

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Daniel Crowley
Simsbury, Connecticut
April 17, 2012
Army Air Corps
Prisoner of War, Bataan Death March

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is April 17, 2012. I am interviewing Mr. Daniel Crowley by telephone. His phone number is 860-658-7159. His address is 6 Deerfield Lane, Simsbury, Connecticut 06070. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, The Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Dan, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today, and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Crowley:

Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum and make sure it's okay with you.

“Agreement read.”

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Crowley:

Yeah, but it's a lot of bullshit, of course. (laughing) I've already done with the National Archives. They have it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, the next thing I'd like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road.

Mr. Crowley:

Janet Sackeaer, my daughter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for her?

Mr. Crowley:

970-331-4675, Colorado.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birth date?

Mr. Crowley:

05/29/22.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Crowley:

Greenwich, Connecticut.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Crowley:

Yeah, I had five brothers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many of those were in World War II?

Mr. Crowley:

None.

Mr. Misenhimer:

None?

Mr. Crowley:

Well, my one brother was over in Germany in the Occupation, that was after the war.

Mr. Misenhimer:

After the war, okay. Now, you grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Crowley:

How? You didn't know you were poor. Everybody was poor (laughing).

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Crowley:

He was a manufacturer, out of business when the Great Depression hit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he able to work during the Depression?

Mr. Crowley:

Yeah, but he just did part-time artistic work.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you live in town or in the country?

Mr. Crowley:

No, in town, Greenwich.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you able to have a garden?

Mr. Crowley:

Yes. One brother actually created a huge garden.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you able to keep any chickens or anything like that?

Mr. Crowley:

No, we didn't do that. Too stupid (laughing). Only the Italian immigrants and Polish immigrants knew enough to do it. The Irish were too dumb. Plus we had one brother who had a big garden, but many times we had no food in the house.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was tough times.

Mr. Crowley:

It was horrible.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Crowley:

Greenwich.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you finish there?

Mr. Crowley:

I didn't. I walked out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your last year?

Mr. Crowley:

'38. I knew more than all the teachers, Richard.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were about a sophomore in high school at that point? A junior.

Mr. Crowley:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Why did you leave high school?

Mr. Crowley:

I just told you, they were too stupid. They weren't educators. They were borers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do when you left school?

Mr. Crowley:

I worked. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer:

What work did you do?

Mr. Crowley:

Various jobs. Gas station, drove wreckers, grocery stores.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go in to the service?

Mr. Crowley:

October 7th of '40.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you volunteer?

Mr. Crowley:

Sure. I beat the draft by seven days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What branch did you go in to?

Mr. Crowley:

US Army Air Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Air Corps?

Mr. Crowley:

I didn't. We went to three recruiting officers to go anywhere and we finally found three openings in the third recruiting office. They were in the Army Air Corps, Philippines, so they told us we were lucky. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was it you and two friends?

Mr. Crowley:

Yeah. Two drinking buddies.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were only 18 years old.

Mr. Crowley:

That's right. We started very young then.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I see.

Mr. Crowley:

You started drinking when you were fourteen, fifteen – as long as you could stand up at the bar in New York State and you could pay for it. (laughing) Social drinking.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Crowley:

Never had any.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go when you went in?

Mr. Crowley:

We sat on an island off New Rochelle, New York called Fort Slocum, a Civil War fort, and waited for a boat until January of '41. Shipped out of Brooklyn Navy Yard February 2nd, '41.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where did you go to?

Mr. Crowley:

Manila.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you hadn't had any kind of training up to that point.

Mr. Crowley:

Warm body, period. With a uniform on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip over there?

Mr. Crowley:

Miserable. Blew a cylinder head in a typhoon off Hawaii and limped into Hawaii and they kept us in barbed wire enclosure for ten days. Wouldn't allow us anywhere. They were afraid we'd run away (laughing).

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say you went to Hawaii first, then.

Mr. Crowley:

By accident.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How's that?

Mr. Crowley:

I just told you: we blew a solder head on the old WWI transport in a typhoon. We limped into Hawaii and they kept confined while they repaired it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the accommodations like on the ship?

Mr. Crowley:

On the ship? Horrible, like steerage.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many high bunks?

Mr. Crowley:

I have no idea. I don't recall.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about the food on the ship?

Mr. Crowley:

Horrible.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to in the Philippines?

Mr. Crowley:

Manila. Outside Manila was the so-called Pursuit Base, it was a fighter base, Nichols Field. Now Manila International or Philippine International.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you arrive there?

Mr. Crowley:

March '41.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do when you got there?

Mr. Crowley:

Not much. We spent about a hour and a half a day on the flight line and then marched back to the tents and had the rest of the day off.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do on the flight line?

Mr. Crowley:

Did maintenance on the aircraft. We learned fairly fast how to run them up, warm them up, do all the tech jobs, everything but fly them. They wouldn't let us fly them. (laughing) You can actually taxi them, though.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of planes were these?

Mr. Crowley:

P-35s. We got moderate P-40s that no one in the world wanted, so the Army kept them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did you do that?

Mr. Crowley:

Until the Japs struck, it was 18 hours after they hit Pearl Harbor. Caught us with our pants down. Destroyed all the aircraft on the ground except four.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand there was a bunch of B-17s there also.

Mr. Crowley:

They were in another field, Clark Field. They were destroyed on the ground because of the stupidity of MacArthur, who wouldn't allow the Air Corps General to take off and attack the targets on Formosa, which is now Taiwan. He had all the targets plotted, the bombs were aboard, the men were ready to take off, but they couldn't get permission so they walked off the flight line, went in the barracks, had lunch, and the Japs hit. Left them all to pieces on the ground.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they attacked Pearl Harbor did you hear about that?

Mr. Crowley:

I just told you, we knew all about it. 18 hours later, they hit us. MacArthur panicked for that whole time. He wouldn't make a move, didn't know what to do. We left the barracks and manned machines on the airstrip, ineffectual WWI garbage – couldn't hit anything with it. Had about 100 Jap planes hit us. I was on a Lewis gun, a WWI Lewis gun, but I'd left my position to get a cup of coffee and they blew it all to hell. So the coffee saved my life. A bunch of sandbags piled up around the gun.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had you had any kind of weapons training to that point?

Mr. Crowley:

(laughing) Not at all. They had three Lewis guns hooked up together by our armorers and took a _____ iron with three holes drilled and they put a bar through the three triggers so you could fire all three at once. A 90-round drum on the top you feed them Lewis gun..

Mr. Misenhimer:

What caliber is a Lewis?

Mr. Crowley:

.30. You had three. I had 270 rounds. If you ever had to fire at a plane it would have jammed anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So then what happened?

Mr. Crowley:

Then what happened? We waited on the airstrip for something to do and they finally decided to send us across the water to Bataan. We thought we were going to Australia (laughing). We sailed across Manila Bay all night thinking we're on the way to Australia. We wound up on the tip of Bataan, this place called Mariveles. We walked off there, marched up the road, set up an encampment, had a pile

of canned goods, Christmas Day. I recall sharing a can of tomatoes with four or five other fellows. That was our Christmas dinner. Then, a little later, we were told we were going up the coast to clean out a 100 Japs who had landed the night before and made it into the jungle. We marched into the jungle, a couple of hundred aircrew guys with no training, and it turned out to be 5,000 Japs. So, we pulled our arses out of there and the Filipino scouts went in and said, "Don't worry, Joe, we'll take care of them," and they slaughtered them all. They did a great job. They were the best-trained soldiers in the world, the Filipino scouts. We were green kids with no training. So, then we head back in to a defense squad, we learned now what it was all about, and about 16 Jap barges tried to land one night, we set up our fifties from cracked up P-40, and the armorers redesigned them so they could be cocked manually because they were electronically cocked on the plane, and they mounted them on some old water pipe, .50 calibers, they had a bunch of them lined up on the beach, dug in, and we waited for the Japs to come in so you could visually see them, you could hear them coming from a distance. They were throwing mortars at us which were, thank God, exploding in the trees behind us, in the jungle. So, we destroyed all the Jap landing barges and all the Japs that were in them. No survivors came ashore, we cared them off. But we captured a bunch of them. It was B.S. that the Japs never surrendered, we captured a bunch of them and treated them decently. Shared what little food we had, which wasn't much because we were cut down a mess kit, roughly two-thirds full of liquid rice, and it was poor quality rice because the Japs had captured, when they landed on Luzon, ten million tons of rice, which was supposed to provision Bataan for six months. They captured it all. The little bit of rice we had on Bataan had to be shared with all the Filipino civilians, all the military men, so the ration was mostly watery, rice-colored water. They actually had about one can of some kind of stuff or soup for 200 men, you could color the water, period. So, our weight rapidly fell off. We lost almost, oh, fifty pounds each average. About forty-five percent of our normal weight. We were – we held out on Bataan for four months. We were starved, diseased, without any heavy weaponry. All we had were WWI rifles: the '03 Springfield and a few Browning water-cooled

machine guns. Everything else was gone. The mobile artillery we had was staffed by Filipinos were all destroyed at that point. That was April. In other words, from December to April that was the holding pattern in Bataan. Then General Edward King of Georgia, Major General, told Washington he couldn't hold out anymore, that the men were starved, they couldn't fight, they were diseased, they had nothing to fight with, and he asked permission to surrender and he did. So we were ordered to march down to the tip of Bataan, which was Mariveles, the town, and to line up and to stay there and await the Japs to take command. So, a bunch of us said, "Screw that," if you'll pardon the expression, and we hid in the rocks of the breakwater, went out into the harbor of Mariveles until after dark and we knew the Japs were already in the town, which was only a few hundred yards away. They were still shooting at unarmed men. A freighter in the harbor filled with bombs, they estimated four thousand tons, and it was set afire by Jap bombs and the crew of that freighter was also hiding in the rocks on the breakwater waiting for dark to row across to Corregidor. We joined them. So, when we hit Corregidor we were now in the US Marine Corps 4th Regiment. We were back on the beach. I was assigned to, again, a water-cooled Browning, a .30 caliber with two regular Marines and myself. I'm an irregular Marine at this point (laughing) facing Bataan, just where I came from. We held out there until May the 6th. Every major weapon was destroyed on Corregidor by the most unbelievably heavy concentrated bombing in warfare history. On Corregidor. They denuded the island. Thousands of artillery rounds falling and they were firing them like machine guns. The bombers were dropping their loads at will and it was isolated on land, sea, and air. Finally, the Japs got on shore and they were going to fire right into the tunnel where MacArthur and the staff were, he had left of course in February. The hospital. So, it was filled with wounded and sick men and MacArthur's former staff, lower ranking of course. He and his General staff took off with him to Australia. You know that history. That was it. General Wainwright surrendered again after contacting Washington and getting permission. All of the fellows on Corregidor that I was with were packed into a couple of acres of concrete, which was formerly a garage depot – supply truck depot for

the island, bombed out garages and bare concrete. They packed about 12,000 of us in to two or three acres. I forget the exact size. No water, well, we had a half-inch water line, no food. No medicine, and the sun was blazing well over 100 on the concrete. The ground was covered with defecation and the water at the far side of the bay, hill side was covered with Jap machine guns and the far side was Manila Bay. The water was covered with defecation. So that was a delightful spot to spend three weeks, roughly.

Then they loaded us into boats, made us walk out up to our necks and climb aboard the inter-island boats, I can't tell you exactly what they were, and forced us over the side in water again up to our necks adjacent to Dewey Boulevard, the main highway going by Manila Bay, it's still there. We were lined up to show the Filipinos how we were the examples of how the white man had been crushed, and the Jap officers on horseback would draw swords, line each side, whacking at the heads with their swords, it was to show the Filipino how the white man's day was gone. They lined the streets of Manila and forced them to watch us go by. We did a big march through Manila and you can imagine the conditions: having had no food, very little water, in that horrible heat for about three weeks. Finally we got to a railhead. They packed us in to steel or iron or whatever the hell it was cars as tight as they could and slammed the doors shut so that you couldn't do a thing. You were body-to-body packed together. Again the floor of the car was filled with urine and defecation, dysentery, bloody. We finally got to our destination, did another long march to the gates of Cabanatuan, the first concentration camp for us. Whatever you want to call it. I call it Pest Hole. That one place, roughly 3,000 guys murdered and of the 3,000 over 100 were West Point graduates. The largest number of history to die at any one spot. So, then they forced us to go out on slave labor work parties. I was sent to Palawan, which is the long southern island, roughly 100 miles long and quite narrow, directly east of Cambodia on the map, at a place called Puerto de Concessa we were ordered to carve an airfield out of the jungle barehanded, picks and shovels, saws and axes, no mechanization, which we did. We leveled the jungle and then we had to level the earth to make it as

flat as possible. I forget how long it was, but it was sufficient for a Japanese fighter to take off. Then we had to dig coral as far as up to about three miles, push it into those metal cars, it took six men to push a car with two Jap guards prodding you to keep you moving. You had to dump it, spread it, pack it down by hand for the base of the airstrip. Then I got a beautiful detail unloading a cement ship. One other fellow and myself were put in the hold throwing the bags of cement, which probably weighed about a hundred pounds, into a rope net all day long. When we got to the end of the day, when darkness fell, we came out of the hold caked with cement which stuck to the perspiration. We were allowed to dive into the jellyfish water to wash off. I guess they were the jellies, the man of wars, you know the stinging type. That went on until we emptied the ship, then I got back on the deck detail mixing the cement. You'd line up, I think it was five men on each side of a sheet of metal and mix the batch, pour it into squares just like you see people doing on the highways, though it's all mechanized of course here, we did all by hand. We sabotaged each square when the Japs weren't looking: too much cement or too much sand to make it so it would never really harden properly. We had the pleasure of seeing the first Jap plane try to take off on it with the tail skid ripping a hole across the runway. That was when the ruthless Jap commander was replaced. He was in the rear cockpit. He forced us to line up the runway on the side to salute him as he saluted us. As he took off. He called us his "honorable warriors." He actually believed we were enthused with the greater effort of conquering the world. In fact, one morning he lined us up and told us he had good news: "They are landing in California. Soon we would be going home. So work hard and you will go home to take care of your families." They actually believe that bullshit because it came out of Tokyo. So, I was one of the fortunate ones. We pulled out of that place and they left 150 guys behind to maintain the air strip them dig and the Jap commander had big holes and they called them air raid shelters 'cause they said the Americans were coming any minute and he had three across the area, and I think it was the fourth one he had the prisoners get in the air raid shelter then he had his men pour gasoline over all of it, then throw torches in. Part of our guys there, they carved escape hatches

out of the dirt. They suspected they might need them and they went over a cliff, a sheer drop down to the rocky beach below. They managed to hide until dark, swam across the bay, and reached the Filipino camp. The Filipinos radioed, got a submarine to pick them up. That's where they story where they got to Australia and were interviewed, that's how the term was coined "Death March." The gentleman who interviewed them could find out for the first time what had happened to us. That was what they were finding out. Did I get ahead of myself there?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Palawan was a little later one, wasn't it?

Mr. Crowley:

'44. I got ahead of myself. In '43, ten fellows broke out of another slave labor detail at Mindanao where they were raising food for the Jap army. They walked through the gates, one was my Company Commander on Corregidor. A Marine called Schofner, actually he was Captain Shofner. He wound up a General. He and nine other fellows walked through the gate with their farming tools, saluted the Jap guards, and kept going until they went through a swamp and managed to evade the Japs and got to a Filipino village and they radioed the submarine, this is where I missed my sequence in the story. When they got to Australia they were interviewed. That was '43. I was sent back to Cabanatuan and waited for a ship to go to Japan. In the Spring of '44, I was put on one of the Hell Ships, which they're known as. We went to the old Olagapo Navy Yard up on the west coast of Luzon where one of the Hell Ships was sunk called the *Oryoko Maru*, 1800 men on it, packed it up like black holes in the hold and the torpedo slammed into it and exploded. 1800 started out on that ship and by the time they got on the third ship, 300 made it to Japan. My ship got there earlier, just missed the sinking at will by the American submarines who sank anything that floated. 6000 of us went to the bottom on the Hell Ships by American submarines because they weren't marked. That was a nasty tricks by the Japs. They pulled it off themselves because the upper decks were packed with Japs being evacuated from the Philippines. I got there in March of '44, I guess it was. I was

forced to work in the copper mine in Hitachi, the city on the coast of Honshu. Furukawa, the giant electronic company, still the largest in the world, I guess, is Japan's General Electric. From there I was transferred inland to another copper mine run by Furukawa at Ashio, another rather large Jap cartel electronic company, owning a factory in Avon now when they bought an American factory and is headquartered in Georgia. I tried to get lawyers to attack their factory in Avon because that's the next town to demand they pay me my back pay, but I couldn't get any lawyer with guts enough to do it 'cause we've never been paid for our slave labor.

So, where am I? I'm in Japan at the second copper mine at Ashio run by Furukawa. The details are: I worked on the 2,000 foot level, they'd drop us in a rusty bucket at the crack of dawn every morning, body to body. 25 were jammed in it, the shaft of natural rock with water running down it, the son of a bitch manning the winch would let us bounce at about 1900 feet every morning. Bounce us up and down and gradually lower us the last 100 feet. The tunnels were so low because it was opened up somewhere around 1500 and the Japs were so much shorter they didn't need very tall tunnels, but of course we had to walk bent over considerably. The tunnels were all laced with rotting timbers which were collapsing every day and caving in. You could hear the cracks. I was assigned to a few choice details there such as: hauling shoring timbers on my back to replace the ones that had fallen and they put me into a shaft about 100 feet high the next level and got about a five-and-a-half, six foot timber on my back with a rope and I climbed the wooden ladder, which had many rungs missing, when I got to the top a Jap was supposed to be there to help pull me out and hold the timber. Once in a while, they'd pull a stunt and let me hang there. You couldn't go back down because the timber's jammed against the side of the shaft. You had to hold on for dear life and that was one detail I worked on. I worked with a powder-monkey, a Jap who packed the dynamite in the holes where American prisoners manned the pneumatic drills about six-foot long, drilled the holes in the face, then the Jap would pack them with dynamite that I would hand him, when he was satisfied that everything was packed and all the fuses were twisted together in one fuse and he'd light it with his cigarette, which

he slobbered over. He wouldn't allow me to move until he was satisfied the fuse was burning well. We'd get down the shaft, the lateral, the short distance, pull into a side lateral and we'd barely get there and it would go *boom*. (laughing) The explosion would roar by us in the main shaft. We'd go flat. So, that was fun. I did that for I think about six months.

Finally, one day, August 15th of 1945, the Emperor spoke. They gave us the day off. The Emperor said, "The war is not going well," in as many words, "but we'll be back," in as many words and he told the truth. They came back with our help and our treasure and our blood. We were taken by train to Yokohama where we were deloused. Then we were flown from the Atsughi air field down to Okinawa then to Manila to wait for a ship to go home. We had to sit there another two or three weeks. I forget how long. Sometime in October. Finally, we got back to San Francisco. That's the end of the story. How do you like that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the worst treatment you got where?

Mr. Crowley:

Well, it was daily. (laughing) 1300-plus days of total terror. Each day you thought was your last. Back-breaking labor. Palawan was probably the worst labor, deep in the mine was the most terrorizing labor. There you are.

Mr. Misenhimer:

A lot of people around you didn't make it, is that right?

Mr. Crowley:

Well, the mine had about 600 Americans, and I'm the only one that I know of. I can't find anyone else now. Palawan, there are probably 4 or 5 out of many hundreds. There are only, I understand, less than 50 nationally out of 35,000 roughly. I guess there's one other guy but he's very, very sick.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I mean during the actual captivity. A lot of people died while you there during the actual captivity, right?

Mr. Crowley:

Well, roughly 45% of us. Murdered is the word. You can't use the nice word like "passed away" or "died." They were murdered. Period.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you mentioned the Alamo Scouts. Were they Filipino or where they American?

Mr. Crowley:

Not Alamo Scouts. Filipino Scouts. They were part of the US Army, highly trained, fed American food, had American officers, and they had infantry, Coast Guard artillery, field artillery, cavalry and 26th cavalry, Philippine scouts, made the last mounted cavalry charge of the history of the US Army Cavalry. Carried .45 caliber pistols and they charged Japanese tanks and they carried the day. The Japs were totally terrified of them. Those horses were slaughtered after that and each group of men of Bataan was given a chunk of that horse meat. By the time it got to your facility in the jungle, wherever you were, it had about an inch of white rot on it, but we cooked it anyway and ate it. That was the end of the cavalry horses. The Filipino field artillery manned 155 guns, which was their main weapon. They were masterful. They pumped out a few rounds at the Japs and then manhandled the guns to another spot in the jungle before the incoming Jap shells, which would number probably 100 to 1 of their two or three shells, would come pouring in looking for them. Finally, the Japs knocked every one of those guns. That was the end of our heavy artillery. That held off the Japs, believe it or not. The bulk of the holding action was done by those scouts with their 155s. They were deadly. They decimated the Japs with those guns and we didn't do badly ourselves. We slaughtered them for the first two months. They were _____. We're holding with WWI Springfields without enough food to give us any strength, but we did it. I must say, we did it.

(laughing) We saved Australia and we saved India with our holding action. If they had swept over the Philippines as fast as they did the Malay Peninsula and the English, it would have been over in weeks. The English collapsed in two weeks, I think, was it? Three weeks. We held off this mighty force, which the General was totally disgraced, of course, that's why he was so brutal after the surrender. He had lost face in Tokyo. When they finally got total, massive reinforcements: air and land and their onslaught that last day – April 8th and 9th was so massive they literally set the jungle on fire. They plowed right into the center of the peninsula of Bataan, which was shrunken down to about a third of the original holding line. We kept pulling back to make a stronger line you know. That was General Edward King's strategy, and he did it masterfully. The Japs would pay a horrible price every time we pulled back and set up a new line and they'd come openly charging. That's when we slaughtered them. That was kind of fun then (laughing). They managed to literally set the jungle on fire and then filtered behind each side. So it would have been massive slaughter if we hadn't held out only one more day. Everyone would have been slaughtered. That would have been it. He was a hero. General Edward King, you can Google him, Georgia. He was the true hero of Bataan. Not MacArthur who got the Congressional Medal, who spent about an hour on Bataan during the whole time. What else would you need?

Mr. Misenhimer:

During your captivity, could you ever get any Red Cross packages or anything like that?

Mr. Crowley:

We were issued three small packages in three-and-a-half years. We were supposed to get one a week and they filled warehouses with those packages that we were supposed to get in Japan. The top guy at the Red Cross gave us quite a talk one day at a convention many years ago and he said, "I want you to know: we produced them, we packaged them, we shipped them, but I know you poor bastards didn't get them." They stole them. The German prisoners were given their box every week. That was the Red Cross ration - one small box per man per week. They did ship them. The Japs allowed

the ships to come in, of course. They stole them. So that one box, or three it was total, provided bartering material for the rest of the duration – cigarettes. It had a can of Spam as I recall, about four packages of cigarettes and a can of powdered milk. The smart guys would drink their coffee, smoke one packet of cigarette and make the rest of them last as barter. Some of the poor bastards would trade off everything for the cigarettes. You've read those stories.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were in Japan, could you get any national news about how the war was going?

Mr. Crowley:

The only news we got was self-created rumors (laughing) and first signs of freedom were the B-29 contrails. You know when they came over, finally. The Japs were terrified of them. They'd say, "(Speaking Japanese)." We could just see the contrails, you know, at first. They were up about 30,000 feet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were in those copper mines, what part of Japan were you in then?

Mr. Crowley:

It was called the Japanese Alps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you on the main island, Honshu?

Mr. Crowley:

Right. Yes. Northwest of Tokyo.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think that the B-29s started like January '45 or something like that.

Mr. Crowley:

Yeah. They kept coming in huge numbers. When the surrender came, the Emperor shut down all slave operations and had each commander, each slave camp, give the men the day off so everyone

could hear him speak. It was the first time they'd ever heard the Emperor speak, the Japanese people. So, the Chinese man dogrobber, who cooked the food for the Japanese officers. He ate a lot of the food. He came out and said, "(Japanese)!" "War Over!" That was my personal message from him interpreting what the Jap Emperor had said on the radio. So, we sat around and waited to get out of there. There was no more work, thank God. The regular guards had taken off, they sent in people like Boy Scouts to guard us. Actually, to protect us from the madmen who were killing a lot of prisoners after the war. They slaughtered an awful lot of guys, especially B-29 crewmen. After the war was over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were there any of the guards that treated you decently?

Mr. Crowley:

I must say, a civilian miner, he was an elderly guy, elderly – he was probably in his forties or fifties, but to me he looked like an old man. He would share his food with me, he had very little in it, some fish and a little bit of rice, a little wooden box, and he'd actually give me a couple of good bites every day. He would say, "Tojo no good?" And I'd say, "Tojo no good." "Yeah." So we'd have to agree on that. (laughing) At that point you'd say anything to get a bite of rice. You did have to use psychology on the poor dumbasses by agreeing with them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which one of your guards would you consider the meanest, the worst one?

Mr. Crowley:

The meanest son of a bitch on Palawan tried to kill me. He struck for my head. He had me on the ground when he cut me on the arm and across the nose and he had me on the ground. He had a club and he was swinging for my head he would have crushed it, but another Jap guard stopped him. "We need these men for labor." They were allowed to kill you at the drop of a hat. So, I guess he was the meanest (laughing). They were all maniacs. They emptied their mental institutions for guard duty,

you know. Those were the kind of bastards they were – they used some of the brutal Koreans, who also were bloodthirsty. Brutal monsters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got home, how were you treated?

Mr. Crowley:

Lousy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that?

Mr. Crowley:

Well, you couldn't get a job with a regular company, a big company, because you were kind of hypnotized, actual message lasered across you that you must be mentally unbalanced if you went through that. I had an older brother who said, "Don't ever tell them you were a Japanese prisoner of war if you want a job," but you had to say it because they were interviewing you. I had several big companies say no, so I said, "Well, screw that," and I now decided I would work for anybody. My brother told another guy in the jewelry business, "This guy is hungry, he'll go out and work." So he gave me a chance. So I did. Straight commission, no expenses, no salary, you sold something you got paid. You didn't, you didn't get paid. (laughing).

Mr. Misenhimer:

When were you discharged?

Mr. Crowley:

April of '46. I recall I had less than \$400 of four years of back pay due me. \$400, which was the final payout of four years of back pay. My mother had taken a small allotment when she was desperate. They all thought I was dead anyway. We were supposedly all dead. The first word they got in late '43, we were prisoners. That's what the Japs finally told the Red Cross.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So in '43 they found out you were a prisoner.

Mr. Crowley:

Yeah. My mother got a – actually it was a Western Union message from a ham radio who picked it up probably in California, a ham in California had picked up a list of names and sent them off to Connecticut and he sent a card to my mother. I think that was early '44. There was no mail. I never got any mail.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Could you send any mail out?

Mr. Crowley:

I had to fill out this card once, how you were treated. The Red Cross had pressured the Japs to do that. So you put on the card something like, "I am fine. I am the exact same weight I was," and you put down the weight when you were a little child, that was the only way you could get a message they would approve. I think it was a one-sentence card. That's the one the ham radio – they broadcast these cards- picked up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now April 12th of '45, President Roosevelt died. Did you all hear about that?

Mr. Crowley:

Oh yeah. The Japs were quiet delighted. "Roosevelt, dead." Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then on May the 8th when Germany surrendered, did you hear about that?

Mr. Crowley:

I don't recall. I probably don't think they would say that. Germany was their protector, in a sense, who covered their ass and told them to strike as they did. They'd never have struck if Germany hadn't told them that this is the proper time, the Americans they're so weak they can't defend

themselves and we'll divide the world, period. We were caught with our pants way down, of course.

We only survived because we had a couple of war ships.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out, did you have any trouble with that they call Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder like they have today, PTSD?

Mr. Crowley:

Well, whatever the hell they call it, I live it daily. I still do. I could attest to that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You still have a problem with that, then.

Mr. Crowley:

We all do. How could they not? Every day was a day of terror. Total terror. You were going to die.

Today, if not, the next day, over and over 1500 plus days. I worked for a fellow, the head of the company I worked for, he was shot down over Germany. His biggest complaint was boredom. He

had to sit around playing bridge all day (laughing). That was that place, what was it 50,000

Americans, was it 50,000? Pilots. That huge prison camps in Germany where they had the enormous number of pilots. Was that a Stalag or something like that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Stalag Luft IV they called it.

Mr. Crowley:

They were benevolent compared to the Japs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your outfit?

Mr. Crowley:

We quit that about four years ago when only about twenty showed up out of about 600 attendees.

Only about 20 of the survivors showed up. The women, the daughters, took over. Well, there are

some sons too, not only daughters. They call it the Descendants of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor. Descendants Organization.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Crowley:

Medals? What are they (laughing). You mean that cheap brass? I got all the usual crap and then the Bronze Star, I guess, was the highest. We had the best one was the Unit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is that?

Mr. Crowley:

You know, where you got the Unit Citation. Whatever they call it. Our untrained Air Corps, untrained totally, detained the Provisional Air Corps Infantry on Bataan. The Navy became a Naval Battalion Infantry, also totally untrained. So you had Bataan, almost all of it being held by totally untrained Filipino Army and untrained American service guys 'cause there was only one white American regiment in the Philippines, the 31st Infantry. They'd been living a life of indolence (laughing) they didn't have to lift a finger. Filipino servants filled every need they had. It was Philippine Scouts who did the primary job of holding. They were masterful. Masterful.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get any kind of a disability?

Mr. Crowley:

Oh, we all have. We're all disabled.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What percent disability do you get?

Mr. Crowley:

I'd rather not say.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, that's fine.

Mr. Crowley:

It took thirty years to get it. They did permit us to go to a VA hospital. I didn't get permission until 1981. Thirty-five years after.

Mr. Misenhimer:

'45 to '81 would be 36.

Mr. Crowley:

That's when we first had the right to go for any medical problems. They'd send you away previous to that and supposedly the employees didn't know any better. They simply said, "We don't know anything about that." The people at the VA did not know history. I spent my own money and I said no thanks. When I got to working I paid my own way. I spent several thousand way back

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Crowley:

Yeah, I went a few nights to college, but it was boring. I'd gone to a good college in Manila just before the war, the University of Ateneo, Filipino professors good. They knew how to inspire you. Unfortunately, the Japanese interfered. I went to Ateneo University in Manila. One of the best in the world, still.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, the people who were captured on Bataan instead of Corregidor.

Mr. Crowley:

They weren't captured. They were surrendered by their country. Be very careful, you've got to say it the right way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Those people on Bataan, they had a worse march than you all had, though, didn't they?

Mr. Crowley:

Well, it's all by degree. They used their legs longer, but our time at that garage for three weeks was probably the most brutal place on earth. Then we had our own marches on top of that. For three weeks there in the burning sun with the food issue and that pitiful water and the ground covered with shit, to put it bluntly, and everybody sick as hell with dysentery, malaria, dengue fever, it was hell on earth. The fellows that did the hike out of Bataan had their own hell. The journalists called the whole thing the "Death March," which symbolizes the whole thing. We did our three weeks there, our thirty days or more hiking, if you want to call it. Defensive, in coming, we couldn't shoot out because you couldn't shoot a rifle across the water to combat a 240mm artillery piece. Then you were kept at that Pest Hole that I just described and then you had to march through the streets of Manila being abused by Jap officers on horseback with their swords. Then you had the horrendous ride in this boxcar where you were standing in your own shit, urine, and everybody else's. You couldn't sit down, you couldn't lie down, you were packed in standing up like those Chinese soldiers, the replicas. Then our march again when we got to Cabanatuan, that was quite a hike, too. So, no one had anything nice. Some of the guys on Bataan actually rode trucks, you know. The brutal thing it was, it was horrible. They killed more by bayonet along that affair than they did to us. Remember, most of the deaths were Filipinos. You knew that, didn't you?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, right. Of course, there were a lot more Filipinos than there were Americans over there.

Mr. Crowley:

Right. I think there were about 10,000 Filipinos murdered on that march and about 1500 Americans. Then, at the first Pest Hole they arrived at, which was called Camp O'Donnell, it was like a National Guard camp for the Filipinos before the war, there the Jap commander wanted them all to die and 26,000 died in six weeks. They were dying as high as five hundred a day there. The Jap commander

had the American highest ranking Colonel, when he asked for mercy for his men, the Jap commander said, “I want you all to die.” (laughing) The only reason they closed that place down was because the disease was spreading into the Japanese soldier ranks because they were literally billions of the flies on the men that were lying on their ground with their defecation pouring out and burning up with fever and the flies would cover eyes and mouth and so on. They lived in the shit and they spread it so rapidly. The bodies were stacked up in big piles. You know, when it got that bad the highest death rate was about 500 a day. I guess the only comparable place was where the Germans rounded up Russians and put barbed wire around them and then just isolated them and let nature take its course.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you stay in the service at all?

Mr. Crowley:

No, I had a choice. I was not going to stay unless they sent me to flight school and they turned me down because I was bucking for that just before the war started. “Sorry, we have too damn many, we don’t need you.” I said, “Well, let me out then.”

Then they had some B-29 crewmen – it was at Tokyo Zoo, I think, and they had them naked so they had the people come see the barbarians, the white barbarians. That’s one rumor, I can’t guarantee it was absolutely true, that some young Jap officers took a truckload of B-29 crewmen out in to the country and they brought their wives and girlfriends to watch them hack them up with swords after the surrender. They particularly hated the B-29 crewmen.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They considered them to be war criminals, not prisoners of war.

Mr. Crowley:

They still punched out the propaganda to their people, they’re still making the movies, they’ve sold hundreds of millions of tickets the movies that all had the same theme, “MacArthur’s bombers were

the war criminals.” That’s the theme of those movies that sell beautifully in Japan. They’ve rewritten the history books so beautifully with their children. That’s all there is to it. That’s because of Washington’s stupidity. We didn’t lay the law down strictly. We were too nice. When we did the peace treaty in ’51 and they emptied all the prisoners, Class A murderers. The prisons were packed with them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they had the big fire raids on Tokyo in Japan, could you all see the smoke from that or anything?

Mr. Crowley:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn’t know about those, then.

Mr. Crowley:

Nope. The firebombs killed far more than the nuclear bombs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh yes. Yes.

Mr. Crowley:

General LeMay was going to burn the whole island up, put a wall around it, and bomb them back to the Stone Age. (laughing) That was LeMay, wasn’t it?

Mr. Misenhimer:

That’s right. That’s all the questions I have unless you have something else.

Mr. Crowley:

Nope. I’m still mad, still want my back pay. You read that book by that Connecticut woman how they profited on the backs of the slave laborers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thanks again for your time, and thanks for your service to our country.

Mr. Crowley:

Some great-great-great-great grandchild might read the annals in the Nimitz.

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