to the mountains, and the foliage and everything was so thick the sun never shone on it. The Filipinos helped us. Gave us rice. If we'd had quinine or something to take care of the malaria, we could have stuck it out there.

T: So you contracted malaria in the jungle.

C: Right.

T: Not surprising, of course.

C: So then the five of us were pretty sick. So we decided we were going to die here. We might as well turn in. If the Japs take care of us okay, and that's what we did. We turned in. The Japs picked us up out of there and threw us on a ship, and that's when we went up to Bilibid Prison.

T: So you were put onto a transport ship at Davao, I guess.

C: Yes. We called it Inter-Island Shipping at that time.

T: It isn't very far from Davao to Manila is it?

C: A good many kilometers, I thought.

T: The distances there pale in comparison to the later ship journey that you had.

C: But that little book that we talked about, that little black book...

T: The Testament Book.

C: That's where this comes in. When we were going down to Mindanao for our duty there, I had that in my coveralls, my flying whatever.

T: So it would be your left breast pocket.

C: Yes. The Japs were bombing us, but they weren't too good of shots. They missed us all. So by that time it was dusk. It was getting dark. So they just pulled this ship into a little cove in the island there, and we had to get off because the bombs were that close. Pushed the side of the ship in there. We thought we might go to the

bottom, so we started swimming. New Year's Eve 1942, that little book was with me in my pocket. All I did was swim for New Year's Eve party.

T: Let me ask you about when you first were captured by the Japanese and you were face to face with them for the first time. What thoughts went through your mind at that time?

**(1, A, 137)**

C: They weren't good, because they were beating us up if we didn't give correct—we tried to not give an answer at all. We had to learn military commands.

T: When you were first captured by the Japanese, was there a kind of...were you interrogated or questioned by them?

C: No. Not more than name, number, and so forth. They didn't beat us up for information because they had taken colonels or corporals...with all the generals and colonels, they weren't about to hit me.

T: That's right. In a sense, as a low enlisted person they weren't...yes. Well, what did you make of these Japanese when you first, when you first came face to face with them? What kind of feelings did you have? If you think about it, were you nervous, scared, angry? How would you describe the way you felt?

C: All of those. Because we'd heard all kinds of reports [of] what they were doing to prisoners, and we thought, well, that's us.

T: So you had heard by this time, rumors of what to expect.

C: Yes.

T: Where had those rumors or stories come from, Mr. Forry?

C: I don't know. We heard them, and they weren't very good hearing.

T: Did that influence your decision on whether to give up to the Japanese? In a sense, if you had heard some of these stories, did that make the decision to give up more difficult?

C: It did indeed, because we decided on our own that we'd turn in because we were all sick. As it turned out, they did treat us humanly. I mean, a beating or so didn't make any difference. And they gave us, just to take care of the malaria, they gave us the bark of a tree. Juice from the bark. It's supposed to...so that's how I got over that.

T: So the malaria did get cleared up, at least initially.

C: Little bit.

T: Let me move to Bilibid Prison. From the information we have, that's the first stop you had as a prisoner of war. And Bilibid Prison in Manila was an old Spanish colonial prison, so it was an older building. Let's talk about the conditions at Bilibid. What do you remember about the quarters you were kept in?

C: Oh, boy! Dreary. The food...they just didn't...they drove around with the numbers...but they didn't have any food for us. So that wasn't very nice.

T: So the food. What kind of food did you receive there at Bilibid there in the prison?

C: Just rice.

T: How many times a day were you fed there?

C: We were fed three times a day, I think. But they said, you are Americans and you're used to eating three times a day. The Japs ate five times a day.

T: So they were feeding you, in a sense, according to what they...but they were not increasing the portion size?

**(1, A, 191)**

C: No. They had different scales wherever you were. Maybe we'll come across some of those too.

T: From your information, you were at Bilibid less than a year, what you think is approximately six months.

C: Yes. I don't think it was any longer.

T: From August of '42. So your first Christmas as a POW was at Bilibid. Christmas of '42, it sounds like, and New Year's of '43, must have also been there.

C: Sounds about right.

T: When you think about the conditions at Bilibid, what kind of sleeping arrangements did they have for the prisoners?

C: Oh, boy. We laid on the floor. Some boards were laid on the floor and a little bag with rice hulls in it for a pillow. Then later on we were moved into a room where we did have...some boards were off the floor where we could bunk down on them.

T: The floor being stone, was the floor cold?

C: Oh, it was cold.

T: So it was not pleasant sleeping because of that cold.

C: No.

T: Bilibid was full of men. The historical accounts talk about how overcrowded Bilibid was. What nationality were the men that you came into contact with at Bilibid? Were they all Americans or not?

C: No. They weren't all Americans. That's why it had such a bad name. That was like what we call our Alcatraz, where they housed the worst prisoners. Filipinos. Or whatever.

T: I see. So you intermingled with these people, in a sense, in the same large compound?

C: Yes. Just a big room, but we didn't intermingle very much. They wouldn't let us. They'd beat you up. You didn't even talk to some of them.

T: There were Japanese at Bilibid, obviously. Talk about the Japanese you came into contact with at Bilibid Prison.

C: The Japanese at Bilibid Prison? Well, they were ready to kill. You just had to tow the line. Whatever they said, you had to do.

T: Was there any kind of interrogation or questioning of you about anything by the Japanese?

C: Not me, anyway.

T: What about the daily routine at Bilibid Prison? What did you do from morning til night at Bilibid Prison?

C: There was nothing we could do.

T: There was no working. You weren't working on anything?

C: No. They just didn't have anything. They didn't have enough guards to guard us. They didn't have enough guards to feed us. It was just kind of blank. A collection of people...not knowing what to do or where to go.

T: It sounds chaotic, in a way.

C: Chaotic is the word. They, on the other side, they had to work pretty hard to even get that ship out to take us to Formosa.

T: Now, in the months you spent there, how was your own health while you were at Bilibid?

**(1, A, 240)**

C: I was pretty healthy at that time.

T: So the malaria...how much of a problem was that for you?

C: That was a big problem.

T: There were lots of Americans in this facility too.

C: Oh, yes. Sandy Thomas, does that ring a bell with you? Sandy Thomas, I think was the name. That was a harsh business. The nurses.

T: I see. No, I haven't come into that. Let me ask about the people you came into contact with. Did you make friends or close acquaintances there at Bilibid Prison? You, yourself.

C: Oh, no. Except [if] they were in our outfit. No friends that I needed at that time.

T: So the people that you really stuck close to or stuck close with during the time at Bilibid were people that you knew before you went to Bilibid. Other Americans.

C: Yes.

T: How important was it to have friends or people you could depend on?

C: It helped. There's no doubt about that. Like on Bataan, when they had that Death March. You couldn't even step aside to get a drink of water. They'd bayonet you.

T: Right. I've heard those stories. How about for you, at Bilibid Prison? What use or how important were friends or people you could depend on?

C: Just to be able to talk to them. Because there was nothing else. You'd try to kid yourself, well, in six months we'll be out of here. So cheer up. That kind of thing.

T: Were you, at this point in time, of course, you haven't been a POW a year yet, how optimistic were you about what the future was going to bring?

C: I knew that the Yanks would be there for us. I knew that we'd get out of there.

T: Were there other people who weren't so optimistic?

C: Oh, yes. Yes. I remember our first sergeant. He should have been encouraging us. We had to encourage him. He finally died because he thought, I'll never get home, you know.

**(1, A, 274)**

T: So it sounds like, the way you describe it, his lack of optimism, not being able to stay upbeat, you think may have cost him.

C: Yes. Also, there were no cigarettes at that time. There was no smoking. He was a chain smoker and no cigarettes. That hurt him too. Didn't make it.

T: Were other men dying there at Bilibid Prison?

C: All the time. Some people that were shot during the battle of Bataan needed attention. (*shakes head no*) No way. No medical attention at all.

T: How is that, Mr. Forry, to see people dying around you on a regular basis?

C: There again you said, well, that's too bad, Jake. He had to die like that. But you gotta go on.

T: So do you become...is it callused? Is that the word for that?

C: I don't think I thought of it as callused. I thought if I could do something with...but there was nothing to do. Except you'd step out of ranks or try to help somebody, you might get punished yourself. By the Japanese. We had to learn the military commands. If you didn't respond, you couldn't say, I don't know. I didn't understand the Japanese language. So we did learn to count off and that kind of things. (*counts in Japanese*) *Ichi, nei, san, chi...*

T: You really had to learn a number of Japanese phrases to keep up.

C: Yes. Right.

T: What was the most difficult thing for you during that time at Bilibid Prison, personally?

C: To do what I had to do to get out of the situation that I was in.

T: When you got out of Bilibid, was that because the Japanese sent you or did you volunteer for something?

C: They sent us.

T: So after some months there, approximately six months, you and people were being moved out and you were moved out...

C: Right.

T: Do you remember that? How did that happen? Were you just summoned one day and that was the end of it?

C: Actually, that's the way it happened. One day they came in, and you had roll call every day. Twice a day. If you had your morning roll call...away you'd go. You didn't know what they said, but you had to follow.

T: Do you remember...what thoughts were in your mind when you were on your way out of Bilibid? Was there a sense of...you didn't know where you were going or what the future was...so how did you take that?

C: Just had to swing with the flow. There's nothing else to do. Because you're out there in the war seven thousand miles away from freedom and not having any food to even eat. There's nothing you could do.

T: Were you a person who was fairly good at taking things as they came?

C: I think so, because there's nothing else. Nothing else to do. So we did it.

**(1, A, 323)**

T: The way you described Bilibid was a place that was overcrowded, with a lack of activity. Not enough food. People, men, continuing to die around you, and the treatment by the Japanese guards as harsh, but they weren't beating people to death you mentioned.

C: That's about it.

T: And you weren't interrogated, either.

C: No.

T: The second major stop for you, in fact the place you spent the most time, was on the island of Formosa, which is currently known as Taiwan. From your recollections, you were moved there in early to mid-1943. So early to mid-1943 you were moved to Formosa. So now the people you were moved with, were these all from Bilibid Prison to your knowledge, or were they collected from a number of places?

C: They were collected from a number of places.

T: I see. So here suddenly you find yourself pulled out of Bilibid Prison and put on a ship. Right there at Manila?

C: Yes.

T: Mr. Forry, on the ship journey that you took from Manila to the island of Formosa, and this looks like it's early 1943, what do you remember about that particular ship journey?

C: You said about how many [men were transported]. I think about between six and seven hundred. Many were on that ship at that time. Everything was horrible then. Especially then, because we didn't know what was going to happen. Whether they were going to shoot us, take us down to shoot us, or that kind of stuff.

T: So they didn't tell you at all, even in the large group, where you were going or what you could expect.

C: No.

T: What else do you recall about being on the ship? Were you above deck or below deck?

C: We were below deck. That's why I know the figure a little bit, about six, seven hundred people jammed down in the hold of the ship. It was horrible. They lowered buckets of rice, steamed rice. That was our meal. It was also our latrine and that kind of thing. Those ships...horrible.

T: And I know from talking to you earlier, you had two ship transports. The second you had in 1945, which went from Formosa, ultimately, to Japan.

C: Yes.

T: And I'll come to that one later. So this ship journey you had here in the hold with six or seven hundred other guys...you talked about food being lowered, rice being lowered. Once, twice a day?

C: I think it was twice a day. One other thing. At nighttime they made the healthiest guys in the ship take the dead up aboard ship and throw them overboard.

T: This is on the way to Formosa, right?

C: Yes.

T: So there were still guys dying in the hold of this ship on the way to Formosa?

C: Yes. And the lack of water.

T: Fresh water was in short supply?

C: Yes. Very short.

T: What went through your mind as you were, day after day, on this ship going to Formosa?

C: There was just nothing to do. Shoot the bull if you had anything to shoot. That's all you could do. Talk to each other. Again, you try to bluff each other...oh, well, six months we'll be home and living in luxury. These Japs will still be out here.

T: Was that...how much did you really believe that, Mr. Forry?

C: That you would tell yourself?

T: Yes.

C: I really did at first, but there came a time when we broke it off. We'll never get home now. But at first, yes, it was real.

T: So the optimism was real at first, you're saying. Then as time went on, you kind of lost that sense of...

C: Yes. Because we had nothing to even look forward to on the ship. The rice coming down there. You were lucky to get a little bit of it.

T: How was the rice divvied up? One bucket going down, even a big bucket, going down to a bunch of hungry guys. How was that divvied up?

C: They had a cup and they...

T: So each person got approximately the same amount?

C: Yes.

T: Who placed themselves in charge of the group or of the food?

C: The Jap guards. They didn't divvy out the food, but they were looking over your back to see that everything was done the way they wanted it done.

**End of Tape 1, Side A. Side B begins at counter 384.**

T: So when you were on the ship and the rice was being given out, who gave the rice out? The Japanese?

C: They would sort of pick their own man. I don't know. They would walk in and you dish out the rice today.

T: I see. So it was somebody they selected.

C: Yes.

T: Did you feel the food was divvied up fairly?

C: Yes, it was. The condition we were in...*(trails off)*

T: Let's move to Formosa, the place you spent the longest time. From your own recollections earlier, you were essentially at two locations. The first called Heito, and that was a stone quarry. Let's start and focus on that. From your own estimation, how long did you stay at the stone quarry facility?

C: About a year I think.

T: About a year. So from '43 sometime to about the same time in 1944.

C: Yes.

T: The second place you were, the capital city of Formosa, and there you were engaged in a stadium building project.

C: Yes. That's what they told us. We had these little railroad cars. I guess they were pulled by the front. And they had narrow gauge track. We'd have to, wherever they had, we had to load them up with dirt or stone or gravel, whatever, and push it into where they were going to put this stadium.

T: You were longer at the stone quarry or longer at the stadium project?

C: I guess the stone quarry.

**(1, B, 432)**

T: And you departed Formosa in the first months of 1945 to go to Japan, on another ship.

C: Yes.

T: Let's focus on the stone quarry first of all. The guys were taken off the ship. Were all of you then taken to the stone quarry, or was the group from the ship broken up that you recall?

C: It could have been broken up because I don't think there was six hundred of us working at that project.

T: At the stone quarry, the work at the quarry, were you also housed at the same place?

C: Maybe a mile or two away from the place. We marched to it every morning and evening.

T: I see. So there were barracks or quarters from which you marched to the quarry and then back again. Let me ask you about the barracks or the camp location where you slept then. What do you remember about the barracks or houses or huts that you stayed in there?

C: It was just a couple planks off a deck. Those were our living quarters.

T: Were they buildings or huts or tents?

C: They were buildings, such as they were. You could see the sky from wherever.

T: How many of you were in a particular building there?

C: It might have been fifty of us, I guess.

T: So that would say there were a number of buildings here or was there just one?

C: Yes. There were a number of buildings.

T: The guards at the camp, were they Japanese?

C: Yes.

T: What can you say about them? What do you remember about these Japanese?

C: Some of them were mean, nasty. Others were nice.

T: Talk about a Japanese from the stone quarry that sticks in your mind.

C: Oh, I can remember the leader. Slant-eyes we called him. Jap. He was nice enough. He was in charge. He was the honcho. He'd march us in and march us out in the morning.

T: Did any of the Japanese speak English to you?

C: Oh, yes. They had an interpreter there for the camp. Whatever they felt they needed translation, he would do it.

T: Were you interrogated at all, questioned at all by the Japanese at the stone quarry facility?

C: No.

**(1, B, 494)**

T: Now, these barracks or these buildings with Japanese guards, approximately a mile or two from the stone quarry that you went to every day...

C: Yes. Right.

T: If you can, talk about the work that you were doing at the stone quarry.

C: There again, we were loading them on a train, a boxcar. The stone. We called them a punky. I don't know what they are...it took two men to haul them, front and back. We had to get out there and scrape them full of these stones. Run up a plank and dump them into the...

T: What kind of stone is this?

C: It was just regular stone. You might go out here and find some.

T: So these were to be crushed and used for building projects somewhere?

C: This was the base for something. We always thought it was being used for an airport.

T: But they didn't tell you.

C: No.

T: So there was stone that was being blasted and then...

C: It was blasted before we got there.

T: I see. So when you got there, you had to rake or something or a shovel or move it.

C: It was like the shape of a shovel and made into a hoe.

T: So you could pull these rocks, large and small pieces, onto a what?

C: Yes. Two baskets made out of...one man in the front and one man in the back. We'd load these up and take them and dump them.

T: Did you carry them on your shoulders then?

C: No, just by your hands.

T: I see. So you'd hold the basket with your two hands, the rocks would be raked in, and you'd carry this thing with your two hands.

C: No. They'd keep two of us together. The object would be two. The front, and one in the back. You lift them up and dump them in this car.

T: So you'd lift up both baskets.

C: Yes.

T: Were they on a pole or something?

C: Exactly.

T: I see. And you carried this pole on your shoulders?

C: No. With our hands.

T: Pretty heavy, the baskets?

C: Heavy enough.

**(1, B, 531)**

T: And when you had them scraped, the stones, and filled the baskets then, I hear you saying, you carried them up—

C: Up a plank, and dumped them into a boxcar. Yes.

T: A railroad boxcar.

C: Yes.

T: And slowly, I guess, these cars would fill up with this stone.

C: As slow as possible (*chuckles*).

T: Now, did you work individually, or in teams?

C: We'd try to make teams out of it. The Japs didn't do it, but when we saw good workers there, that get the work done, then we could rest. So we tried to make our own teams. That didn't always work.

T: Were you doing the same work every day, or was there some variety in what you did?

C: No. Same thing every day.

T: So really sounds monotonous in a way.

C: Yes.

T: Rake, fill baskets, dump baskets, go back down and do it again.

C: Right.

T: Now, during the day was there a meal served there at all?

C: Right. They brought rice out to us.

T: So you didn't eat before you left the camp?

C: No. We might have but then they brought lunch to us. Just another bowl of rice.

T: Were there guards at the actual stone quarry?

C: Oh, yes.

T: Were they all Japanese?

C: Taiwanese. There were a couple of those guys.

T: How were they as guards?

C: Rough. They'd beat you up.

T: So it sounds like they were at least as bad as the Japanese, from your own description?

C: At least as bad as the Japanese. They were worse than the Japs.

T: The daily routine sounds pretty much the same. Now, were most of the people you were with, or all the people, were they all Americans? The prisoners?

**(1, B, 563)**

C: No. British.

T: Mostly British?

C: Not mostly, but a lot of them were British. It made me think I was...there was one British heavy-weight boxer. When he was at home he was a heavy-weight boxer. He was six foot. He was a big guy. So they'd bring us our little bowl of rice at noontime, and you asked me what we would get. He'd sit down on a pile of stones and he'd pretend he's eating a chicken drum or anything other than rice. If I'd be home, I'd have a piece of bread with this. Stuff like that. He did that to the point where he killed himself.

T: How so?

C: Because he pretended he was eating chicken legs and all that good stuff and he wasn't eating at all.

T: So he deluded himself, you're saying.

C: Yes.

T: And the caloric content of what you're eating couldn't have been very much.

C: No. It wasn't.

T: How did the British and American prisoners, how do you remember them getting along together?

C: We had arguments. Because they didn't know you...you asked, did you form teams? Well, we did sometimes. But you always wanted to stay away from the British, because they were lazy. They didn't get their work done, so the Japs punished all of us.

T: I see. So it sounds like there was some bad blood between the groups?

C: Yes. I guess that's what you'd call it.

T: So you, when possible, would work with other Americans.

C: Yes.

T: The routine differed little. How was your health at this time when you were working at the stone quarry?

C: Pretty good. Pretty good, because...the record I showed you there...they let me send a card home because I was a diligent worker.

T: Yes. Now, what does it mean to be a diligent worker in the eyes of the Japanese?

C: I don't know. I guess I did the work they wanted me to do.

T: Were you...you're doing what could be dangerous work here without much regard for safety, it sounds like. Were you ever injured while you were doing any of this kind work?

C: Yes. This one particular day we were working in the stone. It was drizzling. Not really rain, just a drizzle. We had to walk up this plank to dump the stone in there. I slipped and went off the plank and hurt my knees.

T: How badly?

**(1, B, 602)**

C: Bad enough they gave me four days off.

T: You must have almost broken them to get four days off.

C: Yes. Yes.

T: Was anything broken?

C: No. It was lucky for me because, not only did I hurt my knee, they cut my rations because I couldn't work.

T: Incentive to get back to work.

C: Yes.

T: What kind of medical care did they give you when you hurt your knees?

C: Nothing.

T: So four days off from work was the medical care.

C: That was as good as I could expect.

T: When you consider the year that you spent there at the stone quarry, did people come and go? Did prisoners arrive and leave again?

C: No.

T: This group arrived and stayed together?

C: Yes. After that trip to Bilibid jail, there was not too much shipping of prisoners back and forth.

T: So when you got removed from Bilibid, you kind of moved as a group, by and large.

C: Yes.

T: Now, were men dying while you were you at the stone quarry or had that kind of stabilized?

C: That stabilized, but there were still a couple.

T: You mentioned the one British former boxer.

C: Yes.

T: What was the most common cause of death then in a place like Heito?

C: Beri beri.

T: Did you get that as well?

C: No. If I did have it, I was too dumb to realize what it was (*chuckles*).

T: When you saw someone with beri beri, how did that affect them?

C: Oh, that was... There was a guy that laid down on the planks beside me. Got up one morning and his whole body was transparent. Later on I found it was beri beri.

T: What did that do to a person who got beri beri?

C: Like this guy, he blew up, swelled up. His legs were great big. Arms.

**(1, B, 632)**

T: And you didn't get beri beri. At least not that you know of.

C: No. Not that I know of.

T: Of the year that you spent there at the stone quarry, what was the most difficult thing for you personally?

C: I guess being hungry, because we did the heavy work and no food. I think I would say it was that.

T: Does that mean that food was a topic of conversation among the men?

C: Always.

T: So women were off first place and food had taken the top spot.

C: Right. We didn't need the women (*chuckles*). We'd take the meal.

T: It sounds like there were about three hundred men there at Heito, at the stone quarry? Is that about right?

C: Yes. Maybe not quite three hundred. That's a pretty good estimate.

T: Were prisoners, from your observation or your experience, beaten by the Japanese?

C: Oh yes.

T: What for?

C: Anything. Anything that you might do. For instance, I remember when we were building that stadium, or whatever we were supposed to be doing. They were in teams of five.

T: Let me ask you. When you were moved to the stadium project from the stone quarry, was everybody moved again? The group was picked up and moved?

C: I think so.

T: So once again, you're not getting any real new people added to this group.

C: No.

T: So you had a chance, good or bad, to interact with the same people for an awful long time.

C: Yes, right.

T: Sure hope you liked them.

C: (*chuckles*) I had good relations...didn't push (\*\*\*) for England. I had a couple, one... He was an Englishman.

T: So you made some English, what we might call, friends while you were there.

C: Yes.

T: Did the time at the stone quarry end suddenly as your time at Bilibid had? Were you suddenly just moved one day?

C: Yes. Right. I mean, this guard I talked about earlier. He was a pretty good guy. He tried to tell us that we were going to be moved, but he didn't know how to tell us in English. But he went through all kinds of motions, and we figured out we were going on a boat again.

T: Was it true?

C: Yes.

**(1, B, 673)**

T: So you went on a boat from one location on Formosa to another?

C: Yes. That's when we headed for Japan.

T: But from the stone quarry to the stadium building project, how were you transported there?

C: We walked there, because it was the same area. We didn't go too far.

T: What changed now? You're with essentially the same people and you're on the stadium building project, which will take you from mid-1944 until early 1945. The war is going steadily worse for the Japanese in the Pacific.

Let's start with the conditions that you were in. Where were the prisoners kept while you were building the stadium project?

C: I think in the same place. They just changed locations for the work.

T: So you didn't change the sleeping locations.

C: The quarters. We didn't change.

T: I see. So those quarters you stayed in for quite a while then. The whole time on Formosa.

C: Yes.

T: Being in the same place like that, how was order kept among the prisoners in the camp?

C: We had our fights.

T: Who was in charge?

C: We had some guards there all the time.

T: I mean, among the prisoners? Who took charge? Or who was placed in charge? I mean, prisoners have to organize things themselves too, I suspect.

C: Yes. If you could, you'd make the highest ranking man in your outfit be the boss.

T: What kind of fights or disagreements did prisoners have?

C: It wasn't women (*chuckles*).

T: What was it about?

C: Getting the rice shared evenly with everybody was one thing. But it wasn't a serious thing, I don't think.

T: So the disagreements you describe as not serious.

C: No.

T: Who was your best friend during that time on Formosa?

C: I got thrown in with all the generals and the colonels.

T: So on Formosa you were with officers?

C: Right.

T: Here's a noncommissioned officer, an enlisted person, rather, and you're with a bunch of higher ranking officers.

C: We had one whole barracks with nothing but...General Wainright was the highest ranking man in the United States Army at that time in the Philippines. He was in the camp where I was. He was my best friend. On Formosa, I think this Colonel Braddock would be.

T: Did you meet Colonel Braddock only on Formosa? Is that where you met him?

C: Yes. He was General MacArthur's doctor.

T: How did you make his acquaintance?

C: There was nothing to do but shoot the bull. No radio. No paper. He'd come along and, "What are you talking about tonight, boys?" He was nice and sunny. He said,

“Just keep your sense of humor and you’ll get out of this.” He preached that all along.

T: So Braddock was on Formosa the whole time?

C: Yes. They had the general and colonels herding pigs. To humiliate them.

**(1, B, 710)**

T: After a long workday—and you worked every day—what did you do in the evenings?

C: I didn’t take a bath (*chuckles*).

T: They didn’t supply bathing facilities.

C: No.

T: How did you spend your time in the evening or when...there’s times when you weren’t sleeping and weren’t working.

C: Just nothing. Absolutely nothing to do. Cutting off your radio, the paper. Nothing to do.

T: So conversation becomes important, I guess.

C: Yes. Shooting the bull.

T: Were you good at shooting the bull?

C: No.

T: When guys shot the bull, what did they talk about?

C: What they were going to do when they get home. What they’re going to have to eat.

T: So meals again. Food again.

C: Yes. All the time.

T: You mentioned guys talked about what they were going to do when they got home. Was there, in your mind, did you think about after the war in any concrete terms while you were a POW?

C: Sure. You bet. Getting food and getting a job. How everything would be when we got home, because we didn't know what's happening at home with the war.

T: Let me ask you, on that subject: you were a POW for a long time. How aware were you of how the war was going?

C: Whenever you got a beating you knew that our planes were over bombing.

T: So towards the end of the war when American planes were bombing Formosa or Japan.

C: Yes.

T: Did anybody, while you were on Formosa, for example, and you were there for a long time, did anyone have a radio or access to news that you knew of?

C: No.

T: So your information about the war was...how did you get any information about that?

C: You just didn't.

**(1, B, 745)**

T: So you didn't know how the Japanese were doing?

C: No. Except when they beat us up. We had a bunch of guys just beat the heck out of them. You knew that the thing was in our favor.

T: So in a sense getting beaten was good?

C: Yes. I remember one place. They had just put us in this barracks. New barracks for them. The Navy came over and bombed that evening. Bombed and strafed the heck out of them. They didn't mark any camps that had prisoners. The Americans just bombed. So they lined us up. "Attention!" And beat us up.

T: I do know from the record that American Navy planes, carrier based planes, did bomb Formosa.

C: Yes.

T: By early 1945 that could definitely have happened to you. Was your camp specifically, ever bombed or strafed by American planes?

C: No. Not the one that I was in.

T: So there was never any kind of injuries or deaths resulting from being bombed or strafed.

C: No.

T: The work you were doing on this stadium project, describe that if you will. What were you doing precisely?

C: We were making...building up...I think the foundation for whatever...football field or whatever. We had to take these little cars, these little ton cars and narrow gauge tracks. They were getting all this dirt or gravel or whatever you call it. We had to haul in this stuff and take it over and dump it. Go back in line. Dump it.

T: And you were working pretty much with the same guys that were with you at Heito at the stone quarry.

C: Yes.

T: So it sounds like an expansive building project. That you're working on a foundation here. Same guards with you as well?

C: They'd change all the time.

T: So there were different...they continually changed.

C: Yes.

**End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.**

T: Finishing up your time at the stadium building project or whatever they were building. How had life become, the daily life, had it become more difficult in any way as the war dragged on, Mr. Forry?

C: Every day I think it became more difficult, because at the beginning of the ordeal we got to kid ourselves like six months. But as the days went on, oh boy, another day of this. I don't think I can take much more of this.

T: Did you keep your sense of optimism? The sense of faith in the future as things went on.

C: I had a lot of faith.

T: In a religious sense, you mean.

C: Yes.

T: Were you a particularly religious person before you went in the service?

C: I was a church-going person, but not religious.

T: How did your faith help you during the war?

C: It meant everything.

T: In what sense, do you mean?

C: Colonel Braddock told us to keep the humor. You had to keep the faith. Good things will happen. We will get out of here.

T: Do you think he meant keep the faith in a religious sense?

C: No. I did. I said that.

T: Did you find yourself relying on your faith on a daily basis?

C: Yes, I think so.

T: In what way, if you can remember. Was it prayer? Was that important to you?

C: Prayer was important. I would have my prayer and look up in the sky and knew my folks at home would look at the same moon.

T: So you had that image of something shared.

C: Yes.

T: That little Testament. That pocket Testament that I saw. Did you have that with you the whole time you a POW?

C: Yes. I carried it in my flying suit.

**(2, A, 51)**

T: So the Japanese never took that away. One other thing that I've learned before we started to tape, was that you kept a diary for yourself. When—and I saw several little notebooks—did you begin to take notes or keep that diary?

C: Even while I was out in San Francisco while we were training. All through the ordeal.

T: So at the beginning of your service time, you were writing things down. So keeping a diary necessarily wasn't something new to your POW experience. You had kept a diary before, you said.

C: Yes.

T: When you wrote things down as a POW, how would you describe the kind of things that you wrote down?

C: Straight from the heart.

T: And did you write these...were you pretty faithful about writing every day?

C: I tried to be. I might have missed some times in there.

T: So the entries in your diary, for example, are things that you actually...you didn't save them up or write a week or something at a time. You wrote every day.

C: No. No. I did it because it kept track of time. Some of guys would come to me and say, "Hey, Forry, what day is it?" I kept track of it there.

T: So by writing down the days and the dates, you were able to keep, in a sense, keep a sense of time for yourself.

C: Yes.

T: Was there any other way to keep a sense of time?

C: There's no other way. For me.

T: So you had no calendars per se, so you could really lose yourself, I guess in a sense, of what day, month or week is it?

C: Certainly can.

T: I see. How do you feel keeping a written record benefited you?

C: Meaning these notebooks I have? I don't think they in themselves did that much for me. It was my own satisfaction.

T: You weren't an artist. Your entries are strictly writing down what happened on a particular day.

C: Yes.

T: In your diary, did you talk about people, about Japanese or other prisoners that you met?

C: No. I kept that...in case they found it on me. If I wrote about Japs, what a lousy guard he was...they would cut my head off. So I had to keep them in hiding.

T: You had to censor that out, in a sense.

C: Yes.

T: Let me ask you: the Japanese didn't know about your journals, did they?

C: No.

T: First of all, how did you acquire the notebooks that you wrote in?

**(2, A, 109)**

C: I don't know where it was. Somewhere in Manila.

T: So you had blanks or empties.

C: Yes.

T: And how about writing implements? Did you write with pencil or pen or what?

C: It was some kind of stone we had. We could mix it with water and it acted like an ink.

T: I see. So in a sense, you made your own writing implements.

C: Yes.

T: Now that you have these, how did you keep them from the Japanese for years?

C: Keep it down that barracks bag I had.

T: This is the bag that you took everywhere with you?

C: Yes. It was an Australian kit bag. It was pretty big.

T: Like a gym bag?

C: Yes. Maybe bigger than that. Because...we didn't go on any marches where I was or anything where I was to lug a big bag around. Too much of a job.

T: Right. So you were able to conceal these journals, and they're about five by seven [inches] in size. You were able to conceal these in this Australian kit bag.

C: Yes. I sewed a false bottom with a tongue from a shoe.

T: They allowed you to conceal them in the bottom was it?

C: Yes.

T: The Japanese could have taken your bag away, but they never did.

C: No. They didn't.

T: So you kept that bag from Bilibid through Formosa and then Japan?

C: I did. Because, I say, one of them [the journals] is missing, but I kept the others.

T: You kept two journals, and you say there were originally three.

C: Three.

T: Let me move to the next part. I want to ask you specifically about the hell ship transport that you took from Formosa to Japan, in early 1945. You mentioned earlier, by this time American Navy, carrier based planes, were bombing Formosa so the Japanese decided to move you.

C: That's exactly what happened.

T: Were you moved essentially with the same group of people again?

C: No. As far as I was concerned. No. I might have known some from the others but...

T: So this group you had been with at the stone quarry and the stadium building project was broken up.

C: Yes. A couple ships went out ahead of us, so that's how we knew we were going by ship.

**(2, A, 155)**

T: I see. So you knew as people were parceled off from this group you were going to be on one of these ships.

C: Yes.

T: Now, did the ship go directly from Formosa to Japan?

C: No. We went directly to the China Coast. Then went up the coastline from over there in China. Went up the coastline to southern Japan.

T: Did you go by way of Korea then too?

C: I don't know about Korea. All I know is that we were on the Chinese coast.

T: And then over to southern Japan.

C: Yes. In Japan we got off the ship there, and onto trains.

T: And the trains ultimately took you north.

C: North to Hokkaido.

T: Can you estimate how long you were on the ship?

C: Oh, boy. I don't know... It was an eternity.

T: Can you compare the conditions on this second ship to the conditions on the ship that you took from Manila to Formosa?

C: Only worse. Because we were being bombed and torpedoed and all that.

T: American submarines were active in that area.

C: We weren't having...the Japs wouldn't feed you and all that.

T: Were you aware of whether your ship, your Japanese ship, was traveling alone or in a convoy?

C: It wasn't a convoy. It might have been one or two, but not a convoy as such. Like I said, we were torpedoed one time.

T: Your ship was torpedoed?

C: Yes. And we weren't far enough away from Taiwan that we got back to Taiwan. They put us on another ship.

T: Are you aware of the name of either of the ships you were on?

C: No. *Maru* something. [From Forry diary entries and research, ship was almost certainly *Taiko Maru*, sailing 27 February 1945 from Keelung [Chilung], Formosa, arriving Moji, Japan 4 March 1945.]

T: But they both departed from Formosa.

C: Yes.

T: Well, were you above deck or below deck?

C: We were below deck.

**(2, A, 192)**

T: Describe the conditions, if you can, in the hold of the ship where you were?

C: A stinking mess. Like everywhere I told you...they dropped our rice by bucket and then this was our latrine. That bucket. No water. I was lucky enough to have a canteen of water which I had filled somewhere.

T: So you had at least some.

C: Yes. I did. And it was worth a million dollars.

T: Down there, I bet it was. So the food situation sounds much like the first ship you talked about.

C: Yes. Exactly.

T: Lowered on buckets. Rice that was divided up and that was it. Was there enough room in the hold on this ship going to Japan to sleep?

C: Some had to sit up. Some laid down. Trade off. No, there wasn't enough room.

T: So you were crammed in such a way that not everyone could lie down at one time. You mentioned the first ship you were on that left Formosa was torpedoed. Right?

C: Yes.

T: Can you talk about that experience?

C: We were torpedoed foredeck, so we had some time to get out of there. I can't remember too much of it. Just all hell broke loose.

T: When the ship was torpedoed, were you aware that was what had happened? That it had been torpedoed.

C: Not really, because the Japs told us they hit a sandbar.

T: Oh. So you felt something obviously.

C: Yes.

T: When did it become apparent—did this ship sink by the way?

C: No. We weren't very far out. We got back to Formosa.

T: I see. So it was torpedoed and damaged, but it was able to get back to Formosa.

C: Of course, then [we were placed on] another ship.

T: So you didn't have to abandon that ship? That first one.

C: No. We had to get on another ship.

T: So it got back to Formosa and they transferred you to another one.

**(2, A, 229)**

C: On this ship, that's another funny story. My buddy next door was heir to the Reynolds Company. He was a millionaire. He was laying down beside the porthole trying to get some sleep. I forget his name. He died not too long ago. Had his picture in the paper. He lived in Chester area. But anyway, he laid down beside me and, "Look, Charlie, I got a million bucks at home. And I can't get a grain more rice than you." And he was right.

T: So social class and money didn't matter a bit, did they?

C: No. I know he got back. He was General Wainright's assistant, or aide de camp as they called him then.

T: The first ship, as you left Formosa, was torpedoed pretty quickly you said. Got back. The second ship is the one that ultimately did arrive in Japan, is that right?

C: Yes.

T: Were the conditions in the second ship any better than the first one?

C: No. One standard: no good.

T: You mentioned too, when that first ship was torpedoed that all hell broke loose on the ship. Is that right? That's the phrase you used.

C: Yes. Where to go? What to do? Nobody had any answers.

T: Was there panic among the prisoners?

C: By that time I don't think there was anymore. We were used to that stuff. Get on with it and get us home or whatever you're going to do with us.

T: Kind of this acceptance of what...but you were aware the ship wasn't sinking?

C: Right. The only time they opened up, like I said, on the first ship [going to Formosa], they opened up the deck at nighttime and they'd take out these bodies that had to go up and throw the thing overboard.

T: Were guys dying on the ship going to Japan too?

C: Yes. I'm sure they were, because they took them up and threw them overboard. That's why I always...my government, your government...all the money they're spending to find out where these people are. How can they find out? When they were bombed there and we threw them overboard.

T: There's no record is there? They're just gone.

C: No.

**(2, A, 269)**

C: Same thing with my brother. He was flying that B-17 with supplies and he never got back and never...just disappeared.

T: Did you, while you were on this ship going to Japan, did you also make entries in your diary?

C: I don't see how I could.

T: You had your bag with you, but you didn't have any way to write?

C: Yes.

T: Let me ask you. On this trip from Formosa to Japan, for you personally, what was the most difficult thing?

C: Everything was difficult. Starved. No water. No place to sleep. Everything. Pick one thing out of that bunch...one equals out the other.

T: With the situation that is so bad like that, how do you keep your head on straight? How did you do it?

C: Faith.

T: Was your faith more important for you at those times when things were really tough like this?

C: I tried to stay at an even keel. But it was hard.

T: It sounds like it was hard.

C: It was hard.

T: Were there other guys who weren't able to keep an even keel?

C: Yes, there were. Especially when they opened up and you could see them throwing these guys overboard.

T: That must have been hard to see that.

C: Yes.

T: Did guys go, what we might say...did guys go crazy below decks?

C: Yes, some did. Although not too many. But we had some.

T: What do you do? Or what happened in a situation like that? Where someone just snaps.

C: I guess the guys next to him had to take care of him. Try to keep...cover it up.

T: When you say take care of him, what do you mean?

C: Talk to him. Try easing...he's getting past this terror at the moment. Then he'll make it. Because, I don't know....wherever it was they were taking us [reference to arriving at Moji] they didn't have any docks or anything. They had a couple guys and an oar and had the small lifeboats bring us in.

T: So that's how you were taken from ship to shore.

C: Yes. Then of course, they had the trains there ready for us. They put us on the train. These were passenger cars. So we went over the side and like that. They were passenger cars all right. It was dark. They had the blinds pulled down. Of course, you know, the Yankees...the first thing they did was snap the blinds open. So they taught us in a hurry that you don't do that here. Because we don't want the Japanese to laugh at you. They all think you look like monkeys.

T: So they had the blinds down on these trains as you were moving.

C: Yes.

**(2, A, 312)**

T: So you couldn't see what was outside really.

C: We tried to, but you couldn't. They had the blinds pulled down so people wouldn't think we were monkeys. That's what they said.

T: You went from the south where you got off the ship—did you stop in Tokyo or any other cities?

C: We went right through Tokyo. We were under fire at the time the B-29s were over. Boom! Boom! Boom!

T: Could you see, in Tokyo, could you see anything out the window there?

C: No. Not of interest.

T: And once again, you didn't know where you were going on this train. Just going.

C: No.

T: And I know from before we talked, that your location was at a coal mine on the northern island of Hokkaido. Let me ask you about the coal mine. Where were you kept at the coal mine?

C: They had barracks on decks...on a board. That was a pretty decent barracks too, by the way. I think they used it themselves.

T: The Japanese had used these barracks.

C: I guess, because they were the most decent thing we had.

T: So after being in Bilibid and on Formosa, when you actually got to Japan, you would rate this the best quarters you had.

C: Yes.

T: Describe those quarters if you can.

C: The barracks. One good thing...things were getting better. When we got there to Hokkaido they gave us a meal which we missed along the road. The barracks...it was cold up there. Snow up to our knees.

T: You weren't dressed for that.

C: So we had a barracks and had one of these potbelly stoves in the center of the barracks to warm the whole barracks.

T: How many men to a barracks here, approximately?

C: I don't know. I think it was just a big long building.

T: And were all of you in the same building, that you recall?

C: No. Because there were Chinese and Koreans in the next barracks below us.

T: So here's a coal mine facility...was the coalmine and the camp one and the same, or did you move from camp to coal mine every day?

**(2, A, 344)**

C: No. We stayed in the camp.

T: So the camp was at the coal mine?

C: Yes.

T: Here's a camp, you're describing with not just Americans.

C: No. Korean and Chinese. Because...the reason that we had...our forces didn't know where we were. They knew where we were by air, but not on the ground, so [after the surrender in August 1945] they dropped messages to us. Stay put and we'll be in for you. So they'd come over every day and feed us...fifty-five gallon drums, drop them by parachute.

T: So at that point you were receiving some kind of supplies.

C: Yes.

T: Now, you arrived at coal mine, from your information, right around April 1945.

C: Yes.

T: That's about four months before the war ended. Can you talk about the kind of work that you did there? The daily routine at this facility. [NOTE: From Mr. Forry's diary entries, he worked as a cook and seldom, if ever, went to the mines.]

C: They had to get down in the mine and hack away.

T: There was roll call in the morning outside your barracks?

C: Yes.

T: And then how far was it from your barracks to the actual pit head of the mine?

C: Real close.

T: And this is an underground mine?

C: Yes.

T: What did the men wear to go down underground?

C: I don't remember what I had. But they gave us some of our old Army uniforms to wear in that cold camp.

T: Was it cold underground too?

C: Yes.

T: When the men got underground to the coal mine, now, exactly what kind of work were they doing?

C: Getting coal. Picking away and loading it on the trains and shoving them out.

T: So narrow gauge railway again with cars that were pushed?

C: Yes.

T: The blasting had been done before they got there or did they do blasting too?

**(2, A, 368)**

C: They didn't do any blasting. They just picked away with little picks they gave them.

T: So hand tools. So they're picking away. Did jobs change at all?

C: We could change around.

T: So there was a job of actually picking the coal off the face, loading it into these small narrow gauge railway cars, and then pushing it down to the shaft where it would be raised up.

C: Yes.

T: For you, which of those jobs was the most difficult?

C: I tried to stay on top of the ground as much as I could. Not go under, because we hear about our safety...they didn't even have any shored up timbers. But we...it was that bad down there that a buddy of mine, this is Furr, he was as big as they come. Big tough Army guy. I wouldn't like to meet up with him anyway. Conditions were that bad down in that mine that when you had sickness or broken bone or something, you work on top...

**End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B begins at counter 385.**

T: So if you had a sickness or a broken something you could stay above ground?

C: Yes. Then you'd work above ground. But this guy Furr, that day he said, "I'm not coming down here anymore." He laid his arm across the railroad and broke his own arm.

T: How did you manage to stay above ground some days to work?

C: I must have had to trade with somebody.

T: What kind of work was there above ground?

C: Loading up to take it somewhere else.

T: This work you did from April until the war ended, which was four months it looks like, how about the Japanese at this particular camp? Were all the guards Japanese at the coal mine?

C: I don't remember. All I remember is the Chinese and Koreans.

T: They were also laborers.

C: Yes. They were in the shaft on the other side.

T: So they worked one place and you worked—and you were still mixed with some British POWs, is that right? In the group you were with.

C: Could be. I think there was.

T: And this is the group you were with...some of the group from Formosa. What was the most difficult thing for you about this period of the coal mine in Japan?

C: We were getting close to the end. We couldn't kid ourselves anymore that we'd be home in six months.

T: How aware were you, before the war was over, how the war was going there in Japan?

C: How did we know how it was going? Real good. Because they brought horsemeat in to us to eat.

T: The Japanese?

C: Yes. At the very end. We didn't know that the war over then yet.

T: How did the Japanese tell you about the end of the war?

C: In the first place, they dropped the atomic bomb. The first one. And the Jap general jumped on the table and said, "We're going to get rid of you. We're going to shoot you because Americans have dropped an illegal bomb."

T: That's all of the explanation he gave you?

C: Yes. So then our good old Harry Truman came along and dropped the second one pretty quick [on 9 August 1945]. They didn't even tell us the war was over. They just stacked their guns outside the mine and took off.

T: So the Japanese melted away, it sounds like.

C: Yes.

T: What happened at that point when the Japanese disappeared?

C: It was a joyous day. They left their guns there.

T: What happened at that point? The Americans didn't come right away. You mentioned how you were supplied by airdrop for some time.

C: Yes.

**(2, B, 464)**

T: How did you pass the time in the camp? The war is over, but you're still by yourself and nowhere to go.

C: Yes. You could sit out in the open air and you could shout and yell at somebody if you wanted to.

T: What were your thoughts and feelings at that point, Mr. Forry, after three plus years as a POW?

C: Just get me home now. The job's over.

T: Did you observe any kind of retribution against the Japanese at all?

C: No. No, I didn't.

T: Were there any Japanese left at all once the war ended in the camp there?

C: Not in our camp.

T: Did your camp have a name or a number that you were in?

C: I think it was Number 2, but I wouldn't swear by that.

T: So until you were taken out of this camp by American forces, you stayed in the camp and in the barracks.

C: Yes. We had a small war of our own. They came over every day and dropped fifty-five gallon drums of food for us. All kinds of food. Their orders to us were to stay in your barracks and you will be all right. But the people in the Chinese camp didn't understand that I guess. Then they dropped the next food drop and one of the strings dropped on the camp with the Chinese and Koreans, and so they were going to beat us up because we had gone to get it.

T: Was there any kind of...how were these airdropped supplies split up? Were they shared with the Brits and the Chinese and the Koreans?

C: Yes, we did.

T: So the stuff was shared out.

C: Yes.

T: Were there any conflicts with these Koreans or Chinese, for example?

C: No. Not until the fifty-five gallon drum. If they had stayed inside like they were ordered, there wouldn't have been anything. But anyway, that created a little rift there.

T: They were hit with these things?

C: Yes. Killed a couple of them, of the Chinese or Koreans.

T: Now, were you making diary entries still after the war was over?

C: No, I stopped about that time.

T: Can you estimate, Mr. Forry, how long you stayed in that camp before you actually were moved out?

C: A month.

T: You were there for a month until you got out.

**(2, B, 515)**

C: Yes. I was...the war was over in August, and we didn't get out of there until September.

T: Did Americans actually physically come to get you?

C: Yes, they did.

T: Talk about the arrival of the Americans, if you can.

C: As I remember it was just one sergeant came, to get us ready to fly out. He was good size.

T: So he came and you were trucked to an airport?

C: Sapporo Airport.

T: So you were trucked to Sapporo and flown to...

C: Manila.

T: I know from our conversation earlier, you spent some time in Manila, but then did you take a ship or a plane to the States?

C: We took a ship. At least two planes came in for us to take us out of Japan. They came in and the pilot on our plane said, you guys have been penned up for so long you don't know what's going on. I'm going to take you down and show you. So he took his C-46, took us right down above the atomic bomb.

T: Of Hiroshima or Nagasaki?

C: I don't remember which one. But anyway, he flew down along the coastline so we could see what happened.

T: What could you see from the plane when you looked out?

C: Just a bunch of toothpicks sticking up in the air.

T: You're describing a scene of devastation.

C: Yes.

T: How did that make you feel seeing that?

C: We really didn't know...atomic bomb? What's that? We just didn't know what we were getting into.

T: But you could see the results of it.

C: Yes.

T: You spent most of your time in hospitals here in the United States and that was—where were you in hospital in the United States when you got back here?

C: Woodrow Wilson, down in Virginia.

T: Were you in California too?

**(2, B, 554)**

C: Oh, yes. I forget the name of it. In San Francisco.

T: Where did you spend the most time? Was that at Woodrow Wilson?

C: Yes. Woodrow Wilson. Staunton, Virginia. Because when I was there, they pulled two teeth. And they gave us little red pills to put the weight back on.

T: Did they tell you what those pills were?

C: No. Just take them. I took them. But anyway, after seeing that C-46 go down...he was following us. [unclear reference: perhaps a plane crashed] I was in the first plane. And the number two plane was back here following us. So he came down to show his...so we got to Manila and we were all off the plane. Some general told us, "Look, you guys, you've been penned up. Now, if you go out here and see a plane that's going to the States, it's yours. You get first choice. If you see a ship and that's what you want, your choice." So I thought after seeing that, I'm not going by airplane, so I picked a ship.

T: So you got back to the States. I want to focus on the time that you spent in hospitals, because you were in a number of facilities, the one in California and the one in Virginia.

C: Yes.

T: Physically they took care of your teeth. Anything else major that they fixed up with you?

C: Even after a couple months I had to go to Williamsport and all over the place to take the tests.

T: Was there...that kind of physical recovery side. What did they do to help with the kind of psychological aftermath of being a POW?

*(pause in tape here)*

T: While you were still in the service before you were discharged, what kind of help did you get?

C: I didn't get any.

T: So there was no questioning by military people asking you about the experience or trying to help you in a posttraumatic situation?

C: They did that. All kinds of interviews.

T: While you were still in the service?

C: Yes.

T: What kind of things did they ask you?

C: I don't remember. I don't remember.

T: Do you remember talking to any kind of medical people or psychologists whatever, about what you'd been through in Philippines, Formosa, and Japan?

C: Yes. They talked about it, but I didn't feel the need for any. I was nutty enough *(chuckles)*.

*(pause in tape here)*

T: So what I hear you saying is before you were discharged in 1946, that the military didn't really offer you counseling or support group setting for your POW experience.

C: They would if I would ask for it. I didn't ask for it.

T: Why is that?

C: I thought I was getting all right on my own. I wanted to get back to printing [pre-war business].

**(2, B, 606)**

T: So you were, like a lot of guys after the war, anxious to get out of uniform and move on with your private life?

C: Yes.

T: You had been in the service close to five years by the time you got discharged.

C: Yes.

T: You were married in 1946, right?

C: February '46.

T: So when you were married in February '46 you were still in uniform.

C: Yes.

T: Had you known your wife, Virginia, before you went in the service?

C: Yes.

T: When you saw her again and you saw your folks again, how much did they ask you about your POW experience?

C: I don't believe they asked too much. I think they left me alone.

T: How much did you tell them about your POW experience?

C: Whatever they wanted to know.

T: Did you share details of Bilibid Prison or Formosa or the hell ship, for example, with your wife when you were first married?

C: I probably did.

T: So you weren't a person who, we might say, clammed up about this?

C: No.

**(2, B, 627)**

T: Let me move on now with the VA. You got out of the service in 1946. What kind of counseling or support group help did you receive from the VA through the years?

C: I think they had anything I wanted, and the support group is still going.

T: Are you a part of that?

C: No, I'm not.

T: Have you been a part of that in the past?

C: I went to one meeting.

T: How long ago was that? Do you remember? That you went to that meeting.

C: I don't know.

T: You remember going once, but not again.

C: Yes.

T: What was it about the meeting that made you decide this isn't for me?

C: I thought I was above that. I didn't feel sick. I didn't feel that... My brain was okay

T: Your POW experiences, when you had your business for example, co-workers at your business. Did they know about what you had been through?

C: No.

T: And you've talked, I think you mentioned earlier, you've talked about this with groups or individuals before, in interview situations.

C: Yes.

T: Has the story you tell or the amount of detail you provide someone, someone like me, has that changed over the years?

C: I think it's stronger right now, because of the condition of the world wars.

T: So you're more willing to share more details now than maybe in the 1950s?

C: For myself I don't know that would be the case. But I feel that the care I need would be there if I wanted it.

T: And what I hear you saying is, you're a person who since you got out of the service has thought you've done pretty well for yourself as far as working through this and getting on with your life.

C: Yes.

T: As you were growing up and you have one daughter, Deb, how much did she know about your POW experience as she was growing up?

C: If she wanted to know, if I could tell her, I would.

T: So that's something if she asked you a question, Dad, tell me about what happened during the war, that you did share that with her?

C: Yes.

T: On the same basic track. Did you have to deal with bad dreams or recurrent nightmares after you got out of the service?

C: I do some.

T: Has that always been the case for you?

**(2, B, 662)**

C: Yes. I have some.

T: Are they, the frequency, do you have them more today or less these days than you did right after the war?

C: Right now I would say it was more.

T: Is it, in your mind, typically the same kind of images or the same dreams that you have or is it different ones?

C: I think it's different ones.

T: If you think of a dream that you have, you mentioned dreams that recur, what's one image or what's one dream that you have that you have had more than once?

C: People walking in on my when I'm asleep. When they walk in on me when I'm sleeping, then I wake. Nothing serious.

T: Are there Japanese in your dreams?

C: Not recently I haven't had any to do with the Japanese.

T: Mrs. Forry, I wanted to ask you, Charles' wife Virginia sitting here, do you have something to share about the dreams and images?

V: Yes. He...from the very beginning he had nightmares, and really bad ones. He would scream and yell out loud and thrash his arms. He was fighting. And to this day he still does it. Like he said, he has people coming in his room. He was in the hospital about two years ago and he was being evaluated, and that was the evaluation that the doctors gave him. His traumatic experience. It's still with him.

T: How, as the wife of an ex-POW, how have you dealt with that over the years?

V: I try to get on with it. I'm the type of a person to say, it's past. Let's get on with life. I think that's what he's...I don't like his watching television too much and this war.

T: The Iraq war?

V: Yes.

T: Really. That has caused more dreams, you think?

V: Yes. And they tell you that you should not watch too much of that.

T: As a way of bringing it...it brings back... So you've noticed this just recently with more coverage on the war. War and POWs.

V: Yes. And he seems drawn to it.

T: That's something that you've noticed. This coverage about the Iraq war that has interested you, Mr. Forry?

C: Not necessarily interests me. I'd like to get it over with.

T: We all would. The final question I wanted to ask...the final question I had for you, Charles, is this: what do you think is the most important way that your POW experience changed you as a person?

C: I think when they interviewed me one time for television I told them I thought it made me a better person. To have gone through that. But I wouldn't want to go through it again.

T: When you say it...do you believe it made you a better person in some ways?

C: I think so.

T: That's the final question for the interview. Thanks very much.

**END OF INTERVIEW**