WE LIVED BEHIND BARBED WIRE: FOUR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

John F. Ream
Sarah Ream Connelly
Katherine Ream Sobeck
Nora Ream Kuttner

Interviews conducted by Renee Ream

PREFACE

The family of Fabian and Ruth Ream sailed from Leyte in the Philippine Islands into foggy San Francisco, CA. The family members were emaciated and exhausted as a result of three and a half years in captivity as "guests" of the Japanese Army in Baguio and Manila, also in the Philippines. They survived internment with few belongings and owed what they wore that day in May 1945 to the generosity of the Red Cross.

The three Ream daughters (Nora, Katie and Sally) remember they were dressed in woolen WAC (Women's Army Corp) uniforms, but had no shoes. John Ream, the youngest child, remembers wearing bib overalls without a shirt and he was barefoot also. The chill of the fog was unpleasant and unfamiliar to them.

World War II was still being fought in the Pacific when the civilian prisoners of war were sent to Leyte for rest and recuperation and then sent to the United States. The Reams sailed on the Japara under Dutch registry; their trip home lasted about 21 days.

John Ream avoided sea sickness by sleeping on deck at night. By endearing himself to the Captain's mess crew, he was able to take his meals with them. John remembers leaving rough seas to reach the endless days of sunshine and a sea as calm and clear as glass. All on deck could see for miles.

Fabian, Ruth and Nora (the oldest daughter) were returning to the States after years of working, living and surviving in The Philippines. The three youngest children were United States citizens by virtue of their parents' citizenship, but they arrived in a land that was strange to them and it would take some time to learn the customs of this new place. Nora, who left the U.S. at about age 1, had no memory of living there and had to make the same adjustments.

Ruth and Fabian Ream were no longer living when this series of interviews began, but from remembrances of their four children, it became obvious that the entire family brought some positive memories with them from their wartime experiences. The interviews contain several upbeat events. The cruelty, the anxiety, the starvation and deprivation of those years have somewhat faded with time.

Each of the siblings credits a positive outlook on life to lessons learned during their internment. Sally said they were more tolerant of other people. Katie commented that they learned to make do with almost nothing and that they learned to get along with people in close quarters. Nora called it a non-material experience. Every little thing was important--you made do, you mended, you invented.

John added that hardship, after it is over, is an enriching experience.

Forty four years after their arrival in the United States, this is what the children of Fabian and Ruth Ream remember.

Renee Ream

HISTORICAL TIME LINE

War with Japan begins. U.S. rationing includes: sugar, coffee, meat, gasoline, butter, oils, fats, cheese, shoes & processed food.	December 1941	War with Japan begins. First bomb after Pearl Harbor attack falls in Baguio. Japanese military occupy Baguio. American families sent to prison camps.
Surrender of Bataan. 110,000 Japanese-Americans sent to concentration camps in In U.S. freezing of wages, salaries & prices. Rent control in defense work area.	1942	Daily shortages of food. Ream Family moved from Camp John Hay to Camp Holmes. Classroom the U.S. instruction for children begins. Fathers housed away away from families. Fabian Ream sets up a repair shop in camp.
Italy surrenders Smith-Connally Anti-Strike Act: Strikes are illegal in war industries. Plants seized by U.S. Government	1943	Constant hunger. Civilian prisoners set up camp government. First significant war news heard over contraband radio. Red Cross package arrives at Christmas.
The invasion of Normandy. Battle of the Bulge. Japanese-Americans drafted for military service.	1944	Near starvation diet. Classroom instruction ends. Two civilians escape--Japanese more restrictive. Prisoners moved to Manila. American planes appear, Manila bombed daily. Fathers reunited with families.
Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima & Nagasaki. Japan surrenders.	1945	Mr. Ream weighs 98 lbs. He is 5’11." Siege of Manila by U.S. artillery. Liberation & release of prisoners. Reunion with other family imprisoned in Manila. To Leyte for recovery of health. To U.S.

TABLE OF CONTENTS - PARTS I-VI

Preface
Historical Time Line

Part I - John F. Ream

Oral History - Tool #1 ii
Legal Release iii
Genealogical and Biographical Information iv, v
Interview History vi
Interview Outline vii, viii
Table of Contents, Part I ix
Oral History Interview 1 - 33

Part II - Sarah Ream Connelly

Oral History - Tool #1 ii
Legal Release iii
Genealogical and Biographical Information iv, v
Interview History vi
Interview Outline vii - ix
Table of Contents, Part II x
Oral History Interview 1 - 46

Part III - Photographs

Part IV - Articles and Documents

Part V - Katherine Ream Sobeck

Oral History - Tool #1 ii
Legal Release iii
Genealogical and Biographical Information iv, v
Interview History vi
Interview Outline vii, viii
Table of Contents, Part V ix
Oral History Interview 1 - 49

Part VI - Nora Ream Kuttner

Oral History - Tool #1 ii
Legal Release iii
Genealogical and Biographical Information iv, v
Interview History vi
Interview Outline vii - ix
Table of Contents - Part VI x
Oral History Interview 1 - 72

PART I

JOHN F. REAM:
CIVILIAN PRISONER OF WAR IN THE PHILIPPINES,
1941-1945

An interview conducted by
Renee Ream
March 9, 1989

[In fulfillment of requirements
for Sociology 048, Oral History
Methods and Techniques
Vista College, Berkeley, California
Instructor: Elaine Dorfman]

ORAL HISTORY - TOOL #1

Narrator:	John F. Ream
Interviewer:	Renee Ream

Why this narrator was selected to be interviewed:

John Ream was chosen for this oral history interview because he has valuable insight to offer on life as a civilian prisoner of war in a military zone during World War II. His remarks will reflect a child's point of view of events that took place over forty years ago.

It is hoped that information from this interview will be a valuable addition to the small, but growing body of literature, about civilian war prisoners in the Philippines. All of this literature is written from an adult's remembrances.

Purpose of this interview:

To record some of the wartime experience of John Ream during his internment in the Philippines during the years 1941-1945. We will discuss the periods immediately preceding and following the war.

Place to deposit the interview:

The tape and transcript of this interview will be deposited in the Ream Family Archives, which contains a modest collection of books pertaining to the lives of civilian and military prisoners of war during World War II in the Philippines and during the liberation of the Philippines at the end of World War II.

Donated Tape Collection

The Ream Family Archives
320 Yale Avenue
Kensington, California 94708

We, John F. Ream and Renee S. Ream
Narrator Interviewer

do hereby give to The Ream Family Archives for such scholarly and educational uses as the Curator of The Ream Family Archives shall determine the following tape-recorded interview(s) recorded on March 9, 1989 as an unrestricted gift and
dates(s)
transfer legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude any use which we may want to make of the information in the recordings ourselves.

John F. Ream
Signature of Narrator

John F. Ream
320 Yale Ave
Kensington, CA 94708
Name & Address of Narrator

March 13, 1989
Dated

Accepted for The Ream Family Archives by

Amy Lynn Ream
Currator

March 16, 1989
Dated

Renee S. Ream
Signature of Interviewer

Renee S. Ream
320 Yale Ave
Kensington, CA 94708
Name & Address of Interviewer

March 13, 1989
Dated

John Ream: Imprisonment in the Philippine Islands, 1941-1945
Subject of Interview

GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Information gathered by:
Renee Ream
Phone #: 415-525-1576
Date: March 1, 1989

Name of narrator:
John F. Ream

Name at birth:
Fabian John Ream

Date of birth: November 28, 1934

Place of birth: Baguio City, Philippine Islands

Home address:
320 Yale Avenue, Kensington, CA

Phone: 415-525-1576

Date of marriage:
September 7, 1957

Place of marriage:
San Jose, CA

Name of spouse:
Renee Sneskin Ream

Place/birth: Philadelphia, PA
Date of birth: December 8, 1934

Name of father:
Fabian Dewine Ream

Place of birth: Dingle, ID
Date of birth: December 17, 1891

Name of mother:
Ruth Neil Johnsen Ream

Place of birth: Minnesota
Date of birth: August 31, 1896

Grandparents

Father's father:
William Dewine Ream

Place of birth:
Date of birth:

Father's mother:
Nora Ellen Crockett Ream

Place of birth:
Date of birth:

Mother's father:
Kristian Johnsen

Place of birth: Denmark
Date of birth:

Mother's mother:
Abelone Christina Neilsen Johnsen

Place of birth: Denmark
Date of birth:

Names of brothers and sisters and dates of birth:

1. Nora Ream	October 26, 1926
2. William (Billy) Ream	July 17, 1928 d. December 5, 1930
3. Katherine Ream	December 7, 1929
4. Sarah Lee Ream	June 2, 1932

Names of children and dates of birth:

1. Andrew John Ream	February 28, 1964
2. Amy Lynn Ream	March 8, 1967

GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Narrator's profession: Deputy Chief of Police, retired
Management Consultant

First family members to come to this country: unknown

Mother's family from Denmark late 1800s
Father's family from Western Europe during colonial times

Education: BA/Police Science

Travel: 10 1/2 years in the Philippines, revisited in 1979, London, England and Paris and Normandy region of France, also in the United States

Military Service: 1958-1960, 1st Lt., U.S. Army, Military Police
Officers' Basic Training in Augusta, GA
Posted to Tacoma, WA

Date family moved to this area: @April 1945

Where did your family come from: The Philippines

Why did they leave their former home: Liberation of the Philippines by U.S. Forces under the command of General Douglas MacArthur

Any memorabilia: Few early pictures and memorabilia remain as a result of conditions brought about by World War II.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The interview with John Ream took place on Thursday, March 9, 1989 between 3:00 and 5:00 pm at the Ream Family home on Yale Avenue in Kensington, California. No one else was in the home. Telephones in the home were turned off. There were no interruptions.

The narrator and the interviewer sat at the dining room table with the microphone between them. Noise from the motor of the tape recorder can be heard throughout the tape, because the microphone was too close to the recorder.

In the final transcript (laughter) was used to indicate that both the narrator and the interviewer were laughing, while (laughs) was used when only the narrator laughed. Information in brackets was added by the interviewer to clarify the narrator's statements. Lengthy, rambling sentences were divided into two or three shorter sentences for clarity and for easier reading. Disagreement of verb tenses within a sentence or paragraph was not corrected at times. The interviewer allowed these discrepancies to show that the narrator spoke in the present tense at times, because his memories were so vivid.

Although John was a child during his imprisonment (ages seven to ten and one half), he remembered a great deal of detail about those years. He was frank about not knowing some information and did not attempt to improvise answers. John feels that the war years contributed significantly to the development of his character. During the interview his face and voice reflected strong emotion about several incidents that occurred in the prison camp.

John Ream is 54 years old. He is tall and lean, physically fit and in good health. John is retired from the Oakland Police Department after twenty eight years of service, thirteen of those years as a Deputy Chief of Police. He is a partner in a management consultant firm.

INTERVIEW OUTLINE

Page Number

- I. The Ream Family unit as of December 1941
  - A. Parents' background 1
    - 1. Father 1
    - 2. Mother 1
    - 3. How parents met 1-2
  - B. List of household members
    - 1. Sisters 2
    - 2. Housegirls 2
- II. Japanese military arrives in the Philippines
  - A. Recollections of the beginning of the war
    - 1. Bombings 3
    - 2. Air raid shelter 3
  - B. Japanese soldiers arrive in Baguio
    - 1. Father surrenders gun collection 3
    - 2. Family reports to processing center 4
    - 3. John hands over childhood treasures 4
  - C. Internment
    - 1. Family prepares for internment
      - a. Three days of supplies taken to processing center 4-5
      - b. March to Camp John Hay 5
    - 2. Aunt's family interned, also 5-6
    - 3. Description of Camp John Hay
      - a. Kitchen facilities and food 6-7
      - b. Housing and sleeping arrangements 7-8
    - 4. Treatment by Japanese guards 8-9
  - D. Transfer to a second internment camp
    - 1. Reasons for the move 9
    - 2. American and Chinese interned together 9
    - 3. Aunt's family moves to Manila 9-10
    - 4. Family concerns about family in Manila 10-11
  - E. Life in Camp Holmes
    - 1. Camp organization
      - a. Roles of prisoners 12
        - (1) men and women separated 12-13
        - (2) John's visits with father 13
      - b. Father's role in camp 13-15
    - 2. Treatment by Japanese guards 15
      - a. Prisoners in general 15
      - b. Escapees 15
      - c. Japanese respect for families 15
      - d. Roll call 16
    - 3. Conditions
      - a. Diet, health and sanitation 16-18
      - b. Schooling 18-19

        - c. Camp activities 19
            - (1) Red Cross packages 19-20
            - (2) Holidays 19-20
        - d. News from family in America 21

III. American military returns to the Philippines
- A. Military activity
    - 1. American air activity 21
    - 2. News of Italy's surrender 21-22
- B. Internees moved to prison in Manila
    - 1. Taking food and belongings to new camp 22
    - 2. The trip down the mountains by truck 22-23
- C. Bilibid Prison in Manila
    - 1. Arrival in Manila 23
    - 2. American military POWs 23-24
    - 3. Sanitary conditions 24
    - 4. Health of family and internees 24-25
    - 5. Communications with military POWs 25-26
- D. The battle for Manila
    - 1. American air superiority 26
    - 2. Prisoners see and hear the fighting 26-27
    - 3. Japanese guards withdraw from Bilibid 27

IV. Liberation and departure from the Philippines
- A. American military arrives at Bilibid Prison 28-29
    - 1. John recalls machine gun firing 28
    - 2. Removal from combat zone 28-29
    - 3. Effects of new diet 29
    - 4. Temporary return to Bilibid, possessions looted 29
    - 5. MacArthur inspects Bilibid prison 29
    - 6. Visiting family imprisoned in Santo Tomas 29-30
- B. Preparing to leave the Philippines
    - 1. Leaving the city of Manila 30
    - 2. Adventures on Leyte 30-31
    - 3. John's feelings about leaving for America 31
- C. Return to America
    - 1. Voyage to America 31-32
    - 2. Arrival in San Francisco 32
    - 3. U.S. family meets family in San Francisco 32
    - 4. Positive and negative aspects of the war from John Ream's point of view 32-33

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Oral History Tool #1 ii
Legal Release iii
Biological and Genealogical Information iv, v
Interview History vi
Interview Outline vii, viii
Table of Contents ix
Oral History Interview 1 - 33

Interview with John F. Ream, Interview I
Date of Interview: March 9, 1989; Kensington, CA
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

R. Ream: John, I'd like to ask you some questions about your life in the Philippines, specifically the war years, and I'd like to take you back to December of 1941 prior to the war. Tell me a little about your family background. Who lived in your home just prior to the war?

J. Ream: My mother and father and three sisters. And we lived in Baguio in the mountains in the Philippines.

R. Ream: Will you tell me your father's name and a little about him?

J. Ream: My father was Fabian Dewine Ream and he was born in Idaho and raised on a farm. when he was about eighteen years he got recruited by the U.S. Government to teach in an agricultural school in the Philippines. And so, he went over there and after teaching awhile he came back to the United States and met my mother and married her. My oldest sister, Nora, was born in the United States. And then subsequent to that my father went to work for a private bus company. He was working there before the war started.

R. Ream: Do you remember the name of his company?

J. Ream: Yes, it was M. P. Tranco, which stands for Mountain Province Transportation Company.

R. Ream: When they returned to the Philippines, what city did they return to?

J. Ream: As far as I can remember they returned to Baguio, which was the town in Mountain Province where my father [had] worked.

R. Ream: Tell me something about your mother including her maiden name.

J. Ream: My mother's name was Ruth Ream. Her maiden name was Johnsen. And she was a trained registered nurse, who got her training in Utah, where she met my father. And as near as I know she never practiced her nursing in the Philippines. When we returned to the United States she began practicing her nursing again.

R. Ream: How did your mother and father meet?

J. Ream: Well, my father's sister, Beulah, was as I recall, doing her nursing or her internship to be a doctor in the same hospital that my mother was taking her training as a nurse. Through my father's sister my father met my mother.

R. Ream: Returning to the Philippines now, who else was in the household besides your father and mother?

J. Ream: My oldest sister, Nora, the sister immediately younger than her, Katie, and the youngest sister, Sally. When I say youngest sister, she is the youngest of the sisters, but she is older than I am.

We also had--I can't recall if they were living with us, but there were two young Filipino women, Josepina and Maximina, that were house girls. And they took care of the house and the children.

R. Ream: Now it is December 1941, how old are you, John?

J. Ream: I was seven years old.

R. Ream: And that would make Sally...?

J. Ream: I would guess eight or nine.

R. Ream: And Katie...?

J. Ream: I think each one of us was separated by maybe one and one half to two years, so Katie would be maybe ten or eleven. I would have to calculate that out.

R. Ream: And Nora would have been...?

J. Ream: I would say Nora was probably thirteen or fourteen years old at the time.

R. Ream: Do you have any idea how old your parents were?

J. Ream: I can't recall how old they were.

R. Ream: Was it possible they were in their late thirties or forties?

J. Ream: Yes.

R. Ream: Did you have any idea that the war was to begin in the Pacific Theatre in December of 1941 prior to December the 7th?

J. Ream: No, I was seven years old. I had no idea that anything like that was brewing.

R. Ream: Do you remember any conversation amongst your parents and sisters?

J. Ream: I don't recall any conversations.

R. Ream: What then was your first memory of the fact that Japan was now at war with the United States?

J. Ream: Well, my first memory was...I can't remember specifically whether I knew that Pearl Harbor had been bombed or anything about Pearl Harbor. But my first memory was that my father with some help dug air raid shelters. And we had air raid warnings and we would go into the shelter and there were some Japanese airplanes that were bombing. As a matter of fact, they had bombed about a mile from my house--the first bombs after Pearl Harbor...and there was a military installation called Camp John Hay that was bombed then. Subsequent to that we dug air raid shelters and there were air raid warnings and there was periodic bombing until the Japanese invaded.

R. Ream: Do you have any idea what date that was?

J. Ream: I recall that we went into the camp just prior to Christmas Eve, the day before, the day of or the day after--something like that. Immediately around Christmas time was when we were summoned to go to the Brent School, which was the local high school, a private high school. And it was on one of those days very close to Christmas.

R. Ream: How did the Japanese first appear in your home town of Baguio?

J. Ream: What I can recall happening was that...my father worked in town and either he got notification in town or there was a telephone communication. But prior to seeing any Japanese military, my father was told to bring in his guns to surrender them. He was a hunter and had a gun collection. And I can't recall any soldiers coming out to our house, but I understood that they used the local Japanese merchants as a go-between, between the military and the American civilians that were being contacted and rounded up. My first recollection of any Japanese military was when we went to the high school for processing.

R. Ream: But your father had turned in his guns prior to that?

J. Ream: Yes.

R. Ream: And where did he turn the guns in?

J. Ream: I have no idea.

R. Ream: Do you remember any feelings of apprehension amongst your family members as you gathered at the high school?

J. Ream: I think there was a general climate of apprehension. I know personally what my apprehension was, but I think everybody was concerned and it was a very traumatic, apprehensive experience.

R. Ream: Can you describe your feelings?

J. Ream: Well, I can describe incidents more than I can my feelings at this time.

R. Ream: Tell me about it.

J. Ream: As a kid I had a pocketful of garbage. And in this garbage was a pocketknife and some old depleted flashlight batteries. I remember when the Japanese guard was patting me down, he felt a thick bulge in my pocket, and I took the batteries out and I gave him the batteries. And our communication was kind of bad because he didn't speak English. And I said, "That's all." And he went on and my pocketknife was still in my pocket. And I was discussing with my father, I think, the fact that I still had my pocketknife. And he said, "Well, they're looking for weapons, so turn it in." So I went back and surrendered my pocketknife. And so those are the kinds of experiences, I think, that I remember.

R. Ream: Was it hard to part with this pocketknife?

J. Ream: Yeah, it was a treasure of mine.

R. Ream: At the time that you were at the high school were you taking belongings with you or was this a general assembly?

J. Ream: We were told to take enough with us for three days. And three days includes blankets, food and whatever you can carry. I can't remember exactly what we took with us, but we put it all in the car and drove to the high school, and we ended up having to carry all that we could. Later from the high school we marched through town to this Camp John Hay that they had bombed earlier. And that's where our first basic incarceration was at Camp John Hay. We spent the night basically being processed at Brent School, but later on our real incarceration was at Camp John Hay.

R. Ream: Did you ever return to your home to pick up more possessions?

J. Ream: No.

R. Ream: When you walked through town were there onlookers?

J. Ream: I think there were some people. I can't remember how many or...I wasn't thinking. As a kid that age I was thinking more of walking and carrying things and I wasn't really perceiving too much of the surroundings. But I just have very minimal recollection of walking through town. I can't remember how many people were out.

R. Ream: Who were you walking closest to?

J. Ream: I can't recall.

R. Ream: Were you in close proximity to your parents?

J. Ream: Well, I'm sure I stayed with my parents.

R. Ream: Were there any other members of either your father's family or your mother's family in Baguio at that time, who would have been going into camp with you?

J. Ream: My father's sister, Beulah, and her son, Lee. And it turns out later that she was pregnant with another son at the time.

R. Ream: What was Beulah doing in Baguio at that time?

J. Ream: Well, she was married to an Army doctor[1], who was active Army. You probably know more of this history than I do (laughter from both). But, anyway, she (more laughter) was in the Philippines with her husband and she had some connection with the Army herself.

R. Ream: Where was Sam at this time?

---

[1] Sam Allen served with the Quartermaster Corps; he was not an Army doctor according to his son, Lee Allen.

J. Ream: Sam was with the active troops and ended up on the Bataan peninsula.

R. Ream: So at this point none of you had any idea that Bataan had fallen?

J. Ream: It hadn't fallen at this point.

R. Ream: Then did you feel confident that he was still alive?

J. Ream: I don't think we had any idea at this point.

R. Ream: Tell me the name of the first camp in Baguio that you ordered to.

J. Ream: Camp John Hay.

R. Ream: What kind of facilities were there?

J. Ream: Well, it was an in-town kind of military installation that was barracks and warehouses and either a parade ground or a polo field. I'm not sure which. And there was a small horse cavalry unit assigned there. My sisters, who had horses, liked to go down and visit before the war. And my recollection is that we were put in some large barracks that had no bunks.

There were some kitchen facilities, but I can't remember ever eating in a mess hall. I remember when we went there, we would get our food and just wander around, as I recall, eating the food.

R. Ream: Was the family unit together?

J. Ream: Yes, we were together and had a little living area.

R. Ream: And was Aunt Beulah and her family with you in your quarters?

J. Ream: I can't recall.

R. Ream: So you don't think that there was any central kitchen at this time?

J. Ream: I think there may have been a central kitchen, but I don't know that there were any dining facilities. My recollection of eating at that time was drinking broth out of a tin can, like a Campbell Soup can. It wasn't Campbell Soup, but it was homemade broth that you drank out of a tin can.

R. Ream: Who provided your food? Was this food that you had brought with you to the high school?

J. Ream: It wasn't cooked separately, I think it was cooked in kind of a central pool. And I don't know who provided the food at this point.

R. Ream: How would you compare it to the diet that you had prior to the war, as far as abundance?

J. Ream: Well, I think it was horrible, because there wasn't any organization or facilities set up. The organization wasn't there to provide food, because of short notice. It was basically minimal subsistence and poorly prepared. And like I say, our utensils were drinking things out of tin cans and very minimal from every respect.

R. Ream: Were there any other sources of food?

J. Ream: At this point I don't recall whether there was or not.

R. Ream: Do you recall any townspeople bringing food?

J. Ream: Not at this camp.

R. Ream: None of the prisoners at this camp received outside food?

J. Ream: I don't know.

R. Ream: Your father was still housed with the family at this time?

J. Ream: Yes.

R. Ream: And did he remain with you throughout your tenure at this particular camp, Camp John Hay?

J. Ream: I believe so, yes. I don't think there was any segregation between the men, women and the children at this point.

R. Ream: Who was guarding your camp?

J. Ream: As far as I know they were Japanese guards?

R. Ream: And the commander of the camp?

J. Ream: I don't recall who it was at this point.

R. Ream: How long would you say that you stayed at this particular camp?

J. Ream: It seems to me it may have been like three months.

R. Ream: About three months...and then were you transferred?

J. Ream: Yes.

R. Ream: Before you were transferred, is there anything that you would like to tell me about Camp John Hay? Any remembrance there?

J. Ream: Well, as I recall our living conditions, there were a bunch of mattresses. I don't know how they were brought in or where they came from, but they were on the floor. All of our family had maybe a double bed mattress and a single bed mattress. And we kind of stuck ourselves in like cord wood to sleep on these mattresses.

And I do recall at one point, they brought a bunch of Japanese children up to the fence and they were peering in. They may have brought us candy. I'm not sure. They were very typical little girls with square haircuts and peering in to look at us. And I don't have positive or negative feelings about this experience at all; it's just that I have a recollection about it.

And I remember the roof leaked. It was corrugated tin roof in this barracks, and it had a lot of holes in it. I remember when the rain hit the roof it was a nice sound, but there were a lot of drips coming through where the nail holes were.

R. Ream: Do you remember your treatment or mistreatment by the guards at this point?

J. Ream: No, I don't. I have no recollection of any guards. There were guards, but I don't have any remembrance of them.

R. Ream: Did anyone attempt to escape from the camp?

J. Ream: Not from this camp, no.

R. Ream: Did anyone not respond to the call to assemble with their possessions and go to the camp? Did any people flee rather than submit to incarceration?

J. Ream: Yes, but this I didn't know anything about at the time. I read later about people who went back into the hills and stayed away from the camp.

R. Ream: You said that you were at Camp John Hay for approximately three months. So let's say it's either March or April of 1942 now and the Japanese have decided to move you to another camp. Do you know why that decision was made?

J. Ream: No, I don't. I can guess why it was made, because they moved us out of town to a more easily guarded and well, more realistic for this kind of a camp, where it was more in a rural area. We could farm--do some minimal farming--and be easier to guard and have more access to firewood and things like that.

R. Ream: Were the housing conditions better at this new camp?

J. Ream: Yes, I don't know if it was because the conditions were better to start with, but we had more time to develop and build and change and do things at this camp. There was more time and more material. We were able to make our environment better.

R. Ream: Were the families still kept together as a unit?

J. Ream: No. When we first went into this camp, there were three populations that were segregated. We had some [civilian] Chinese prisoners, who were kept segregated in one barracks, and there were men and there were women and children. And sometime, and I don't know how long it took, but later on the Chinese were moved out. And then the men were segregated from the women and children during the first part of the war.

R. Ream: Do you remember the treatment of the Chinese prisoners? Was it any different than the American prisoners?

J. Ream: No, I have no first-hand recollection of that.

R. Ream: Was your Aunt Beulah and her son still with you at this camp?

J. Ream: Yes.

R. Ream: And did she remain there for the duration with you?

J. Ream: No, sometime, and I don't know when during this camp, she gave birth to the child she was pregnant with. I think he must have been one or two years old at this time when she was moved to Santo Tomas to a camp in Manila with her children.

R. Ream: Why was she taken down or sent down to Manila?

J. Ream: Well, my understanding was they needed doctors down there. And so, they asked her and she moved down there for the need of doctors in Manila.

R. Ream: To treat the civilian population?

J. Ream: I think she treated both civilians and Japanese military.

R. Ream: Was that at her request?

J. Ream: Well, I think that her request was that if she was going to treat Japanese military, she could also treat American military and civilians.

R. Ream: Had she any idea at this time, if Sam had survived the fall of Bataan?

J. Ream: I don't think she knew at this time.

R. Ream: Then you would not have known if he had survived until the end of the war?

J. Ream: Yeah, that's my recollection, that we did not know for sure until the end of the war.

R. Ream: Did you ever have any news of Beulah and Lee and Henderson, her two sons, or of your mother's sister and her family in Manila? Did you have any news of them for the remainder of the war?

J. Ream: I don't recall that we did. There may have been some; I don't think we did.

R. Ream: Do you think your parents were apprehensive about their families in Manila? Do you remember that?

J. Ream: Oh, I think there was always concern. And, I think what happened is that there were so many people in the camp that had either relatives or friends in other camps. I think there were some people in our camp that may have gone down and made a visit, but they couldn't keep track of all the players. They didn't have time or the capacity to find out about everybody. But, there was some news coming back and forth between camps, because I think there was some minimal visitation. What for, I can't remember, but it seems to me there was some going on.

R. Ream: Your Aunt Beulah at this point was on her own with two small children. Do you remember the feelings of your parents, who were saying goodbye to a sister and a dear friend? Do you remember how they felt that day?

J. Ream: I have no recollection. I know that she went away, but I have no recollection of the moment she went.

Interview with John F. Ream
Date of Interview: March 9, 1989; Kensington, CA
Interviewer and transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 1, Side 2

R. Ream: Let's back up from the time you left the camp and discuss the organization at the second camp. Tell me the name of this camp.

J. Ream: This camp was called Camp Holmes. That's H-O-L-M-E-S. And it was what I would call a training military camp where they have ranges and barracks and shops and things like that--maybe a small garrison before the war, because it was a military camp.

R. Ream: How many people would you say were in this camp, excluding the guards?

J. Ream: About four hundred to five hundred internees.

R. Ream: Well, there must have been a lot of problems at the camp that needed resolution. Of course there were many services that were needed. Did each person have a role in this camp? Was there a camp organization, let me ask you that?

J. Ream: Yes, there was. First the camp organized kind of informally to provide services. The cooks were designated and people were designated to prepare the vegetables. My mother was involved in vegetable preparation; my father was involved in the shops. There was a blacksmith, there was a general shop, there were woodcutting crews. There were various people that had roles to make the camp function.

Later on there was a more formal political organization set up, and when, I'm not sure of the years. But it became much more organized politically to handle various problems.

One of the major problems was--well let me start off on this segregation issue again. The early part of the war the Japanese had put a fence down the middle of the parade ground and there was one hour every day that the husbands and wives could talk over the fence. Eventually, one of the major political issues was whether (with the permission of the Japanese) the families could live together. There were some married men that didn't want this to occur. They liked their single life style. This became a hot issue in the camp. But eventually, I guess maybe in 1943 sometime, the middle barracks, the middle of the three barracks was designated as family barracks. Then we had the single men's barracks and the single women's barracks. And our family happened to opt to live together. We lived in the middle barracks as a family unit. What was the question you asked me? (Laughter)

R. Ream: Do you remember being separated from your father?

J. Ream: Yes.

R. Ream: Did you see him often?

J. Ream: As a child I could go over and visit on the men's side. And as I recall, I would visit him not only in his living unit, but also at the shops. So my recollection is--you recall singular things--I remember visiting him one evening and there must have been some curfew. I think the curfew was darkness, when I was supposed to be back to where my mother was. And I recall fiddling away the time and passed the darkness curfew one day. I was going back and I bumped into this Japanese guard who challenged me with a military challenge. He had a rifle and a bayonet and I had a little trouble with language in dealing with him. I was trying to explain that I lost track of time. I was a little frightened but he reached into his pocket and pulled out a yo-yo, which he gave to me. And in retrospect, you know I think of it, that it was a calculated thing that he had this yo-yo in the pocket. He had put it there specifically for such an encounter. So I accepted the yo-yo and went on to where my mother was.

R. Ream: Tell me about your father's shop. What did he do? What was his role?

J. Ream: Well his role--he did some interesting things. His role was basically to--it was a fix it shop. And he manufactured anything that needed to be manufactured. I might at this point tell some of those things he made.

R. Ream: I'd like to hear about them.

J. Ream: He made a machine that would separate--it was quite a big machine. It was a big table that would shake and it would separate what they call the palay, the unhusked rice which is inedible, from the husked rice which is a common white rice. Some of the rice we got was heavily palayed. This machine would separate these two, so that what you got was an edible rice.

He also invented a machine which was basically a political machine (laughs). But bananas come from, you know, maybe twelve inches long to three inches long. So when you got a big bunch of bananas, and somebody was distributing them at the food line, they would give their friends a nice big one and their enemies a little one. So this machine my father invented was a big hopper. You threw in all the bananas and it would randomly select one and spit it out at random. So that whatever one you got that's the one you got to eat.

He also manufactured...he had false teeth and he broke his lower plate. And a dentist and my father collaborated and they made a mold out of gypsum, which is like the inside of sheetrock, and melted down some aluminum--old aluminum pots. they made a set of aluminum teeth which he wore for probably three years, including the first part of his return to the United States, before he could have a set of teeth manufactured.

R. Ream: That's quite an accomplishment.

J. Ream: In order to get the aluminum down into all the crevices where the teeth would be in the mold, they centrifuged it. They had a mold in a pot on the end of a rope and they would swing it around to centrifuge this molten aluminum down into all the crevices of the teeth.

R. Ream: Were the teeth at least adequate for his needs during the war?

J. Ream: Yeah, they were adequate for eating. It was hard to drink hot coffee or fluids with a set of metal teeth.

R. Ream: Did your father also fix things for the guards?

J. Ream: Yes, he would do some (laughs) things for the guards. And we had a funny story, where a guard came in with an aluminum pot that was eroded at the bottom. And of course, aluminum is very hard and difficult to work with. He wanted my father to fix it. My father knew that he couldn't repair this aluminum pot that was corroded out of the bottom. The guard insisted and my father told him he couldn't fix it. The guard thrust it at him and said, "You fix!" And so my father took some shears and cut the bottom out and put it on the soldier's head and said, "There fixed!" The guard was kind of taken back and so he took it off and he looked at it. He looked at my father and burst out laughing and then he went on his way. Later he came back and brought a little piece of--I don't know whether it was beef roast or caribou--some piece of meat for my father.

I'm trying to think what else he fixed.

R. Ream: Generally, what was your treatment by the Japanese guards at this point?

J. Ream: First, the treatment of me specifically was okay. Our main problem was food. As far as physical treatment I have no problems generally in the camp. I would say with the exception of providing adequate food it was okay.

Except, I think there were probably six cases of what I would classify as brutality. One of them involved a man, who had a Filipino wife, who was living outside. He escaped twice to see her. They would work him over physically at each of the escapes. We had another man who smuggled some booze in, and they really worked him over very severely with golf clubs. I don't know whether he got any permanent injuries. I talked to him since the war...but they really beat him pretty badly.

And then there was another incident, where we had two that were later identified as reserve officers that got caught in with us--reserved military personnel. I believe it was sometime in 1943 that they escaped. And the military police from town came in and took some of their friends out and back to town. From what I understand they tortured them and beat them, broke their ribs and things of that nature trying to get information about these two escapees. Our camp commander, Tomibe, I understand went out and recovered them from the military police. He brought them back, and as a result, he took a demotion over his part in retrieving the prisoners--the internees that were being physically abused.

R. Ream: Were there any incidents of abuse of women and children?

J. Ream: I don't think there were. I think generally they respected the family. And on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday they would bring candy to th children and make a big formal ceremony out of it handed the candy to the children.

R. Ream: How did the Japanese guards account for the people in the camp? How did they know that everyone was present and accounted for?

J. Ream: We had daily roll calls in the morning. And I'm trying to think--I can't remember it being daily, but I think they were daily--we had head counts.

R. Ream: What if you were too sick to make roll call?

J. Ream: I don't know how that was handled.

R. Ream: Were people who were ill separated in any way?

J. Ream: Only worst case. We had a--I don't know if it was called a dispensary or a hospital--it was probably a dispensary before the war started. We used it as a hospital.

R. Ream: You said earlier that your mother was a nurse by training. Did she use that at the dispensary or in any other way in the camp?

J. Ream: I don't think so. I don't think she worked as a nurse in the hospital. There were some Army nurses that were used in the hospital.

R. Ream: Japanese Army or...

J. Ream: No, nurses in the American Army. I know particularly one, Ruby Bradley, was an Army nurse, who was nursing down there.

R. Ream: Did you have regular meals at this time during the war?

J. Ream: Yes, we had meals that were served. We had an Army kitchen with a mess hall. We had regular meals served there.

R. Ream: Were they adequate?

J. Ream: They weren't adequate in the sense that we did not have a balanced, nutritious diet and the calorie count was probably on a very, very slow starvation reduction--calorie reduction. We didn't have enough. I don't recall ever eating an egg during the duration, no milk, minimal amount of meat. I guess rice was our main staple along with what we knew as camotes (which are sweet potatoes) and beans (sometimes full of weevils and debris). It was an inadequate diet. I think there wasn't anybody who was overweight that came out of the camp. They were very lean--emaciated.

R. Ream: Was it your impression that the Japanese guards were eating much better?

J. Ream: They were probably eating a little bit better, but not what I would consider a fully adequate diet. They had more ability to improvise, and for instance, go into town and get fresh fruits and things like that.

R. Ream: You were still quite young at this time. How old were you?

J. Ream: During the duration of the camp I was between seven and ten and one half years old.

R. Ream: Would you have any recollection of malnutrition causing disease in the camp?

J. Ream: Oh yeah, my recollections were that there were some communicable diseases, primarily dysentery, that were very hard. And I remember having dysentery and having your body really degraded. It was very difficult to fight the diseases. I know that one time I got a burn on my leg and it really got infected, and it seemed that it took weeks and weeks and weeks to get the infection out of the wound--the burn. But I think it was that generally all the diseases were hard to treat, because of a lack of good nutrition. Sores opening up and not healing and things like that.

R. Ream: Do you think poor sanitation may have added to that? I didn't ask about sanitation. What kind of bathroom facilities did you have starting with toilet facilities.

J. Ream: In the...[second] camp, Camp Holmes--we haven't moved away from Camp Holmes yet--I would say at Camp Holmes the bathroom facilities and the sanitation was adequate. Our climate was to our benefit. We were at 5,000 foot altitude and we basically did not have a fly and mosquito problem and those kinds of things. It was an army camp and it was used to taking care of a lot of people, so that sanitation was fairly decent.

R. Ream: Flushing toilets?

J. Ream: Flushing toilets, showers.

R. Ream: Soap?

J. Ream: Soap was a problem. We had it but we really had to conserve it and hoard it.

R. Ream: Did you have any schooling during these years?

J. Ream: Yes, somewhere in Camp Holmes--and it would have been maybe mid or late 1942--there was some school started and we had a few books. We would have like one book per class, and we had to pass them around for homework between the end of school and the start of school next day. Of course, we had teachers there, because the teachers that were in town before the war started were rounded up with us.

We had all the makings for school. We didn't have schoolhouses. We would have classes in nepa shacks and outside sitting around in a group. One of the problems with the school--when you got anything touching U.S. history--the Japanese would not allow it to be taught. And so there were some subjects that were sensitive. But generally you got your basic schooling.

That stopped in late 1944 when we started getting some return of military action. We had American airplanes and bombers flying over and so they suspended the schooling.

R. Ream: Now is this still Baguio?

J. Ream: Yes. They did suspend the school in Baguio and it was in late 1944 just before we moved down to Manila.

R. Ream: How many grades did you complete, do you remember?

J. Ream: Before I went in [to school] my mother taught me the first grade and I went into second grade. And I believe I took the third and fourth grades in the camp. I do have a fourth grade graduation certificate from the camp.

R. Ream: How would you describe the quality of that education?

J. Ream: I would say it was pretty decent, because I was able...when I came to the United States I thought I would have to go back [a grade]. I had my choice of going into the fifth grade or ending up the fourth grade. I went back in the fourth grade and I wasn't impaired at all, except socially. I mean I could keep up with the academics of it.

R. Ream: Now your two older sisters were teenagers by this time. Did either of them graduate from high school?

J. Ream: Yes, Nora graduated from high school in the camp.

R. Ream: So that she was prepared to go on to college, if and when the war ever ended?

J. Ream: Yes, which she did do.

R. Ream: What kind of activities did you have in camp?

J. Ream: Okay, there developed in camp all kinds of social activities. There were plays, musicals, chorales. We had a certain amount of sports. As I recall we had ping pong and the Japanese would get involved in some of the ping pong. And we had some baseballs and some old mitts and bats, and soccer balls as I recall.

Getting back to the plays, we did a radio play one time by having all the cast of characters sitting on stage behind sheets that were strung up like curtains. Basically you just listened to the play, rather than observing it.

We did some hiking. At one point the kids could--and would--sneak out the fence and go on little hikes, mudball fights and kids war games in the hills. That sort of thing.

R. Ream: Was Christmas in the camp a good time in the camp for you?

J. Ream: Yeah, we always had some kind of Christmas festivities. All the gifts were homemade. By this time we could make knives and I remember that was one of the gifts that we would make. It would be the equivalent of a hunting knife that would be make out of car bumper or a piece of steel of some type with bone handles or leather handles. There would be all variety of gifts that would be homemade, and they would have religious pageants during Christmas. The most memorable Christmas was--we got one shipment of Red Cross food and clothing.

Interview with John F. Ream, Interview I
Date of Interview: March 9, 1989; Kensington, California
Interview and transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 2, Side 1

R. Ream: What treasures were in that Red Cross package for you?

J. Ream: Let me separate here--there were two shipments. One was kind of amusing; it was a clothing shipment. Here we were in the tropics and we got wool knickers suits, heavy tweed wool knickers suits and that always caused a good laugh. They were virtually unusable in this climate. The other Red Cross packages were boxes of food. Typically what you would get in a box of food was cans of corn beef, cigarettes, some chocolate, powdered milk and they had prunes in there which leads to the next story.

We were talking about Christmas, and...these packages arrived, just before Christmas--I remember that Christmas, because we were out on the parade ground, and they were burning the crates or whatever packaging the Red Cross packages came in. We had a big bonfire and everybody was sitting around celebrating and having a good time with all this food shipment. Our family opened up a box of prunes. And I remember that our celebration that night, each having a prune. That was really something!

R. Ream: A special treat.

J. Ream: A special treat.

R. Ream: Were there any contests in camp...?

J. Ream: Well, yes (laughs). One Halloween they had a masquerade contest and my sisters dressed me up as cupid. I won and my prize was a couple packs, maybe three packs, of cigarettes which I gave to my father. These were the ones that came in the Red Cross package.

I might elaborate a little bit. The cigarettes, if you recall any of the wartime cigarettes, were all in victory packages. They had all kinds of rah-rah win the war kind of stuff on them--the cigarette packages. The Japanese cut out any reference to victory. Basically, they cut out the packaging with any reference made to victory--out of the cigarette packages or anything.

R. Ream: With the packages did you ever receive any news or letters from America or any letters from the family in Manila?

J. Ream: I do have a recollection. There were some letters that reached our camp some time. I don't know whether it coincided with the reception of the Red Cross food packages. But there was some news--a letter from the United States from my father's family. I think it was my father's, maybe my mother's also. But it didn't amount to much more than a couple of letters.

R. Ream: Was there evidence that the Americans were now on the move to recapture the Philippines?

J. Ream: Sometime, I would guess in mid-1944 or towards the latter part of 1944, we could look from where we were at our location, I guess probably thirty to forty miles away was Lingayen Gulf (maybe it was further than that--fifty or sixty miles), and on a clear day we could see [the gulf], but we were at 5,000 foot altitude. On a clear day we could barely see the ocean down at Lingayen Gulf, and then pretty soon we started seeing some of what appeared to be airplanes and naval activity down in that direction. I mean this was at the very maximum of our sight with the naked eye.

Then one day it happened and an airplane flew over our camp. It flew in very low and it was obviously some kind of a navy dive bomber or fighter. It created a lot of speculation because on the wing was painted this new insignia that we had never seen before and we weren't quite sure what it was. It was the star with two dashes on either side. We weren't quite sure what we were dealing with. Then shortly thereafter we saw a vapor trail and we had never seen a vapor trail before. It was a P-38, a twin-boomed airplane, and it was something new to us also. It was so high you could barely discern the shape of the airplane. It was obviously doing some reconnaissance photography in the area.

R. Ream: Did you have any idea how the war was going at this point?

J. Ream: Well sometime--I didn't know at the time--but when Italy surrendered, we knew about it. And the word was that somebody had walked by the Japanese guard shack when the Japanese guards were tuning the radio, and they tuned in to an English speaking narrator who said that Italy had surrendered. And of course everybody was jubilant. Years later I found out there was a clandestine radio in our camp. So apparently they were getting news in, but it had to be handled very carefully so the fact that there was a radio wasn't made known to the guards.

R. Ream: Were you beginning to feel that you would be liberated at some time?

J. Ream: Yes, the big game in the camp was speculation on when and how. We played games like Ouija board and the Ouija board question was always when and where would be our liberation. But it really became obvious when in either November or December 1944--when we got moved down to Manila. Then we knew it was getting very close.

R. Ream: Prior to moving to Manila did you notice any difference in your treatment by the Japanese guards as the war situation deteriorated for them?

J. Ream: Not really. There was one incident where there was some guerilla activity, but that was fairly early in the war. It may have been late 1942. Our guards got very "skittish" and then of course after the two escapes from our camp, they built a big, high bamboo fence around us and curtailed our activity. They restricted us much more than they had. But I would say there was not much visible change in our guards at that point up in Baguio.

R. Ream: I'd like to discuss with you the time when you were moved down to Manila. Were you notified in advance that you were going?

J. Ream: Yes, I can't recall much. One of the problems we had is that we couldn't take a lot with us. We could take a minimal amount of our personal possessions. They had food to sustain five hundred people, and they had to have some small stockpile of food. We had live chickens, pigs and we had maybe a couple cows. Basically, what they did was slaughter them, and we had one tremendous dinner, and we were given some of this food to take with us. So we packed it up in five gallon cans, which were old fuel cans, packed up some chicken and some food we normally didn't get. And we packed it in the back of the trucks.

The trip down to Manila took such a horrendously long time. As I recall we left almost at dawn and didn't get there until well after dark. I would guess it is about a 120 maybe 150 mile trip. And of course what happened, when we got down to the tropical climate, all our food spoiled. All this wonderful food that we had packed up for the trip had gone to waste. All the rice was sour; it just turned bad.

R. Ream: By this time people were undoubtedly feeling the effects of malnutrition. How were they able to survive the trip?

J. Ream: Well, it was difficult to say the least in the sense that we had one sick man in our truck. It was basically an open bedded truck almost like a dump truck. He had dysentery and he had defecated all over the inside of the truck and the smell--I mean the whole trip was gagging on the odor. And there were no bathroom facilities. Occasionally they would stop the trucks and the women would get off one side and use the side of the road as a bathroom and the men got off on the other side. It was a very tedious, rough trip.

R. Ream: Could you hear the sounds of the war as you were coming down the mountainside?

J. Ream: Coming down during the daytime I think that we took some detours. And this may have been the reason why the trip took so long, because the Japanese army was moving from Manila up to the mountains. We had to take side roads. There was a lot of military movement When we got into the outskirts approaching Manila, the thing that was most visible to us was--it had turned dark by this time--the sky was just filled with searchlight beams. Apparently, there was some concern about being bombed at that time. They were searching the skies for airplanes. I don't recall any firing or explosions during that trip.

R. Ream: What time of day was it when you arrived in your new camp?

J. Ream: I think it was around ten o'clock at night.

R. Ream: And was the camp waiting for you? Was there anything prepared for your arrival?

J. Ream: I think there was minimal preparation. What they had done--the camp we had moved to wasn't really a camp, it was a prison. It was an old Spanish prison with three compounds. And the very sick and disabled military prisoners were occupying this old Spanish...

R. Ream: Japanese military?

J. Ream: No, it was American military. They moved the military prisoners out of one compound and put them into existing compounds and moved us into the one they had vacated. It was dirty and the mattresses that were there had bedbugs in them. It was in very, very poor condition.

Sanitary conditions were the poorest. Our toilets were a big pit dug in the ground. They rigged up a trough that you could straddle and go to the bathroom in and the trough was at an angle, so that after awhile somebody could pour a bucket of water and wash everything down into the pit. The toilets that were in the buildings were not working; the sewers were all plugged up and they were nonfunctional.

There were a lot of graves. I think that there were three rows of graves around the interior perimeter of the concrete prison wall. When we wanted to get some water supplement and to dig a well, the well was fighting between the toilet pits and the graves of all these prisoners or whoever it was that was buried around the inside of the wall.

R. Ream: Were you able to make yourself comfortable in a matter of a few days or did you always have these mattresses that were loaded with bedbugs?

J. Ream: I can't remember. We must have solved the problem some way, because I don't remember. We were relatively comfortable. As a kid I was running around getting into trouble all the time (laughs) so I can't remember that aspect of it.

R. Ream: Was the food situation better or worse then?

J. Ream: It was much, much worse. We were barely making it.

R. Ream: What percentage could you say of the camp seemed reasonably healthy?

J. Ream: I'd say probably two thirds.

R. Ream: Were reasonably healthy within your own family? How many of them?

J. Ream: I think all of us except my father. He was the one that was suffering the most from the diet.

R. Ream: What were the outward effects on him?

J. Ream: His problem was he had a kind of a colitis condition or intestinal condition...he had almost a perpetual diarrhea. This was very depleting on his body; it was just wearing him down and he had a tremendous loss of weight. From probably going into the camp weighing one hundred eighty pounds down to ninety nine pounds.

R. Ream: Was he able to function? Did he still have a repair shop?

J. Ream: No, at this time he was in basically a hospital wing. It wasn't actually a hospital, it was some outside... prison cells that were--being in Manila we were in a tropical area where it was mostly warm. These prison cells were almost like animal cages with bars on them. They didn't keep the doors locked, but he was in this kind of facility where they had some beds for those who were sicker than other people.

R. Ream: Was your mother alright?

J. Ream: Relatively speaking, yes.

R. Ream: Was she able to take care of your father?

J. Ream: Well, I don't know whether he needed that kind of taking care of. There was no restriction on visitation or anything like that. I spent a lot of time there.

R. Ream: Was there any communication between your civilian population and the military prisoners on the other side of the wall? Did you know anything at all about them?

J. Ream: Yes, they were kind of surprised that we were moved in. I don't think either side realized that this situation was going to occur. The wall between--I'm just guessing--was maybe a fifteen foot high concrete wall with guard towers on it. The only communication was where there would be a common grate or drain. That would allow one person without seeing who was on the other side to talk--the civilian prisoner could talk to the military prisoner. Some communication could be traded that way.

R. Ream: Did you personally talk with any of the prisoners?

J. Ream: I can't recall. I don't think so.

R. Ream: Do you have any recollection of where these prisoners were from? Were any of them survivors from Corregidor?

J. Ream: Yes, either Corregidor or Bataan.

R. Ream: What kind of war news were you receiving, whether it was via contraband radio or visually?

J. Ream: I can't recall anything coming in as far as your typical news, but we could see what was happening. And it was almost a daily occurrence, you could set your clock on the bombers that would come over Manila. There were large formations of B-24 heavy bombers. Thee was a lot of fighter activity and a lot of naval dive bombers--constant pounding of the city everyday. When the Americans came in there was total superiority of the skies. You didn't see one Japanese airplane up in the air when the Americans were in town.

Towards dusk everything would quiet down. I recall a lone twin engine Japanese medium bomber kind of taking a patrol of the city. That was almost an evening occurrence; you could almost set your clock on that also. The Americans really on a daily basis just plastered the city.

R. Ream: Could you see the effects of the bombing?

J. Ream: They didn't bomb around our vicinity. We were like right in the middle of the city. But there was a constant problem with flack coming down on us, where we had to be very careful. We couldn't be outside during the bombings, not because of the bombs, but because of the anti-aircraft fire landing all around us and big shards of shrapnel falling just like rain. But we could see out in the outskirts wherever they were bombing, like probably Cavite, which is a naval station, or the docks or the ships in the bay or anti-aircraft guns.

You'd see a lot of navy dive bombers going after anti-aircraft guns and you could see columns of smoke and hear the explosions. One of the American airplanes I recall seeing shot down was a B-24. I guess the bomber fuel load exploded and only part of the crew--I think there were only three parachutes out of the crew that opened up and came down.

But there was one bomb that landed near us, and this was after the Americans had liberated us. And some stray bomber dropped a bomb that skittered outside the outer wall of our prison and blew the wall in and killed some military personnel on the other side.

R. Ream: Do you remember being fearful at this time?

J. Ream: The most fearful part was after the Americans landed and the Japanese guards had left. When the Americans hit the outskirts of Manila, we were in kind of a vacuum. Before they left the Japanese had booby-trapped the inside of the gates of the prison. Later we learned that they had put five hundred pound aerial bombs and fifty five gallon drums of gasoline in the basement of two and three story buildings all around us in the city. And when the Americans came in there was this fire fight. I remember going to my dad's hospital ward and I was sleeping there, laying next to him in bed and these explosions and the whole city was blowing up. You could feel the explosions more than you could hear them. And that's when I was really scared, because we were really in the middle of one big huge bunch of explosions. Then when the Americans came in everything was hunky-dory. When they came into our camp they had to immediately load us up and haul us out, because the temperature of the city was getting so hot. You couldn't stand to be in there. The whole city was just in flames and burning.

R. Ream: Was there a battle between your Japanese guards and the Americans coming in?

J. Ream: No, our Japanese guards had left the camp. They just left us unattended.

R. Ream: Other than booby-trapping the buildings did they make any other attempt to harm you?

J. Ream: No. In fact it is my understanding that they had made some statement to the camp leaders that--"Thanks, it was enjoyable working with you and we may not be here too long." And then they just basically disappeared.

Interview with John F. Ream, Interview I
Date of Interview: March 9, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 2, Side 2

R. Ream: So the Americans just suddenly appeared?

J. Ream: Yes, it was in the middle of the night, I think maybe four o'clock in the morning. One of them stumbled on us and as soon as they made the discovery, they made some very quick preparations to haul us out to the outskirts of the town. They brought in trucks and jeeps and I recall driving down the streets and seeing all these American GIs--big and tan, white teeth...all of them very happy and greeting us. And of course they were all marching toward the battle zone, and they hauled us out to a shoe factory out in the outskirts of Manila.

Then we got over-treated at this point.

R. Ream: When the Americans came into the camp what was their reaction to you--to your conditions?

J. Ream: I don't recall. I'd like to back up and just for the record talk about the personal experience of how this whole invasion of the city occurred from my perspective. I remember we were in this kind of a vacuum and we hadn't heard any shots fired. I went out to a water tap in the yard to wash my feet before going to bed. I washed my feet--I was in wooden clogs--and as I was going back I tripped and got sand all over my feet again, so I went back to this water tap to wash them off again and I heard this "brrrrp" and it was a machine gun. Then there was some--you could tell--some small arms firing and machine gun firing. This was the first we heard it, and it was the First Cavalry Division Reconnaissance Team coming into the city. Then there was a couple hours of quiet. I think they withdrew. Then that's when all hell started breaking loose and all these explosions blowing up the city occurred.

Then getting back--after finding us and hauling us out to the shoe factory...

R. Ream: The military prisoners as well?

J. Ream: The military prisoners as well.

They got us out of there and I think the normal reaction was they wanted to give us whatever they could. So they overloaded us with sugar, tea with sugar in it, canned milk, corn beef hash and corn beef. I remember my first breakfast was cream of wheat with canned milk for cream and sugar. I almost got sick just smelling it; it was so rich. I think probably the next two weeks I was on the toilet getting rid of all this rich food.

Then what happened--to get back--after all the fighting passed our camp (that's the one we came from) we had left all our possessions back there. They took us back (I think we were at the shoe factory maybe a couple of days) and they took us back, and we found out that the Filipinos had looted our camp and had gone through and all our possessions--that's photographs, birth certificates and everything--were all piled up in big piles of debris. We had to sift through and find which belonged in our family and other families...to recapture some of those really prized possessions.

Somewhere along here MacArthur came into inspect our camp and we lined up like for roll call for the Japanese. MacArthur came through and inspected us and walked through our whole camp. I remember him doing that and having photographers with him.

R. Ream: Were there Red Cross workers that came in to assist you?

J. Ream: There were, I don't recall very much about them.

R. Ream: Did your father have any encounters with Red Cross workers?

J. Ream: I can't recall.

R. Ream: At this point did you have any news of your family in Santo Tomas Prison?

J. Ream: Santo Tomas University, one of the major internment camps in the Philippines, was let me say off the top of my head about eight or ten blocks from us. And so now we were semi-free. We were told that we could leave the camp, but were cautioned about--there was still fighting over Manila. There were still snipers, there were mines and a lot of things like that we could get hurt by. We were told to leave, but to be very cautious. So we walked over to Santo Tomas. Of course they didn't know that we had moved down to

Manila. We walked down there and located my mother's and father's sisters.

R. Ream: Had they and their families survived?

J. Ream: Yes they had.

R. Ream: And Sam?

J. Ream: At one point it was learned that Beulah's husband, Sam, had died in the death march to Bataan, I believe by some disease--dysentery or something.

R. Ream: How did Beulah learn of Sam's death?

J. Ream: I'm not sure.

R. Ream: When did you prepare to return to the United States?

J. Ream: Okay, the week after we had returned to the camp--a week to ten days--the Americans assembled us. I think there was some choice that people could elect to stay in the Philippines. I think they discourage it, but there were some people who elected to stay.

But for the majority of the prisoners, they took us to an airport. I think it was on the south part of Manila, because I can remember riding by the walled city which was south of us. It was still being contested. They were firing howitzers at it at a flat trajectory straight into the wall. Anyway, they trucked us out to the airport and they flew us to the island of Leyte.

We were put in basically a convalescent hospital which consisted of tents on a beach. And there were a lot of wounded military prisoners in this convalescent hospital. For some reason, and I don't know why, my father was again segregated from us and he was on the other side of the island of Leyte. I don't know whether all the men were over there or, if it may have been just the sick.

R. Ream: Were you able to see your father?

J. Ream: Yes, a couple of times I hitchhiked over to wherever he was. I had no problem in getting rides. In the first place having civilians and civilian kids was so unusual. And then I found it really enhanced my hitchhiking ability to tell these military personnel that I had three sisters. And so they would take me wherever I wanted to go, including the scenic route past all the air bases with all the new fighter planes and that sort of thing.

R. Ream: Did you get out and look at any of the planes? Were you allowed to do that?

J. Ream: Oh yes. In fact for some reason my father and I ended up on one of these air bases looking at the airplanes. And I remember we got in a situation where a B-25, which was revving up its engines, did a turn to taxi down the runway and we got in the propwash of this B-25. He was throwing gravel and rocks at us, and we had to run for our lives to keep from being stoned from this airplane.

R. Ream: How did you feel when you heard that you were going to the United States?

J. Ream: To me it was strange, because I had never been there. It was, I guess, some excitement and anticipation. There was enough going on in my life, you know, to be in the middle of all this. It was one adventure after another without much stability at all, so it was just another step in the great adventure.

R. Ream: How did you return to the United States?

J. Ream: We returned on a Dutch troop ship. I think the crew was Dutch, but they had some American sailors on there that I think manned the guns that were on the ship. And it was a troop ship and when you went down into the hold it was built so that they had canvas hammocks that were about five or six high from the deck to the ceiling. I think it did have a three inch gun on the back and some anti-aircraft guns. And I think that's what the sailors manned.

We started off through a typhoon...[in] tremendously heavy seas. I was seasick about the first five days until I learned that you didn't sleep way down in the bowels of the ship, but you would sleep on the deck in the middle of the ship where you got the least amount of rocking. And I befriended sailors, and I befriended the Javanese cooks that cooked for the Captain. And I wandered the ship at will and got the best food and the best treatment by everybody involved.

R. Ream: What month and year are we talking about that you left the Philippines?

J. Ream: It took us twenty two days to make the trip. I think we arrived in San Francisco in May or early June as I recall of 1945.

R. Ream: And would you say you and your sisters were appropriately clothed for San Francisco?

J. Ream: Well, my sisters were in WAC uniforms, which were a little warmer than what I was wearing. I was wearing bib overalls, barefoot, and I don't know whether I didn't have any shirt or just had a light shirt underneath it.

When we hit about the Farallons, they put fresh water into the shower. We had been taking salt water showers all the way over. When they put the fresh water in, it was either their drinking water or it was ice cold. And it was miserable for somebody [from] the tropics to take an ice cold shower before coming into foggy San Francisco. It was unbearable!

R. Ream: Where did you go when you arrived in America?

J. Ream: I remember being greeted by, I think, three of my uncles. I think that my Uncle Douglas [and Uncle Milton], my father's brothers, were there and I think my Uncle Kris, my mother's brother, was there and their families to greet us.

And we moved to San Lorenzo where Milton had a very large, old Spanish ranch house and it had a second house adjacent to it. It was called the Meek Estate and we kind of lived in this small second house, which must have been servants quarters or something. And that's where we set up our residency.

R. Ream: Looking back at the war years, John, what were the worst aspects to you personally?

J. Ream: I think that was diet and probably the long term effects that it had on all of us as far as developing our teeth, my father and the damage it did to his intestines. When I look back--at the time I didn't realize what a major ordeal it must have been for parents of a family to be going through this and having to come to this country with zero assets and start at middle age to create a life again. It's something--I personally didn't suffer--well, I did suffer a bit in the kind of clothes I wore to school and things like that, but my parents must have really suffered. I think those were the major things.

R. Ream: Were there any positive aspects of the war years?

J. Ream: Well, I think the whole experience was positive in the sense that...hardship after it's over is a very enriching thing. You get a totally different perspective in life. There's a lot of very good, positive things that you end up with.

R. Ream: Is there anything else about the war years that you would like to share?

J. Ream: Well, let's see. Well there's a lot more detail that I can elaborate on, but I think from a kid's perspective it was like being in one big, exciting experience, even though the food and some of the other things were hardships. Still there was a lot of excitement to it.

R. Ream: Thank you very much, John.

J. Ream: Okay, it was a pleasure.

PART II

SARAH REAM CONNELLY:
CIVILIAN PRISONER OF WAR IN THE PHILIPPINES,
1941 - 1945

An interview conducted by
Renee Ream
June 24, 1989

ORAL HISTORY - TOOL #1

Narrator: Sarah Ream Connelly
Interviewer: Renee Ream

Why this narrator was selected to be interviewed:

Sally Ream Connelly was chosen for this oral history interview because she has valuable insight to offer on life as a civilian prisoner of war in a military zone during World War II. Her remarks reflect a child's point of view of events that took place over forty years ago.

It is hoped that information from this interview will be a valuable addition to the small body of literature about civilian war prisoners in the Philippines. All of this literature is recorded from the point of view of an adult's remembrances.

Purpose of this interview:

To record some of the wartime experience of Sally Ream Connelly during her internment in the Philippines during the years 1941-1945. We will discuss the periods immediately preceding and following the Ream Family internment.

Place to deposit the interview:

The tape and transcript of this interview will be deposited in the Connelly Family Archives, which contains other diaries pertaining to life as an internee in The Philippines during World War II.

DONATED TAPES COLLECTION

We, Sally Connelly and Renee S Cean,
Narrator Interviewer
do hereby give to Connelly Family Archives for such scholarly and educational uses as the
Curator
Family Archives shall determine the following tape-recorded interview(s) recorded on June 24, 1989 as an unrestricted
date(s)
gift and transfer legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift precludes any use which the interviewer may want to make of the information in the recordings.

Sarah L. (Sally) Connelly
Signature of Narrator

SARAH L. (SALLY) CONNELLY
2185 Stewart Ave
Walnut Creek CA 94596
Name & Address of Narrator

6-24-89
Dated

Accepted for the
Archives by

Curator

Dated

Renee S. Cean
Signature of Interviewer

Renee S. Cean
320 Yale Avenue
Kensington CA 94708
Name & Address of Interviewer

6-24-89
Dated

Sally Cean (Connelly): Internment in the Philippines, 1941-1945
Subject of Interview

GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Information gathered by:
Sally Connelly
Phone #: 415-935-2280
Date: March 1989

Name of narrator:
Sarah Lee Connelly

Name at birth:
Sarah Lee Ream

Date of birth: June 3, 1932

Place of birth: Manila,
Philippine Islands

Home address:
2185 Stewart Ave., Walnut Creek, CA

Phone: 415-935-2280

Date of marriage:
July 30, 1955

Place of marriage:
San Leandro, CA

Name of spouse:
Elvin Jerry Connelly

Place/birth: Stockton, CA
Date of birth: April 30, 1922

Name of father:
Fabian Dewine Ream

Place of birth: Dingle, ID
Date of birth: December 17, 1891

Name of mother:
Ruth Johnsen Ream

Place of birth: Kerkhoven, MN
Date of birth: August 31, 1896

Grandparents

Father's father:
William Dewine Ream

Place of birth: Iowa
Date of birth: October 29, 1859

Father's mother:
Nora Ellen Crockett Ream

Place of birth: 12/28/62
Date of birth: Utah

Mother's father:
Christen Johnsen

Place of birth: Denmark

Date of birth: June 21, 1868

Mother's mother:
Abelone Katrina Maria
Nielsen Johnsen

Place of birth: Denmark
Date of birth: August 14, 1871

Names of brothers and sisters and dates of birth:

1. Nora Ruth Ream Kuttner	October 26, 1926
2. Katherine Ream Sobeck	December 7, 1929
3. John Fabian Ream	November 28, 1934

Names of children and dates of birth:

1. Erin Connelly	January 15, 1959
2. Craig Alan Connelly	May 4, 1960

GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Narrator's profession:

First family members to come to this country:

Mother's family from Denmark
Father's family from USA

Education: High School - Secretarial College

Travel: Philippines, France, Monaco, Italy, Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia, Baja California, U.S.A.

Military Service:

Date family moved to this area: May 1945

Where did your family come from: Philippines

Why did they leave their former home: Repatriated war prisoners

Any memorabilia:

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The interview took place on Saturday, June 24, 1989 between 3:00 and 6:00 pm at the Ream Family home on Yale Avenue in Kensington, California. At times two other people were in the home, which caused slight distractions from time to time. Telephones were answered by others in the home. No one came to the door.

The narrator and the interviewer sat at the dining room table with the microphone between them. There were some delays, because the interviewer was unfamiliar with the voice activated feature on the microphone, which was on. After a lengthy delay that feature was turned off and the interview proceeded smoothly.

Sally was a preadolescent child during her years of internment. Despite the lapse of forty years she remembered many details of her life during those years. She did not hesitate to respond, "I don't remember" to questions that she could not answer. At times her voice reflected strong emotion to specific incidents at other times her voice was soft, reflecting some sadness or perhaps regret.

In the final transcript (laughter) was used to indicate that both the narrator and the interviewer were laughing, while (laughs) was used when only the narrator laughed. Information in brackets was added by the interviewer to clarify the narrator's statements. Lengthy, rambling sentences were divided into two or three shorter sentences for clarity and for easier reading. Disagreement of verb tenses within a sentence or paragraph was not corrected sometimes. The interviewer allowed these discrepancies to show that the narrator spoke in the present tense at times, because her memories were so vivid.

Sally was 56 years old at the time of the interview. She is married and has raised two children, now adults and living away from home.

INTERVIEW OUTLINE

Page Number

I. Ream Family unit as of 1941

A. Members of the Ream Family 1
B. Father's background 1-2
C. Mother's background 2

II. Japanese invasion of the Philippines

A. Beginning of WWII in the Pacific 2
B. Japanese forces invade the Philippines 2-3
  1. Parents remain in the Philippines 3
  2. Father surrenders gun collection 3-4
  3. Katie and Nora sent away from home temporarily 4
  4. Preparations to assemble at Brent School 4
  5. Nora's Christmas gift to Sally 4
  6. Katie and Nora return home 4-5
C. Japanese soldiers arrive in Baguio 5
D. Internees assemble at Brent School 5-6

III. Internment at Camp John Hay

A. Description of camp 6-7
B. Aunt Beulah and family 7
C. Description of quarters and camp restrictions 7-8
D. Food
  1. Food committees and purchase of food 8-10
  2. Guards give children candy 9
E. Sanitation and health 10
F. Family members in Philippines prior to the war 10-11
G. Activities at Camp John Hay
  1. Camp organization 12
  2. Christmas 13
  3. Katie and Nora at Camp John Hay 13
  4. Sally's camp activities 13
  5. Sally's dad visits quarters of wife and children 13-14
  6. Two camp incidents 14-15

IV. Life at Camp Holmes

A. About Camp Holmes
  1. Reasons for move from Camp John Hay 15-16
  2. Location of camp 16
  3. Description of Camp Holmes 16-17
  4. School begins 17
  5. Description of quarters 17-18
  6. Beulah and family leave for Manila 18-19

B. Diet and health at Camp Holmes
  1. Purchase of food 19
  2. Chlorinated water is rationed 19-20
  3. More about food
    a. goober goo 20
    b. the banana sorter 20
    c. John augments his diet 20
    d. Guards give candy to children 21
    e. fresh meat and milk 21
    f. health problems 21-22
C. Camp activities
  1. Guards do not mistreat women and girls 23
  2. School begins 23-24
  3. Work crews organized 24
  4. Drama 24
  5. Father's repair shop 24-25
  6. Two escapees 25
  7. Father's false teeth and other emergency repairs 25-27
  8. Mother's role in camp 27
  9. Holiday activities 27
D. The war progresses
  1. War news 28
  2. Filipino friends supply news 28
E. Other memories of Camp Holmes
  1. Ouija board entertainment 29
  2. No news from Manila family members 29
  3. Internees learn to be tolerant of each other 30
  4. Japanese guards
    a. guards respect hardworking people 30
    b. guards are soldiers on rest and recuperation (R&R) 30-31
    c. guards mistrust a few male internees 31

V. Life at Bilibid Prison
A. American military presence in the Philippines 32
B. Internees moved to Manila 32
  1. Food spoils on long trip to Manila 32-33
  2. Many hardships on the trip 33
  3. Camp sewing projects 33-34
C. Arrival in Manila
  1. Description of quarters 35
  2. Food situation becomes more grim 35
  3. Poor sanitary conditions 36
D. Military prisoners of war
  1. Death March survivors in Bilibid 36
  2. Chance meeting with a military POW years later 36-37

    3. News of a soldier with the liberating forces 37

  E. Liberation day nears

    1. Diet extremely poor 37-38
    2. Shoes and clothing badly worn 38

  F. Other remembrances of Camp Holmes

    1. More about entertainment 38
    2. Red Cross packages arrive 38
    3. Making doll houses 39
    4. Fear of being used as hostages is unfounded 39

VI. Liberation and Return to the United States

  A. Fighting nears Bilibid 40
    1. Japanese guards disappear from camp 40
    2. Skirmishing outside prison walls as American military arrives 40-41

  B. Liberation

    1. Family prepares to leave the Philippines "temporarily" 41
    2. Real food distributed 42
  C. Heavy fire power in Manila 41-42
    1. Internees evacuated to outskirts of Manila 42
    2. Temporary return to Manila 42
    3. Reunion with family at Santo Tomas 42-43

  D. Leaving Manila

    1. Trip to Leyte for rest and recuperation 43-44
    2. Red Cross distributes clothing 44
    3. Trip home on a freighter 44-45
    4. Arrival in San Francisco, CA 45-46
  E. Sally reflects on the effects of internment 46

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Oral History Tool #1 ii
Legal Release iii
Biological and Genealogical Information iv, v
Interview History vi
Interview Outline vii-ix
Table of Contents x
Oral History Interview 1-46

Interview with Sarah Lee (Sally) Ream Connelly, Interview I
Date of Interview: June 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

R. Ream: Sally, would you describe the Ream Family unit as of December 1941. Who was in your family? If you would give me just the first and last name of each person.

S. Connelly: My dad, Fabian Ream; my mother, Ruth Ream; my oldest sister, Nora Ream; Katie Ream--Katherine, my next sister, Katherine; Sarah, me; and brother, John.

R. Ream: Were there any other members in your family? Were there any other people in your household?

S. Connelly: Nobody lived with us at the time the war broke out, but, my Aunt Beulah--Dr. Allen and her son, Lee--were in Camp John Hay.

R. Ream: Tell me a little about your father.

S. Connelly: My dad was one of a very large family. I think he was number three down the line, but I'm not sure; I have to verify that. He was born in Dingle, Idaho in 1891. And Dingle is a very small town. Dad had about eight or nine brothers and two sisters.

He was a very brilliant child, but he did not go beyond high school. When he got out of high school he taught for awhile. Right after the Spanish-American War he heard that the Americans had promised the [people of the] Philippines that they would have an education. They were very short of teachers, so Dad volunteered to go to the Philippines as a teacher. He went over there in 1916; he became a teacher than he became a principal of a boys school in the lowlands in Munoz.

Then after a couple of years (I don't know how long it was), he decided that the Filipino women were becoming a little too attractive for him and he had better come home and find an American bride. He became engaged to a young woman. I don't know why they didn't marry, but they didn't. He had several jobs.

He met my mother through his sister, who went through nurses training with my mother. Aunt

Beulah told Fabian that she thought Ruth was the woman for him and she wanted him to break off the engagement with the redhead. So Dad met Mom and that was it. They had six children, actually. There was a boy between my two sisters, right after Nora, [named] Bill.

R. Ream: Tell me about Bill.

S. Connelly: I didn't know Bill. I never knew Bill. Bill died of dysentery in the Philippines. It was really heartbreaking for my parents; he was two and a half years old. Sister Katie was born at that time, when Bill died she was an infant.

R. Ream: Tell me about your mother.

S. Connelly: Mom was the second of four children born to a Danish couple from Denmark. And they lived in Minnesota. Mom was born in Kerkhoven, which is a very tiny hamlet west of Minneapolis. Mom was very musically inclined; she loved the piano and she wanted to be a concert pianist, but she knew that there wasn't much future in that. She used to play for silent movies, which she enjoyed doing.

I don't know when...[her family] moved, but they moved to Hibbing, Minnesota, which is in the northeastern part of Minnesota, and she used to commute to Minneapolis to get her music lessons. And I guess it was quite a hardship, so for awhile she worked as a housekeeper.

She decided to go into nurses training because a very good friend of hers, Lorna, wanted to become a nurse also. Lorna and Ruth went into nurses training at Cook County--well Lorna didn't get into Cook County Hospital--but Ruth got accepted to Cook County Hospital. Then after Helga [Ruth's youngest sister] grew up enough, she went to nurses training at Cook County. During that time Aunt Beulah was taking nurses training also. And after they graduated from Cook County they went to work in Salt Lake City and that's where Beulah introduced Mom to my Dad. They were married shortly after that.

R. Ream: Let me take you to December 1941. Do you remember if your family knew anything about the coming war?

S. Connelly: I think they probably did. They were very bright people; they listened to the news all the time, but I think the war surprised everyone except Roosevelt and the people in his government.

R. Ream: What is your first recollection of the war starting? How did you first hear about it or was there some sign that there were problems between Japan and the United States?

S. Connelly: I think there was some kind of talk around home. I don't remember exactly what the relations were [between Japan and the U.S.]. But...we went to school early on Monday morning--the days are different over in the Philippines. I was in the fourth grade and we had chapel every morning. All the students were required to go to chapel. We had just gotten out of chapel and some planes flew overhead and we heard bombing within hearing distance. We knew they were bombing somewhere, but we didn't know exactly where it was. I remember walking out of the chapel and walking up towards the classroom and people were saying, "They bombed Pearl Harbor yesterday," which was Sunday evening.

Then the rest of the day is kind of vague and I remember when we got home they were talking about the Japanese invading the Philippines in the very northern part of Luzon. That's about all I can remember, and that town called Aparri, that's where the Japanese first landed. That part of it I remember.

R. Ream: Did the school people send you home right away?

S. Connelly: They probably did, but I can't really remember that.

R. Ream: Did your parents feel that you were safe there?

S. Connelly: I think we were safe there. The first day of the war I don't think that the Japanese invaded that day, but I think that [my parents] thought that we would be safe there. I'm sure that my dad didn't want to come back to the United States. I think he felt that we would be there all our lives, that the Japanese would not mistreat us. But that's hearsay as they say in court.

R. Ream: Was that before you received notification that you were to report to camp?

S. Connelly: No, I think at first...civilians came up and...told us my dad had to surrender all his guns; my dad had a gun collection. There was quite a bit [of time] between Pearl Harbor and the time things actually happened...the timing is kind of vague. Because of the bombing we built a bomb shelter down at the bottom of the hill on the other side of the garden.

My mom was kind of concerned and put a can up in the pine tree and was trying to teach us kids how to shoot the can down. And of course Dad got real mad at her. He said, "When they miss, where do you think the bullets go? What goes up has to come down, and they could hit anyone anywhere...and at any distance."

I know that when the war first broke out...my mom and dad sent my sisters up to the mountains, because they figured the girls would be safe there. They were kind of wary about what Japanese soldiers would do to young girls. They sent me down to the Burnett's house and this was just before Christmas.

I remember my sister, Nora, gave me the Christmas present that she had bought for me, some perfume and lipstick and things like that, things you give little girls. The perfume smelled delicious. The lipstick was like clear gloss, it wasn't red.

Anyway, I think I was there two or three days and Nora and Katie were out in the mountains a week or so. Then mom called us all back in and said, "You're safer here with me." That was before we wrapped up our mattresses and went to Brent School.

This was the time--the interim between the time--the Japanese came and told us to go into camp. Actually, they came and they told us for our safety we should congregate at Brent School, which is the Episcopalian school that we attended. So we all went there and I don't think that was the time that we took our mattresses. I think then we got to go home and collect things like mattresses and a little bit of food, because they said we'd be there for a little while.

R. Ream: Tell me about your preparations for reporting to Brent School with your possessions. Tell me what you took along with you.

S. Connelly: Well, I remember rolling up the mattresses and I remember the blankets. Mom must have taken some food along and a couple of changes of clothes for each of us. We were kind of excited as kids would be, wondering what was going to happen.

By that time we had seen Japanese soldiers, I think. We must have. I remember seeing some troops when I was at the Burnett's house. Burnett's house was near the road down to the mines. [We were not certain] whether they were the retreating Americans, which they might well have been, or incoming Japanese.

R. Ream: Now when you arrived at the Brent School, what happened at the school? Were there Japanese guards there?

S. Connelly: That I don't remember.

R. Ream: You don't remember anything that took place?

S. Connelly: I remember seeing the school. I remember playing there, I remember being very crowded. I can picture the school, but I can't [picture] the guards at all. I just know there were a lot of people and we didn't have too much to eat. We were hungry. And this was probably about lunchtime or so, but I can't remember.

R. Ream: After Brent School did you go back home that night?

S. Connelly: I don't know.

R. Ream: Do you remember at what point you went to one of the internment camps?

S. Connelly: I don't remember how long we were at Brent School, but I remember packing up and the walking and carrying stuff to Camp John Hay. I remember going down the hill and passed the rock structures, the gate of Camp John Hay. It was a long walk as I remember. But how long we stayed at Brent School I'm not sure.

R. Ream: Were any of the townspeople out as you walked through the town?

S. Connelly: We didn't walk through the town, you didn't have to walk through the town. I don't remember seeing any (there probably were), I don't remember them.

R. Ream: Which camp did you go to that day?

S. Connelly: Camp John Hay. It was an American outpost at one time and that's where...the Japanese concentrated their bombing and our area [to live in temporarily] was that camp.

R. Ream: Can you describe the camp to me?

S. Connelly: It was an army camp and had a lot of nice trees. It had a golf course and rolling hills and several barracks and tennis courts. They walked us to a barracks that was right next to the tennis courts and right next to that was the Chinese [civilians'] barracks. The Chinese were interned when we first got there and there were about three times as many Chinese in the barracks as we would have had, but we thought we were crowded. The guard house was the commandant's house or something right across the street from the barracks.

When we first got into camp it wasn't long before all the water was shut off, in fact it was probably shut off before we got there. The toilets we had were in horrible condition and I remember that very vividly. They didn't flush or anything and, of course, after this long walk everybody had to go. Men and women and children they all shared the same bathrooms.

It was very crowded. We placed our mattresses on the floor. I remember, now that I think of it, that we had a little boy that was living with us at the time. His name was Bertrand

Bandman[1]. I don't remember him going to Brent School with us, but I remember at Camp John Hay that he had to share the mattress [with us]. There were about eight of us, I think. We had two double mattresses and we had a whole bunch of people sleeping straight across the bed and then we had two people sleeping at the foot of the bed crosswise. And Bertie was there.

R. Ream: Were there any other family members there with you outside of your immediate family--or living in the camp not just with you?

S. Connelly: My Aunt Beulah, who is my Dad's sister, and her young son, Lee.

R. Ream: Were they housed separately from you or did they share quarters with you?

S. Connelly: When you talk about sharing quarters, you've got wall to wall people here--that's quarters (laughter)--I think Lee and Aunt Beulah had a separate little room, not by themselves, but I think there was a little room where there may have been five or six families. And I think they were in there, but I'm kind of vague on that.

R. Ream: Would you describe your living area for me and who shared it with you?

S. Connelly: Okay, we had two double mattresses. Picture a large, huge one room. You walk in the front door and you turn left and there's a big wide aisle. On the left going around the perimeter of the whole building were mattresses, wall to wall, and in the center of the building. The aisle went up one side up the back and down the other side. And we were in the center island, up at the corner in the center island we had a big corner lot (laughter). Anyway...our living area was the size of two double mattresses. And the next person was the next mattress over. It was wall to wall mattresses.

R. Ream: Were the men separated from the women and children at this point?

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[1] Hind, R. Renton, Spirits Unbroken, San Francisco, CA: John Howell, 1987. Whenever possible this source was used for the correct spelling of the internees' names.

S. Connelly: At this point the men were living in the same place as the women and children.

R. Ream: All right, when you arrived at the camp what did you find, other than the Chinese prisoners which we already discussed? Had there been any preparations made to receive you?

S. Connelly: I think barbed wire [was] up all around everywhere. [The Japanese] had closed it off and made a compound out of it, so that we had to stay in that one area of the barracks and the tennis courts. We were allowed on the tennis courts at certain times, not just constantly. The preparations were that the water had been turned off and we didn't have any water.

R. Ream: How long were you without water?

S. Connelly: It might have been a week; it might have been a day.

R. Ream: Tell me about meals. Were meals provided for you? Were the guards organized and ready to serve you?

S. Connelly: The guards didn't serve us. As far as the organizing of the meals, I think at this point the food was sort of pooled. I don't think we were being fed yet by the Japanese. The food came in from our own little stash, but they did cook in a big kitchen and we had to stand in line and get food. I remember the kitchen was sort of out in back. It was an attached section. You walked across a sort of a porch and then there was the mess hall. We did not cook our own meals, they were cooked in a big kitchen and by a certain group...

R. Ream: Let me ask you this, were committees selected to cook the food or how did the different things happen in the camps--any kind of camp organization? That was a quadruple question answer in order (laughter).

S. Connelly: Yes, there were committees, but I don't know how they got started. Being a kid you're not aware of things like that. Grownups take care of everything. But yes there were committees and about the same people that started cooking in camp John Hay cooked throughout the whole three years. They were sort of privileged people as I remember. I don't know when they started breaking off and putting other committees in order.

They must have had a latrine committee to keep the latrines clean. Since the toilets didn't flush and didn't work they had to dig latrines. And I remember the men out there digging the latrines and putting the board across for people to sit on and it seems like [the board] was already cut out. I do remember, but it was recalled for me in Fern Harrington's book[2]. She wrote that [we used]...the board that the fire buckets hung from, which was very convenient.

I remember we kids--I mean kids are happy-go-lucky and they play and make the best of everything. I just remember being a kid and playing around and exploring and finding out different things. If I remember rightly, even then the Japanese used to bring in candy for the kids. Japanese soldiers loved kids and they used to always bring in candy.

R. Ream: Because it was so crucial to you I want to back up to the food. I don't mean to dwell on it, but what I want to know is where did the food come from, because obviously, your own supplies did not last long.

S. Connelly: Yes, and each person [that] brought in their own supplies only brought in enough for a couple of days. I think that the food must have come from the grocery stores in town. They must have bought the food, they probably pooled money--collected money from people to buy the food. The man that was in charge of our camp was a civilian that we knew before the war. He obviously knew that people needed the food, so he probably was instrumental in bringing it in.

R. Ream: Were they well balanced meals?

S. Connelly: At that time they probably were. I don't remember too much about that--the details of things like that.

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[2] Miles, Fern Harrington, Captive Community: Life in a Japanese Internment Camp, 1941-1945, (Jefferson City, TN: Mossy Creek Press, 1987).

R. Ream: Was there sufficient food for you?

S. Connelly: No, I don't think there ever was; I think we were always hungry. It was rationed.

R. Ream: Were there any health problems at the time that you can remember, possibly related to nutrition or sanitation?

S. Connelly: You know, the first few weeks, I don't remember exactly when it was, the sanitation was a big problem because of the flies, because the latrines weren't working. I just remember the first few weeks of camp I was sent out to the hospital, because I had a bladder infection. And there was another lady, who had diabetes, who was sent out with me. I think we were out for about three weeks in the hospital downtown. That stuff is very vague to me.

R. Ream: Do you remember anything at all about your hospital stay?

S. Connelly: Yeah, I remember we were in a ward. There were probably about six beds in the ward and Freda Grose was the woman who had the diabetes, I remember her very well. I remember the wonderful, I say wonderful with my tongue in my cheek, irrigations that I had to have all the time (laughter). It was terrible. I just kind of took everything in stride.

R. Ream: Who staffed the hospital?

S. Connelly: The nuns, it was a Catholic hospital and they had nuns as the nurses.

R. Ream: Do you recall how long you were in the hospital?

S. Connelly: I think three weeks, but I'm not really positive.

R. Ream: Were your parents allowed to visit you?

S. Connelly: No, nobody was allowed out of camp. There was probably very little communication, but I know they knew I was in good hands. I think Aunt Beulah [Dr. Allen] was allowed out, maybe she was the reason I was sent out.

R. Ream: What was your Aunt Beulah doing in the Philippines?

S. Connelly: Well, Aunt Beulah came over as a single woman, because my dad was there and my mom and Aunt Helga was there also. Aunt Helga came out not too long after dad and mom got there. I don't think they came out on the same boat. But Aunt Helga met Theo out there and got married and Aunt Beulah met Uncle Sam. And they got married. Aunt Beulah practiced medicine there. I think she practiced medicine before she met Uncle Sam--I'm not too clear on that either. It was one big happy family.

R. Ream: What did Uncle Sam do?

S. Connelly: Uncle Sam was in the Army and stationed at Fort McKinley in Manila.

R. Ream: Was he with infantry or cavalry?

S. Connelly: I think it was infantry.

R. Ream: Was he medical?

S. Connelly: Beats me, I don't know. I just know he had white hair.

R. Ream: You mentioned that Beulah and Lee were with you in the camp, so Uncle Sam was not there, or did you just omit him?

S. Connelly: No, no, he was in the Army. He had his duties with the Army. He went to Corregidor and was in the Bataan Death March and died as a result of it.

R. Ream: Did you know that at the time?

S. Connelly: I think that Aunt Beulah got information at some time during our internment, but I don't think it was right that soon.

Interview with Sarah Ream Connelly, Interview I
Date of Interview: June 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 1, Side 2

R. Ream: So, you are not sure at what point during the war you found out that Sam had died on this march.

S. Connelly: No, I'm not.

R. Ream: In the camp (we are at Camp John Hay) did all the adults have a role to play, for instance did they all have assigned tasks?

S. Connelly: I don't think so, not at this point, not at Camp John Hay, because I think we all thought we would be getting out pretty soon. As soon as the Japanese completely took over the Philippines, I think they [American civilians] thought that we would get out.

Certain individuals had assigned roles. Mr. Harold was in charge of the committee and he was sort of a go-between between the Japanese and the Americans. Certain people did the cooking and certain people did the cleaning up. It could be that they had rotation, so people took turns doing things. I know we had to keep our own areas clean and neat and I think we had to keep the floors scrubbed clean, because the Japanese are very meticulous and they liked it to be kept clean.

In Camp Holmes [the roles] sort of expanded and people had more specific jobs. It was more settled down in Camp Holmes and I don't think--in Camp John Hay it wasn't quite settled down enough.

R. Ream: At Camp John Hay what did you father and mother do to occupy themselves during the day besides keeping track of four rambunctious children--two of them teenagers? Do you recall?

S. Connelly: Nope. I don't know what my folks did (laughs).

R. Ream: Do you recall how long you were in Camp John Hay?

S. Connelly: Well, I think it was probably about two or three months. You know, kids don't keep track of time like that--it's morning and night, morning and night.

R. Ream: Were you there at Christmas time? Do you remember if you were there the very first Christmas?

S. Connelly: No. I don't think so. I think we had Christmas at home, but we didn't have a big Christmas or anything like that. I think we went in right after Christmas, but because of the turmoil and who's going to be in charge of us and what are the Japanese going to do, I don't think we celebrated Christmas, really. I remember the Christmas, because Nora gave me that present.

R. Ream: In the camp and we are still at Camp John Hay, do you know what Nora and Katie did to occupy themselves?

S. Connelly: Well, I know Nora was older and she probably--they played bridge, I think. I don't think Katie played bridge though, but I think Nora played bridge with the older kids from her high school. The kids put on a Christmas play. They probably did that to occupy the time.

R. Ream: Now is this at Camp John Hay?

S. Connelly: Yeah. It's not a Christmas play, but they put on a play. I remember one of the songs they sang: "There's a great day coming manana, and..."

R. Ream: Do you remember the song?

S. Connelly: [Sally sings part of the song] "There'll be great days coming manana with a wonderful, wonderful dream...we'll be out of the doldrums manana. ...So come you mourners...and beat your drums..." Anyway, that's how it went. I remember them singing that. It was kind of like country club atmosphere I think, because so many people were around and you played and the evening times you would walk around the tennis courts.

...I don't know why or when the Japanese released the Chinese; maybe they thought there were too many to have to feed. But when they released the Chinese people, then the men moved over to that barracks. And then...the men and women were separated. They only saw each other in the evening time and they called that commingling and I remember my dad and mom used to laugh about that word, because they didn't think there was such a word as commingling. They thought it was a Japanese made up word. But that was kind of fun, too. Evening time was real special time, especially for kids.

R. Ream: What did you do in the camp? Tell me about it.

S. Connelly: What did I do? I got into trouble (laughs).

R. Ream: All by your lonesome (laughter).

S. Connelly: No. I played and played, ran around, investigated. I remember more of the things we did in Camp Holmes than I did in Camp John Hay.

I remember one time I got my hair cut. I needed a haircut and Mila Mount cut hair. Before the war she was a beautician, I think. And she cut hair and she cut my hair really high up in the back and left like a little duck tail and I hated it. I hated it; I went around with my shirt over my head for weeks (laughs). Oh, I hated it; I was so mad at my mom for letting her cut my hair. I guess I had a typical Japanese haircut, because our little mattress area was right near the door where the Herolds lived and where the Japanese [guards] always...[entered]. They passed by our place and they'd see me and they'd go "little Japanese girl, little Japanese girl." (laughter) I used to get so mad, oh I'd get so mad at that.

And then of course Elmer Herold--when he'd come out of [his room]--we must have eaten at our bunks, we must have cooked a little something in our bunks--because every time he came out of the door he'd say, "What, eating again?" And that really made me mad, I don't know why, but it really made me mad. I don't know if it really bothered my folks...and the Herolds always had a lot to eat, they had a lot of special privileges that I remember.

R. Ream: Were they part of the kitchen crew?

S. Connelly: No. He was the go-between, the head of the committee, the go-between the Japanese and...

R. Ream: At this camp only, not any of the others, but at this camp, do you remember any treatment by the Japanese guards other than the fact that they gave candy to the children?

S. Connelly: Well, they seemed congenial enough as I remember. They used to shuffle along up and down the aisles and at certain times they'd have to check us out several times to be sure that people were there. It was pretty strict. You had to be in bed at a certain time, lights out at a certain time. They had their marches. They marched around checking on us, and of course always in and out of that door that was right near our area there. In this camp--I don't remember, it's sort of vague to me...there was some beating up at the guard house or something. I think it was Chinese people that they beat up. And I remember that they did take people out of camp to question, and nobody knew what ever happened to them. Sometimes they came back, sometimes they didn't. I remember...that Mr. Gray never came back. Some of my memories have been jogged because I just finished Fern's book. But I do remember that.

R. Ream: Did you go to school there?

S. Connelly: Not in Camp John Hay that I remember.

R. Ream: Was there any other recollection that you would like to share with me about Camp John Hay?

S. Connelly: Well, you know it's really funny, but it was sort of a country club atmosphere and it was fun.

R. Ream: Do you remember anything about the month or the year that you were moved to a different camp?

S. Connelly: No, I don't. I don't even remember the day we were moved, but I remember moving.

R. Ream: Do you know why you were moved?

S. Connelly: Probably because they needed the camp to house Japanese soldiers, because there was an airstrip near by, or they needed a place where we were sort of isolated. We were moved to the Philippine Constabulary which was another military camp. I think that we were more isolated there and it would have been a little easier for us to be guarded and [there was] a little less contact with the Filipino people.

R. Ream: What was the name of this new camp?

S. Connelly: Camp Holmes.

R. Ream: And where was it located?

S. Connelly: In Trinidad Valley.

R. Ream: So you left Baguio then?

S. Connelly: No. Trinidad Valley is like the suburbs or outskirts of Baguio. You had maybe seven miles or seven kilometers. It wasn't all that far, but it was down in the valley, where they had a lot of truck farms, the garden area of Baguio area.

R. Ream: Can you describe Camp Holmes to me?

S. Connelly: Well, it was a formerly a constabulary camp.

R. Ream: Does that mean police?

S. Connelly: Philippine Constabulary--the police or the army. To come into the camp you passed the guardhouse. There were two large parade grounds and from one end of the parade ground you looked across...and you saw three barracks. To the right and to the middle were two-story barracks; left was the one-story barracks--probably the officers' at that time.

At the very beginning I think, you make a right turn off the highway, and as you go up the hill on the right hand side was the bodega, which was the storehouse of the supplies before...[the war] happened. And on the left would have been the guard house, then you went up the hill even further and you came to the parade grounds. That was on one level, and then off to the left on another level were several buildings that probably had quartered officers.

Maybe it was a hospital, I don't know. They made a hospital out of one of the buildings and there were so many women that had brand new babies that they made a baby house down there. Then there was a sunken garden that was really pretty. It was just a regular, beautiful garden with a big pond with a fountain in the middle.

There was another kind of parade ground between the single-story building and the hospital building. During the course of the camp they put some buildings down there where they housed the nuns that came in. I think they had one that they used as a school room. Then they built another house directly across from the single story barracks that was a one room school house. The classes were very small. I think the largest class had maybe six kids in it. Our class had five.

R. Ream: What grade were you in?

S. Connelly: I went in the fourth grade and...when I came out I was in about the sixth grade. Our education was very sporadic and interrupted many times. When I came to the States they put me into the fifth grade, no into the sixth grade, then I skipped the seventh grade. But anyway, that's the States.

Then they built some--I don't know if we outgrew those school houses or what--but they built some nepa shacks on the right hand side. When we first came there, there were Chinese [civilians] also in the right hand double barracks. Women and children went into the middle two-story barracks and the men went into the single-story barracks. Then when the Chinese people moved out of the double barracks on the right, the men moved over and the women got the single-story and the other one, the other double-story. In that time we moved over to the other single-story because we kids were larger and they had the double-story barracks for the women with smaller children.

R. Ream: Describe your quarters for me.

S. Connelly: Well, the first quarters we had when we first got into that camp were on the second floor--I would say probably the west side of the barracks. You walked up the stairs and there was a separate room where a couple of families lived. And then we lived next door to that, right against the outside wall. We still had mattresses on the floor. I don't think we had beds at all. Then when the men moved out of the single-story barracks, we moved over to the single-story barracks. Mostly those were single women and there were about one, two, three, four or five families with older kids like we were and we were put into an end room in the single-story barracks. So that room had about four or five families in it, maybe even six.

R. Ream: Was it curtained off for privacy?

S. Connelly: Eventually, we curtained it off and rearranged our beds. At that time we had bunk beds and we arranged them so that we could have a little privacy. Nora, at that time, went out and lived in the big main part of it where the single women lived. But Katie, John, and mom and I stayed in that little room. And then towards the end of that camp they started allowing men and women to live together again, and we were just in the process of moving in with my dad and the far right hand barracks--I think by that time John had moved in with dad--we were just getting ready to move over there, but we never did quite. Maybe we were there for a couple of days.

R. Ream: Were your Aunt Beulah and her son, Lee, still with you?

S. Connelly: Yeah they were...I don't know at what point, but at one time there was a shortage of doctors at Santo Tomas, and so they asked some of the doctors to go down. Apparently, we had quite a few doctors in our camp, because there were a lot of missionaries. A lot of them were medical missionaries.

R. Ream: So Beulah and Lee left?

S. Connelly: Yeah, Beulah and Lee and Hendy--by that time Hendy was born. So now Hendy must have been born in 1942. So it was probably late '42 or early '43 that they went down to Manila.

R. Ream: Do you remember how your parents felt to say goodbye to Beulah and her young children?

S. Connelly: No, I don't. You never know how somebody feels, especially when you're a kid, you don't remember. Aunt Beulah belonged to everybody in camp. She just wasn't my Dad's sister. In fact there were times when I felt that she was a lot closer to friends and Army people than she was to her family there.

R. Ream: What was the food situation like in Camp Holmes?

S. Connelly: Well...number one, we were constantly hungry, but I always felt that we had better food than they had at the other camps, because we did have a little garden. We were allowed to have a garden and we did have fresh vegetables, not fruit. Well, for awhile we had fresh fruits, because they allowed people to go out and buy these things outside. And a lot of people had friends who would bring them food from the outside.

I think at this point the Japanese were starting to provide the food and the food got progressively worse as we went along as far as the staples that the Japanese would provide. That's because the rice had more and more rocks and dirt in it just to make the sacks heavy. So people got less for their money. But we still had fresh vegetables and they would make use of every speck of vegetable. One time I remember we had beans, and there were weevils in the beans. We'd have rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and they'd make soft rice which is like oatmeal mush. We had cornbread once in awhile.

I remember when we first got to Camp Holmes there was a water problem there, too. They had a big canvas bucket that...had chlorinated water in it, and it was really chlorinated. I remember that the [bucket] had spigots down around the bottom and we would drink out of that.

There was also a water problem as far as bathing and [flushing] toilets go, too. We were just allowed a certain amount of water to take a bath with and certain times that we could take a bath. Every once in a while we were a bit slow, and we almost missed roll call because we'd be taking our bath, and we'd have to run out there a little bit wet. [Some of] us kids did that, I don't think the parents did that. But I remember Libby Bergamini and I used to do that and Joan Roberts. We'd always run a little bit late.

Okay, back to the food.

R. Ream: Let me ask you before you go back to the food, what were the consequences of missing roll call?

S. Connelly: I don't think we ever had any consequences (laughs). I think we made it every time--barely.

R. Ream: Now we'll go back to the food.

S. Connelly: Okay, somebody invented a thing they called goober goo to put on the rice to kind of make it a little more palatable and whether we had hard rice for breakfast or soft rice for breakfast, we'd have a spoon or two of this goober goo. It was like peanut butter mixed with syrup. And eventually everything tasted good: chard (oh, wonderful chard) and even the weevils in the beans tasted good. But we were always hungry and we kids were almost always the first ones in the line. Then, of course, the kids would go and they'd be playing and they'd stand in line and then the grownups would join them later on. And of course the kids were saving places for the grownups.

We used to have a banana every day. You probably heard this story before, but the first people would pick through all the bananas and pick out the fattest and the biggest and the best bananas. And they'd feel all the others and get them bruised and everything. The people at the end of the line, if they got any bananas at all, would get puny ones. So my dad invented a machine that was a banana distributor, and it was like a hand-cranked water wheel kind of thing that somebody on one side would put a banana in. It was like those automats. You fill up the holes and somebody comes and grabs one out and the hole gets filled up again. And you had to take the banana that came off when your turn in line came up. So it was pretty fair. Everybody got either good or bad bananas depending how their turn came up in line.

There was never enough to eat; we were always hungry.

I remember one time John caught a bird and he found a potato or something. I don't know who cooked the bird, but I think I cooked the potato. I said I'd cook it for him if he gave me a bite of it and my mom was mad at me, because she said John needed it more than I did (laughs). He was pretty skinny I guess. I think that mom felt that the girls being older could kind of take care of themselves a little better. I think she kept a good eye on John [the only surviving son], probably because of Bill [the baby who died]...But I don't feel that she loved him more than she loved us girls, I think that she just felt that he needed more attention.

The Japanese still--every once in awhile--brought candy to the kids. And as we were there longer and longer and longer, we acquired a couple of cows and some goats and got some of the milk for the babies from the goats and the cows. Oh, they also had pigs. Every once in a while they'd slaughter an animal. Oh, yeah, I remember when they use to slaughter the cows. We kids were given permission to go down and watch them slaughter the cows and that was horrible, terrible. You don't want me to describe that do you?

R. Ream: (Laughter from both) If you want that in your oral history, I would be very happy to include it.

S. Connelly: They'd slaughter them down at the bodega, but boy they saved every single bit of that cow that they killed. It was pretty gruesome.

R. Ream: Do you remember personally any health problems for yourself at this time, because of sanitation or lack of food?

S. Connelly: Well, I think we all got hepatitis at one point--jaundice. Generally, I think we were pretty healthy at this point. I don't think anyone was starting to get beriberi or anything yet--maybe some of the older people. I think that there was dysentery. I don't remember if I got it. I think everybody maybe did, but I'm not sure, I can't remember that. You'd think you'd remember dysentery. But they did give us shots for cholera and things like that. And I remember I stepped on a nail one time, and had to have my foot fixed and I had a little dental problem here or there--had to have a tooth pulled. But I think generally my health was pretty good.

Interview with Sarah Ream Connelly, Interview I
Date of Interview: June 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 2, Side 1

R. Ream: At any time at this camp or Camp John Hay did the teenage girls or the younger, single women have any problems with the Japanese guards as far as sexual advances?

S. Connelly: I don't think so.

R. Ream: Can you describe some of the camp activities for me?

S. Connelly: Well, there was a lot of bridge playing, as I remember, of the high school kids and on up--people that played bridge. I know Nora played bridge all the time. I think Katie played a little bit.

As far as kids go, kids play all the time--they had baseball. You could go out and play baseball. I was always stuck in left field and I objected to that. I wanted to be the pitcher (laughs). They had races--organized races for kids. There was a man there, Mr. Burnett--the house where I stayed when the war first broke out--he was sort of in charge of the sports activities there, and he was always in charge of the races. How often they had them I don't remember, but we had the races and Joan Turner taught a little bit of dancing, I think, and she put on about three festivals--dance festivals--where she had all the kids perform according to their abilities.

They had school. In fact I think we even went to school on Saturdays. We were not supposed to have history or geography but we did. And at one point my dad became my geography teacher when Jimmy Halsema, who was the usual geography teacher, was sick. That was an interesting experience--some of the things that dad taught us. And because he worked in the wood shop he was able to make us each a little globe and then he had to teach us how to cover it all. We had to make a map on something like an orange peel and glue it on, but that was towards the end of Camp Holmes and that was when I was in the sixth grade, I think. We had a little one room schoolhouse. I know they taught geography and history, because my fourth or fifth grade teacher was a geologist. He taught us geography. And Cordie Job, who was I think a principal or vice-principal of Brent School, was the principal of this little school. And she was our teacher for the next grade and she taught us history--ancient history. She didn't like me.

R. Ream: Why didn't she like you, Sally?

S. Connelly: I was a ringleader. I had that mischievous look in my eyes and I'm guilty of everything whether I am or not. You know that (laughter) I am. She used to jump down my throat all the time and Dr. Skerl thought I was egging everybody into trouble and everything, when I was totally innocent--totally! (Anyway, you're going to cut this out, of course you are.)

R. Ream: No, I'm not. This is wonderful. I love it. I'll cut out my comments, but yours go in (laughter). No, I think that's delightful.

S. Connelly: Let's see. What else? What did we do? Oh, we kids explored and when we had a chance we'd go on the different parties. Like they'd allow us to go up with the wood party once in awhile, where they'd go out and collect wood for the stoves--woodcutting crew. Every once in awhile they'd allow us to go with the garbage crew. I remember one time that I went with them--they always did this, but I only remember going once--they would pick all the gardenias and give them to the young girls or their wives, or whatever, and that was really kind of special. It was still a country club atmosphere.

Mrs. Whitmarsh was sort of a drama teacher and she would get people together to put on dramas. We had (I think twice a week, maybe it started out once a week but it ended up twice a week) we had what they call lectures. That's what we called them, lecture tonight. Well, it started out as lectures, but they ended up having plays and things like that and that was kind of fun. That was evening entertainment.

Then of course everybody had a few little duties. I don't think the kids had duties so much, but the parents had duties. The kids were kind of just left to run free.

R. Ream: Tell me about those duties, especially in relationship to, first your father, and then your mother. I'd like to know what their roles were in the camp.

S. Connelly: Okay. Dad's always been sort of a handyman and he liked to invent things. So he and a few other men who worked with wood and with their hands had a little building way at the other end of the parade ground and beyond. It was on the way out towards where the goats and pigs were kept, where the livestock was kept. They had a machine shop and Dad was sort of in charge of his part of the machine shop and Mr. (I think his name was Butts) was in charge of his machine shop. Some people worked strictly with wood and some people worked with other things. And they'd invent and they would putter and they would make things. Dad made a lot of things out of metal--hammered metal. He made my mom a teapot out of an old fire extinguisher. He made eating utensils, plates out of aluminum, whatever scrap metal they could find they made something out of. They made knives.

R. Ream: That was permitted? Knives were permitted?

S. Connelly: Yes. Things got a little easier. We got there and things were strict at first. And then as time wore on things got easier and easier and then when the two men escaped,[3] things got clamped down again. It was a little harder again, so we suffered a little bit for these men escaping.

Anyway, dad was very clever. He made a lot of things. He made his famous false teeth out of aluminum when he broke his.

R. Ream: Tell me about those teeth.

S. Connelly: Well, they looked like a plaster cast, really regular dentally made teeth. They were beautiful; they are beautiful. Nora still has them. I just remember the lower plate. Katie thinks there was an upper plate, too. But I just remember the lower plate.

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[3] Richard Green and Herbert Swick.

R. Ream: Now, you said today that Katie has the teeth.

S. Connelly: Yeah, but she'll give them to Nora.

R. Ream: Upper or lower?

S. Connelly: Just the lower. See when dad got into camp he broke his teeth. They couldn't be fixed. I think for awhile he had them kind of wired together, but that didn't work to well. So he made himself a set, that I remember, lower dentures. Then when he came back to the States he really felt that he should become more conventional, I guess. There was a dental student at U.C. San Francisco that needed to make some false teeth...in order to graduate. It's like writing a thesis or something to make these false teeth. So he made dad a nice set of dentures, and dad thought those were great dentures, and he always said they were almost as good as his aluminum teeth.

R. Ream: I want to go back to his aluminum teeth in the camp. Where did your father get the aluminum for those teeth?

S. Connelly: Well, I really don't know...there was so much scrap metal around. We were on a military base. They had a rifle range there. We kids used to go and dig out bullets and everything. And [the camp] probably had been bombed at the beginning of the war. There was a lot of scrap around. And nothing was thrown away. He could have just found a scrap and picked it up and used it, maybe melted it down, I don't know.

R. Ream: Now did he make those by himself?

S. Connelly: Well, with the help of the local dentist, Dr. Walker. But I'm sure that he did ninety nine percent of it himself.

R. Ream: Now we talked about the banana sorter and your father's teeth, which he made. Were there any other notable projects that stand out in your mind that he made?

S. Connelly: Let me think here. Well the teapot was really neat and the plates and the flatware, the spoon. That particular spoon that I have here is just one of a few, but that's the one that he had inscribed on. And that was the only one [left].

When we returned to Bilibid--we were evacuated overnight by the American Army--the Filipinos [had] looted the place and they left a little ditty bag with just a few objects in it. I think they must have just forgotten to take it or something. That spoon was the only one of the things that dad made that had been left there. Everything else was taken.

R. Ream: Returning to Camp Holmes. Do you remember anything about your mother's role in the camp--what her tasks were?

S. Connelly: Well, I think at the very beginning she had to work in the bathrooms. I think everybody had to take turns. There was a time that we ran out of toilet paper and everybody had to take turns handing it out to people--you know, two or three sheets or whatever. She had to still maintain her family and keep them dressed and clean and everything. And everybody had a certain job as far as the community went. She became the head of the vegetable group, where the women had to pare the vegetables and clean them for the meals of the day.

R. Ream: But again, she did no nursing.

S. Connelly: No, except of her own family.

R. Ream: Do you remember any holidays at Camp Holmes?

S. Connelly: I remember Easters; we used to have sunrise services and go down to the sunken garden. They'd have an Easter pageant, or what do you call it, the passion plays? And Christmas. I think they celebrated Thanksgiving...not like we celebrate Thanksgiving [in the U.S.] but I think they had--for every holiday that we celebrated they made a little bit of special effort to remember it. But of course Thanksgiving is connected with food, and we didn't have too much food there. The one Thanksgiving or Christmas where we really gorged ourselves was just before we went down to Manila. They couldn't take the livestock with them and everything, so they had to do a lot of slaughtering and they gave people much more than they could eat at the time. But that was desperation, that was nothing they could help. There was no refrigeration. They couldn't take the cut meat or anything down.

R. Ream: Do you remember hearing any news of the war, or were you totally isolated from any news of the European theatre or the Pacific theatre?

S. Connelly: Well, I remember in Camp John Hay when they said Singapore had fallen. I remember that. In Camp Holmes everything was more or less rumors that I remember, but they say rumors, but whether or not anyone had a radio, I didn't know at that time. We could see out over the bay, and we used to think we could see ships out in the ocean. We could have seen ships, they might have been Japanese troop ships, whatever. Every once in a while a plane would fly over. Later on [in] 1943, 1944 planes would fly over.

R. Ream: Whose planes were they?

S. Connelly: Well, probably Japanese planes to begin with, but then we'd see these specks way up in the sky and we couldn't make them out. They were the twin fuselage P-38s and oh, nobody could figure that one out. And they were just specks, way up there. Of course we didn't have any binoculars or anything.

Go back to dad and his inventions. There was one girl there that had--before the war I guess she'd had her two front teeth knocked out--and they broke off and dad replaced them. He hand tooled them out of ivory for the dentist to reattach them. That's another one. I'll probably come back with some of these things as they pop into my mind.

R. Ream: Let me ask, did you receive any news from the U.S.A. from family? Did you ever hear from them?

S. Connelly: I think we might have gotten one message or so. Sometime during the camp, when the Filipinos were able to bring packages in, we started getting packages from somebody that apparently knew us or knew Nora, because of her horse or something, I don't know. But we never heard of her and she would bring us food all the time, and I think every once in a while she would put in something--a little bit of news. And I think this is one way that people got news, too, in the packages. The Filipinos would insert a tidbit or another.

Of course we got all our news by the Ouija board. That's one of dad's inventions. He made a Ouija board, and we used to sit and play on that and ask it questions. And of course we wanted to believe everything and so we did. Whenever we asked about the war and it said good things, we just really believed it. And truthfully, I think that a lot of the things that Ouija board said really were true. Skeptics like to say, "What a kook." There were a lot of things the Ouija board said that were actual.

And of course Katie was the one that could work the Ouija board better than anybody. Lot of things happened with that Ouija board--that was another source of entertainment, we'd sit for hours over the Ouija board. Then Katie got to the point where she didn't need the board at all, she did automatic writing and got things there. One of the things that made us really believe in the Ouija board--well dad made it and it isn't like the ones you buy in the store where it slides and points to different letters and everything. He put a pencil in the point and it wrote and we used to write on paper.

Which is another item that I didn't bring up when we were talking about school. We used our pencils until all that was left was the little metal thing and little teeny weeny quarter inch of lead and we used to have a shortage of paper, so we would write really small to try and fit everything on the paper. You'd need a magnifying glass to read it. We were very frugal.

Anyway, as far as the Ouija board goes, one time Katie was being a little upset and the Ouija board said, "Don't be so belligerent." And Katie says, "What does that mean?" She'd never heard that word before. Where does a kid get words like that--who's doing that? And the Ouija board used to say that it was my Grandpa Ream talking, W.W. Ream. That's pretty neat. I remember those times with the Ouija board.

R. Ream: Did the Ouija board ever tell you how your family in Manila was faring, because I know you had more than just Aunt Beulah and her sons down there?

S. Connelly: Yeah...all the Diehls were down there.

R. Ream: Did you ever have any news of them?

S. Connelly: Yes, there was a time when there was a little bit of correspondence between the two camps...we knew they were interned, they knew we were interned. Of course, when Aunt Beulah went down, she gave news of everybody.

R. Ream: Were you at any time in any physical danger from any warfare at Camp Holmes? Was there any bombing, was there any shooting?

S. Connelly: I don't really remember any. According to Fern's book there was a time when the guerrillas were trying to come in. But I'm not sure if I remember that or not.

R. Ream: Do you have any other recollections that you would like to tell me about--about this Camp Holmes?

S. Connelly: I think it was a very, very good experience in learning how to get along with people. We had such a wide variety of differences between the missionaries and the miners and people really learned how to get along well together.

I know that I remember that the Japanese admired people that were hard working and for instance, they really admired Aunt Beulah and they admired my mom, because she took my dad's lunch to him all the time. They [the guards] were really human. The camp was sort of--well Baguio right now is an R and R [rest and recuperation] spot for American troops. And it was an R and R spot for Japanese troops at that time. We got a lot of young shell shocked Japanese soldiers. They were very young, and they just really loved the kids...

R. Ream: So you saw them?

S. Connelly: Yeah, oh yeah, we saw Japanese soldiers all the time.

R. Ream: I mean the shell shocked soldiers.

S. Connelly: Well, they were...not shell shocked to the point where they were crazy. They were just kind of burnt out.

R. Ream: Were they housed with you?

S. Connelly: No, no, [they were] not housed with us at all. There was a guard house at the end of the parade ground and a lot of them lived there. I don't know where the other ones lived, but they had quite a few, so they must have had a barracks there for them somewhere...they made their rounds...and we had roll call every day, twice a day, in the morning and at night. We had quite a bit of contact with them I think. Not like a social club or anything like that.

R. Ream: Do you remember the Emperor's birthday?

S. Connelly: That's probably when they came to give us candy (laughs) or children's day or something. I don't know, as far as I know we didn't celebrate those days.

There were couple of men--there was one guy who had a Filipino wife. When I think of him I think of him I think of Willie Nelson; he was kind of a Willie Nelson person. He used to escape periodically to go out and be with his wife. And they'd find him drunk and bring him home and beat him up a little bit. And after awhile he'd escape again. Then another guy they found bootlegging alcohol--bringing in alcohol and they made a public demonstration of beating up on him in front of us. He's coming to the reunion.

R. Ream: What is his name?

S. Connelly: Mount, Mr. Mount. I don't remember his first name. His wife is the one who cut my hair, [the haircut] that I hated. But they really beat up on him. They used up to beat up on Sy Sorrell, but I don't think they hurt him too much.

R. Ream: Why did they beat him up?

S. Connelly: Well, because he's the guy that used to run away every once in a while to be with his Filipino wife.

R. Ream: What month and year were you taken down to Manila?

S. Connelly: It was between Thanksgiving and Christmas or close to Christmas I think.

R. Ream: Of what year?

S. Connelly: 1944.

R. Ream: Do you know why you were moved down to Manila?

S. Connelly: I think that the Japanese were starting to lose the war and in fact the rumor was that they were going to take us down and use us as hostages.

R. Ream: Could you see actual signs of any American presence in the Philippines at that time?

S. Connelly: Oh well, we saw more and more planes and I don't think they were actually in the Philippines, at least not on Luzon, at the time we moved. We used to be able to see Lingayen Gulf, and we saw more ships out there, and we were getting pretty excited and everything. We knew something was happening. As far as presence, no we didn't see any, only what we thought were Americans--the ships and the airplanes.

R. Ream: What preparations did you make to go down to Manila.

S. Connelly: Well, I think we were given a limited amount of space [in the truck] that we were going to be moved in, so we were only supposed to take certain things with us--the necessities. I remember I took the globe that my dad gave me, but it was lost along the way, so I never saw it at the other end. We had to take our bedding of course, the necessities.

Then [before we were moved] they slaughtered all these animals and they cooked up all the rice and everything. I remember we had a big tin, it was a cracker tin, I don't know if you ever saw those--and we had that full of rice, cooked rice. By the time we got half way down there we were parked in a park, and we went to eat the rice and it was all sour, so we couldn't eat that. And I don't remember if we had anything to eat, because the rice was sour. But we gorged ourselves before we went down, and we were given certain rations on the way.

Fern, in her book, mentioned that some of the people were dumped, and their trucks were, removed and then they had to wait for some other trucks to come and get them and bring them down. I don't know if we were in that group or not, or if we were in the earlier arrivals.

R. Ream: Did you start out early in the day?

S. Connelly: Yeah. Quite early in the morning.

R. Ream: Had the sun come up yet?

S. Connelly: I think it was predawn and it was just starting to come up.

R. Ream: And how long did it take you to go down to Manila?

S. Connelly: [We spent] a long time in the back of an open bed truck with nothing but the hard truck to sit on and a guy with dysentery sitting right next to us (laughs). That must have been John's story. Oh, this guy he was so sick. He was one of the old codgers--well, he was old to us--he was probably in his forties. And he had red hair that covered his whole body and he didn't wear a shirt. He had shorts and boots on--that was all he had. With a redhead's complexion you know he must have been burned to a crisp. He must have really been one sick guy, because he had dysentery, and Nora and I were sitting right next to him. It was just awful. All the way down--I mean they didn't stop the truck or anything.

R. Ream: You had no bathroom stops in all that time?

S. Connelly: I think they maybe had one or two bathroom stops, but that's not enough for a person with dysentery.

I remember I was wearing a dress that one of the women made for me. That's another piece of entertainment, that they had women who taught some of the girls how to sew--do needlepoint, stitching, things like that.

R. Ream: Which camp?

S. Connelly: Camp Holmes. It was Miss Sims and Miss Ashcroft. Or no, was it Fern Harrington and Cleo Morrison? I can't remember, but I think it was Sims and Ashcroft. Anyway, Miss Sims and Miss Ashcroft made me a couple of dresses when I was in camp. I remember the dress I wore on the way to Manila. It was bright yellow and it had daisies all over it and it was buttoned down the back with these handmade coconut shell buttons. But the buttons hit me right at the wrong place in my back, and my back was so sore from that button hitting me right against the side of the truck.

Interview with Sarah Ream Connelly, Interview I
Date of Interview: June 24, 1987; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 2, Side 2

R. Ream: We were talking about that yellow dress with the buttons that hit you in just the wrong spot.

S. Connelly: In my back, yeah, and my back was really sore and my bottom, too, from riding in that truck all the way down. It was pretty bad.

R. Ream: What time of day did you arrive in Manila?

S. Connelly: I think the evening probably. I don't know what time.

R. Ream: Was all peaceful there or was there any sign of a war going on?

S. Connelly: Oh well, the city was a shambles it was pretty [scary] and we got into this Bilibid Prison, which was an old, condemned prison. We were put in the very back section...the front section...sort of had a center and it had like a wheel. It had sections that went out from the center. Then at the very back ...was this one big section, which used to be the hospital of the prison.

[Bilibid] had a big building that was at present two and half stories tall. All the windows were knocked out and there weren't any toilets or anything. It was a condemned prison. They were starting to tear it down. I don't know how many floors it had to begin with, but it had two and a half floors now. We were not allowed up on the top floor. Our quarters were up on the second floor. To cover the windows--to kind of protect from the rain and the sun--they had these corrugated iron slats that were held open by two by fours. There was a nice mango tree right outside the entry way, the lobby area, and one outside the back door, too.

I can't remember where we got our meals, but I think at the end of the building was the place where they cooked the meals. I remember what we ate there. We ate a lot of soy-beans down there. We had just plain boiled soybeans, you know like they boil baked beans here or boiled beans. And then they ran out of that and all we had was bean curd, which is sort of like tofu now, except it was kind of sour. We kids just couldn't eat it. We could not swallow it, and that's all that my mom lived on. I remember she would take our portions, because she just had to keep going. But there wasn't any food value to it, it was just pretty awful stuff. I'm sure that she got beriberi down there or malnutrition anyway. Dad was really sick. He was in the hospital ward, which was some cell blocks on the other end. Mom spent a lot of time with him; he was really sick.

R. Ream: Did school activities continue?

S. Connelly: I don't think so. The toilet situation was--an outside toilet was a long trough that was sort of built on an angle. Up at the top end of it they had a bucket that gradually filled with water. When it got filled with water, it would dump itself and wash down everything that was in the trough.

I think that the men and women both shared that bathroom facility. I think that the men would go certain hours and women go certain hours, or maybe fifteen minutes on fifteen minutes off, whatever. Then each section was divided by a curtain, so that you had your own private, little bathroom to do your thing. That was very innovative, that bathroom, that toilet facility.

There were showers, outside showers, which were situated almost directly under the guardhouses. So they weren't very private. I think the guards could see anything they wanted to see.

We discovered somehow--I think they discovered us--the POWs, the military POWs, that were over on the other side of the wall. And they used to pass messages somehow, I don't know if--the wall was too high I think, to throw things over it. Besides the guards would have seen that. So somehow they got messages passed back and forth between the two camps.

What's really funny is that thirty, thirty five, forty years later Al and I went up the coast of California to this little place called Shelter Cove. And I saw all these pictures that looked like POW pictures and I asked the waitress (this was in a restaurant), "What are these pictures from?" She says, "Oh, the owner was a POW in the Philippines." So of course I had to seek him out and talk to him. And he was one of those soldiers that was on the other side of the wall. And he wrote a little book about it; his name is Machi, Mario Machi. Small world.

Anyway, when the soldiers came in--speaking of small world--one of the soldiers that came in was Bill Haskins and he was from St. Joseph, Missouri and he used to talk about his girlfriend back there. Years later after Al and I were married and I went to work at Kaiser Steel, the teletype operator had a southern or midwestern accent, so I asked her where she was from. She said,"St. Joseph, Missouri." I said, "Oh, I know that this is very remote, but would you happen to know of some guy named Bill Haskins?" And she said, "Oh yes, we used to double date." And I said, "Do you know if he ever got home from the war safe and sound." She said, "Oh yeah." And I said, "What about his girlfriend?" "Oh they got married, they were high school sweethearts." So that's a small world.

R. Ream: That is nice to hear those things that people came home safely. Were there more health problems as a result of the diet and sanitary conditions?

S. Connelly: Oh yeah. I think the health, the diet was terrible. Most of the older people suffered more than the kids, I think. We didn't get anymore candy from the Japanese guards--well, maybe once we did, I think. They came into the lobby and gave the candy out. But we didn't have any fruits or vegetables so to speak. I guess maybe every once in awhile we got a little tiny piece of fruit. There was a kind of a weed[4] that grew there and they found out that we could eat it. So we'd go out and we'd pick that weed.

R. Ream: Were the Japanese showing any signs of malnutrition or did they look well fed?

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[4] Sally's sister, Nora, referred to the plant as talinum.

S. Connelly: I really didn't notice that in the Japanese. They were a lot more strict and they kept more to themselves, I think.

R. Ream: Were you now more aware of the war?

S. Connelly: Oh yeah.

R. Ream: Tell me about it.

S. Connelly: Well, after three years we were tired of being in one spot with a country club atmosphere, it was kind of wearing off. But still kids are pretty adaptable. Our clothes were getting thin, our shoes were getting thin. I guess the soles of our shoes wore out and they made clogs. We used to go around in wooden clogs a lot. Those were made in the machine shop. They started making those in Camp Holmes. Everybody was pretty skinny. Kids still played and I guess people and kids started getting more short tempered and everything. The weather was different down in Manila. It was much hotter, stifling. And there wasn't too much to do in Bilibid. It's a good thing we weren't there very long.

R. Ream: The Americans came in shortly after?

S. Connelly: Yeah. There's something I just remembered about--talking about entertainment in Camp Holmes. One of the things we used to do, we'd get a little cup and a spoon and some water and soap suds and we'd beat these soap suds and then we'd melt some crayons to make some color. Then we'd beat up these colored soapsuds. That was our entertainment (laughs). We'd just walk around all day long beating the soapsuds (more laughter). Then we'd make big, thick bubbles or big, airy bubbles. I mean that was pretty entertaining.

Then after the Red Cross packages came in [at Camp Holmes]; we had one shipment in all those years. At that time I think I got a pair of shoes and some clothing was in there, and we all got a little clothing. I remember there were three coats with hoods on them. They were forest green sort of like peacoats with hoods on them and Ann Gowen, Libby Bergamini and I each got one. That was pretty neat.

R. Ream: In Manila?

S. Connelly: No, no this was up in Baguio. I switched back to Camp Holmes, where we got the one Red Cross package. The Red Cross packages were pretty good sized cardboard cartons. I think it was Ann Gowen and I (I not positive who the other person was)--we had our boxes. There was sort of like a little basement underneath the one story barracks, which practically was directly under our room. We had put our boxes down there and my dad had made me a knife. We were down there making doll houses out of these boxes, paper doll houses. Some of the older kids would do things for the little kids; they would make paper dolls and things like that. Also, when I learned how to sew I used to make clothes for Ann Gowen's little baby doll all the time. I really enjoyed doing that.

R. Ream: Was this at Camp Holmes?

S. Connelly: Yes, this is all at Camp Holmes. All these things come back a little out of context. We used to sew little stuffed animals. There were a lot of things we did once we learned how to do them.

Anyway, as far as cutting out doll houses--we were distracted--once in awhile there would be an earthquake or something--maybe that's what distracted us. Maybe there was a commotion in the camp or whatever, but we forgot our doll houses. And I lost my knife, I couldn't find it and I accused everybody of stealing it. And a couple of months later I go back to the doll houses and here's my knife, right in the doll house. I had used that knife to cut out the doll houses. I felt a little sheepish then.

To get back to Bilibid there wasn't really that much to do for the kids or anybody to do, just basically survive. They didn't have any organized races like they did at the other camp. I think we were always in constant fear that we were going to be taken and used as hostages.

R. Ream: Were you?

S. Connelly: No.

R. Ream: When were you first aware of American presence in Manila?

S. Connelly: We had periodically heard shooting--"pops" over the wall--and we weren't supposed to go up onto the story that was being torn down. But they'd sneak up there. I snuck up there and we heard this skirmish out in the street. There was like a little street fight. I think that was about February 2nd or so, first or second. On the third we got our freedom papers.

R. Ream: Tell me about your freedom papers.

S. Connelly: The Japanese just kind of pulled out and we didn't know what had happened to them. Of course there was a lot of speculation and everything. The next morning the head of the camp [internees' organization] called us all together and said that we just got notice from the Japanese that as of today we are a free people. We all, of course, were really happy about that. We cheered and sang. He said that the Japanese said for our own protection--and he highly recommended it--that we should stay where we were.

Now we knew that the Americans did not know we were there. We knew that much, and we figured they'd find us eventually because of the POWs on the other side of the wall that they did know were there, and [they knew about] the people at Santo Tomas. I don't know if the people of Santo Tomas were aware that we were down in Manila yet. They might have been.

I'm getting mixed up with the time. I don't know if it was before or after that we got our freedom, but we heard noises on the outside of a gate that was down near the cell blocks, which was the hospital wards. So we knew there was something out there, whether it was Japanese or American we didn't know, I think. We heard this skirmishing outside. I don't remember when the Americans first came in. I just remember they were there. They came in the front gate or the back gate. I think they came in the back gate and were surprised to find us, women and children.

R. Ream: Do you remember what it was like to see an American soldier?

S. Connelly: Oh, they were tall, husky, handsome with white teeth, gorgeous hunks. Whew.

R. Ream: And by this time how old were you?

S. Connelly: Twelve. No, no I was still eleven, I turned twelve when I got back to the States.

R. Ream: What happened then after the Americans found you?

S. Connelly: I don't remember exactly when it was, but they handed out a steak--each person got a steak. And my dad said, "This meat is too good to cook," so he took one steak and he cut it up and we all had a piece of raw meat and, oh, that was so good. Then the rest of it got cooked (laughs). Course, it was probably very dangerous to eat that raw meat, it's probably contaminated and everything, but we ate it anyway and enjoyed it.

R. Ream: You all survived it?

S. Connelly: Yes, we all survived. We started eating again, which was very good. Then we all thought, well, what are we going to do now and where we going to go. We knew that dad didn't want to come back to the States really. I think he really liked it there. But we thought we have to go back, so we'll just turn around and come back to the Philippines. We all thought--all of the family--thought we were coming right back to the Philippines.

R. Ream: How long did you stay in Bilibid once the Americans came in?

S. Connelly: They came in February. I think we were there about a month before we were shipped down to Leyte, then a month on Leyte before we were shipped to the States.

R. Ream: Were you able to bring all of your possessions with you out of the camp?

S. Connelly: We didn't have any possessions.

R. Ream: Nothing that you brought down from Baguio?

S. Connelly: The only thing we had was practically what was left in that little ditty bag, because right outside the back wall of Bilibid Prison was a mortar unit. They were shooting their mortars across the compound at the Japanese, and the Japanese were shooting back. All of Manila was on fire. There were a lot of fires going on. For a long time there the Americans were trying to put out the fires by bombing the fires. Every time they bombed the fires, the concussion would lift up those big corrugated iron covers on the window and go "whoop," and then the stick would fall out and then "wham."

Anyway, for our own safety the American Army came in and late at night they evacuated us. All we could see--like the cheshire cat--we'd see all these soldiers who were deeply tan (either that or they were all black) at this point I don't know what they were. We never thought of them as being black. All we could see were these white smiles. I stuck real close to Nora all the time. (I don't know where Katie was. She was with mom or other friends). [Nora] was eighteen years old and attractive to the GIs; we walked passed and got onto another truck than the rest of the family. They took us out to an old shoe factory [at Ang Tibay] on the outskirts of Manila and kept us for a night or two.

R. Ream: Then what happened?

S. Connelly: Then they brought us back to Bilibid. [When] we got back to Bilibid, the Filipinos had been in and had looted and had taken everything, except for us that one little ditty bag that contained a few things. I don't remember all it contained, but two of the things are a spoon and a picture of my brother, Billy, that my mom had carried all through camp.

R. Ream: Do you remember why they took you out to the shoe factory?

S. Connelly: They felt that we were in danger for two reasons, because of the mortar fire and because of the actual fires.

R. Ream: When did you first see your family in Santo Tomas?

S. Connelly: It wasn't too long after we were liberated, after we came back from Ang Tibay. I guess that we were allowed to go out and walk around, and Santo Tomas wasn't really that far away from where we were. It was within walking distance.

R. Ream: Now before you entered Santo Tomas did you know who had survived? Had you any idea if all that family was still living?

S. Connelly: I think we just assumed they were.

R. Ream: So then you went over to Santo Tomas...

S. Connelly: And how we found them, I don't know, because there were a lot of people in Santo Tomas, but we found them. We saw their little shanty. Apparently Teddy and Theo had been used as hostages at the very last. The Japanese sort of hung out at Santo Tomas. They didn't release them like they did us and then take off. They just hung out at Santo Tomas and fought back.

R. Ream: After leaving Bilibid where did you go?

S. Connelly: We were taken to the airport and flown in a C-47, I think--a propeller plane--down to Leyte to a field hospital down there.

R. Ream: Were you all living together then--mother, father, four children?

S. Connelly: We had a tent--I don't remember if dad lived in that tent or not, or maybe he was in a hospital tent or something. But we did have a tent. I got sick down there. I don't know what it was from, but I got sick. We were there just a month. We'd go swimming out in the ocean with all the GIs that were out there. There were a lot of GIs down there, whether they were being repatriated or not I don't know... We rode into Tacloban and I remember mom and John and I were on the truck, and the Filipinos just thought John was the cutest thing. They'd pinch his cheeks (laughter). Did he tell you that?

R. Ream: I don't think so. I think he was ten, ten and a half at that time. He wasn't that little actually by this time.

S. Connelly: But he was awfully cute and the Filipino women just loved him (laughs).

R. Ream: All right, now the decision is made that you're going to return to the United States. How did you personally feel about that?

S. Connelly: It was kind of exciting to do that, because we thought we were coming right back when the war was over.

The Red Cross--when we came back to Bilibid and we found that we didn't have any clothes--the Red Cross gave us a lot of clothes. I had a WAC uniform. I went around all day long in a WAC uniform, this wool jacket and this wool skirt, I must have been roasting.

R. Ream: Of course you know you were so thin at that time, maybe you weren't [roasting].

S. Connelly: It came in handy on the ship.

R. Ream: I was just about to ask you, how did you get home?

S. Connelly: On a ship, a little Dutch ship named the MS Japara.

R. Ream: Can you remember what date you got onto the ship?

S. Connelly: No.

R. Ream: Do you remember the year?

S. Connelly: 1945.

R. Ream: Do you remember the month?

S. Connelly: It was probably the end of April or the beginning of May.

R. Ream: Was it a long trip home?

S. Connelly: Seemed like forever.

R. Ream: What did you do on shipboard?

S. Connelly: Oh, I flirted with all the sailors (laughs). I did, I did. It's funny there...

R. Ream: Well, now you're an official teenager.

S. Connelly: Yes, well in camp I always had a boyfriend. I always had mad crushes on Nora's boyfriends, mainly her boyfriend was David Bergamini, and I always loved David. But I had my own boyfriends in camp, too.

Anyway, when we got on the ship, Joanie Roberts, who was the sister of one of my boyfriends in camp, was a real cute little blonde...anyway, the thing was to collect these little pins from the soldiers and the sailors. I've always been madly in love with the Air Force and airplanes and everything, so I wanted a little pair of wings. I walked around and I had my WAC cap and I put it way down on my nose and I'd have to lift my head like this to see [peers down her nose]. And I said I wasn't going to put my hat back until I got my wings from somebody, and I kept begging and begging and begging this guy to give me his wings. I finally got them; he gave them to me. My dad would call me his wacky daughter.

I did, I flirted with all the sailors. I've always been accused of being a big flirt. Katie said I used to flirt with them all on Leyte. She says, "You'd just bat your eyes." They all thought I was pretty cute. Anyway, I remember this one time dad and mom were sitting on top of the hatch. There was this young sailor that we kids all liked, and he was kind of standing by the rail and Libby and I started telling him about,"Beans, beans the musical fruit..." and my dad said Bud was so embarrassed he just stared off into the ocean and tried to avoid us, and dad and mom got a big kick out of that.

R. Ream: Well, when you came back on the ship where did you land?

S. Connelly: San Francisco.

R. Ream: And was there anyone there to greet you?

S. Connelly: Yes, the Diehls who had previously come home on a ship and the Johnsens, which is mom's brother and his family, were there. And Uncle Milton must have been there, because I remember we went home to Uncle Milton's house across this great big bridge and across all this traffic going out to Hayward and going down underneath the railroad bridge. All this was a wonderful experience, we'd never seen a big city like that with big bridges. It was awesome.

R. Ream: Do you think there were any long term effects on your family--the war and the incarceration and imprisonment on your family?

S. Connelly: Oh yes! I think that we all learned from it and we are a lot better people. Kind of an experience that you don't want to do again, but it's a very valuable experience.

R. Ream: So it had some positive effects for you?

S. Connelly: Oh yeah. Very positive effects. I think we're much more tolerant than a lot of people. As far as ill effects I don't know maybe both of my parents suffered with their health. I think mainly it was a positive experience.

R. Ream: At any point in your life did it ever occur to you how difficult it was for your parents?

S. Connelly: Yes, after I became a parent. That must have been Hell.

R. Ream: How would you rate them as parents in the camp?

S. Connelly: On a scale of one to ten--fifty.

R. Ream: Thank you, Sally.

PART V

KATHERINE REAM SOBECK:
CIVILIAN PRISONER OF WAR IN THE PHILIPPINES,
1941 - 1945

An interview conducted by
Renee Ream
July 8, 1989

ORAL HISTORY - TOOL #1

Narrator: Katherine Ream Sobeck
Interviewer: Renee Ream

Why this narrator was selected to be interviewed:

Katie Ream Sobeck was chosen for this oral history interview because she has valuable insight to offer on life as a civilian prisoner of war in a military zone during World War II. Her remarks reflect a child's point of view of events that took place over forty years ago.

It is hoped that information from this interview will be a valuable addition to the small body of literature about civilian war prisoners in the Philippines. All of this literature is recorded from the point of view of an adult's remembrances.

Purpose of this interview:

To record some of the wartime experience of Katie Ream Sobeck during her internment in the Philippines during the years 1941-1945. We will discuss the periods immediately preceding and following the Ream Family internment.

Place to deposit the interview:

The tape and transcript of this interview will be deposited in the Sobeck Family Archives, which contains other diaries pertaining to life as an internee in The Philippines during World War II.

Donated Tape Collection

The Sobeck Family Archives
322 E. 12th Street
Davis, California 95616

We, Katherine Sobeck and Renee Ream
Narrator Interviewer

do hereby give to The Sobeck Family Archives for such scholarly and education uses as the Curator of The Sobeck Family Archives shall determine the following tape-recorded interview(s) recorded on July 8 1989 as an unrestricted gift and transfer
date(s)

legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift precludes any use which the interviewer may want to make of the information in the recording.

Katherine R Sobeck
Signature of Narrator

KATHERINE R. SOBECK
322 12TH ST
DAVIS CA 95616
Name & Address of Narrator

July 8, 1989
Dated

Accepted for Sobeck Family Archives by

Katherine R Sobeck
Curator

July 8, 1989
Dated

Renee S. Ream
Signature of Interviewer

RENEE S REAM
320 YALE AVENUE
KENSINGTON, CA 94708
Name & Address/Interviewer

July 8, 1989
Dated

Katherine R. Sobeck: Internment in the Philippines, 1941-1945
Subject of Interview

GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Information gathered by:
Katie Sobeck
Phone #: 916-756-1103
Date: March 1989

Name of narrator: Katie Sobeck

Name at birth: Katherine Ream

Date of birth: December 7, 1929

Place of birth: Manila, Philippines

Home address: 322-12th St.
Davis, CA 95616

Phone: 916-756-1103

Date of marriage: Sept. 1, 1950
Date of divorce: Sept. 1977

Place of marriage: Pittsburgh, PA

Name of former spouse:
Frederick J. Sobeck

Place of birth: Pittsburgh, PA
Date of birth: February 7, 1927

Name of father: Fabian D. Ream

Place of birth: Dingle, ID
Date of birth: Dec. 17, 1891

Name of mother: Ruth Johnsen Ream

Place of birth: Kerkhoven, MN
Date of birth: August 31, 1896

Grandparents

Father's father:
William Ream

Place of birth: Charlton, IA
Date of birth: Oct. 29, 1859

Father's mother:
Nora Crockett Ream

Place of birth: Logan, UT
Date of birth: Dec. 28, 1868

Mother's father:
Christen Johnsen

Place of birth: Denmark
Date of birth: June 21, 1868

Mother's mother:
Lone Katrina Nielsen Johnsen

Place of birth: Denmark
Date of birth: Aug. 14, 1871

Names of brothers and sisters and dates of birth:

1. Nora Ruth Ream Kuttner	October 26, 1926
2. Sarah Lee Ream Connelly	June 3, 1932
3. F. John Ream	November 28, 1934

Names of children and dates of birth:

1. Eileen Sobeck	April 7, 1954
2. Norah Sobeck	August 2, 1955
3. Charles Koenig Sobeck	November 4, 1956
4. David Frederick Sobeck	February 8, 1959
5. Ruth Victoria Sobeck	January 29, 1962

Narrator's profession: Telephone Customer Service Representative

First family members to come to this country:
Samuel Crockett, 1715 Thomas Crockett, 1633

Mother's family from: Denmark
Father's family from: England

Education: 1 1/2 years college - University of California, Berkeley

Travel: Born Philippines, 2 years in the Peace Corps, Nairobi, Africa - 1968 - 1970

Military Service: None

Date family moved to this area: Katie's family to Davis, CA on 6/19/57
The Reams moved to California May 1945

Where did your family come from: The Philippines

Why did they leave their former home: The Japanese occupation of the Philippines changed the entire job outlook in the P.I. My parents felt that the growing children needed to be in the U.S.A. to take advantage of the exceptional education system and opportunities.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The interview took place on Saturday, July 8, 1989 between 11:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. at the Sobeck home in Davis, California. The narrator's daughter, Ruth, and brother, John Ream, were in and out of the house several times during the interview, but they did not interrupt the taping session. The day was very hot, so the sliding door to the back yard was open and bird songs can be heard faintly on the tape. Other sounds in the background are running water, the opening and closing of the refrigerator door, and the family cat and dog going in and out through the pet door.

The narrator and interviewer sat at the dining room table with the microphone between them. For a short time the interview was not recorded, because the interviewer failed to press the "record" and "play" buttons simultaneously. The question was rephrased and the interview proceeded. The tape recorder was turned off while the narrator and interviewer discussed some sensitive information about one of the internees, who was not part of the family. It was the narrator's decision not to discuss the subject on tape.

Katherine Ream Sobeck, known to her family at Katie, began her internment as a preteen. She retained a remarkable amount of information about those years. She was frank about not knowing some information and did not try to improvise an answer. During the interview Katie's voice reflected sorrow as she remembered several events and excitement or pleasure as she remembered happier moments. When she spoke of her final farewell to her Uncle, Sam Allen, who died on the Death March, the interview stopped. At that remembrance both the narrator and the interviewer needed time to regain composure.

In the final transcript (laughter) was used to indicate that both the narrator and the interviewer were laughing, while (laughs) was used when only the narrator laughed. Information in brackets was added by the interviewer to clarify the narrator's statements. Lengthy, rambling sentences were divided into two or three shorter sentences for clarity and for easier reading. Disagreement of verb tenses within a sentence or paragraph was not corrected sometimes. The interviewer allowed these discrepancies to show that the narrator spoke in the present tense at times, because her memories were so vivid.

Katie was 59 years old at the time of the interview. She lives in Davis, California with her daughter, Ruth, and works in Sacramento as a telephone customer service representative for UPS (United Parcel Service). Katie has four other adult children, who do not live at home.

INTERVIEW OUTLINE - KATHERINE REAM SOBECK

Page Number

I. Ream Family unit as of December 1941 1
- A. Other members of the household 1
- B. Parents background
    - 1. Father's background 1-2
    - 2. Mother's background 2-3

II. World War II extends to the Pacific
- A. War begins in the Philippines 3-6
    - 1. Preparations made to assemble at Brent School 6-7
    - 2. Arrival at Camp John Hay 7
    - 3. Description of grounds and quarters 7-9
- B. Treatment by guards 10
- C. Camp life becomes more organized
    - 1. Community work begins 10-11
    - 2. School starts for the children 11-12
- D. Bataan falls 12
- E. Food and sanitation 12-14

III. Internees moved to Camp Holmes
- A. Decision made to transfer internees to another location near Baguio 14
    - 1. Sanitation facilities and water shortages 14-15
    - 2. Camp life becomes more organized
        - a. meals 15
        - b. work crews 16
        - c. father's repair shop 16
        - d. buildings for hospital and school 16-17
        - e. school and other activities 17-18
    - 3. Health problems 19-20
    - 4. Additional comments about food 20
- B. Camp life
    - 1. Cultural activities 21-23
    - 2. Camp activities for teenagers 23
    - 3. Items made in father's workshop 23-24
    - 4. Katie's activities 24
    - 5. Several deaths occur 24-25
    - 6. Aunt Beulah leaves for Manila and information about family in Santo Tomas 25-27
- C. The war progresses
    - 1. War news is scarce 27-28
    - 2. Treatment by guards as war progresses 28-29
- D. Addition information about life in Camp Holmes
    - 1. Ouija board is a favorite activity 28
    - 2. Sanitation problems - toilet cloths 29-30
    - 3. Chinese internees moved out of camp 31

        4. Katie discusses some of the internees 31
        5. Red Cross packages arrive 31-32

        6. Shortages of food and clothing 32-33
        7. Spending time with parents 33

IV. Internees moved to Manila
    A. Move to Bilibid Prison 33-34
        1. Description of prison 35
        2. Sanitation problems were severe 36-37
    B. Filipinos and Americans suffer from shortages 35-36
    C. Camp committees do not reorganize 37

V. Liberation and departure from the Philippines
    A. Fighting begins in Manila 37-39
        1. American military moves internees to the outskirts of Manila for safety 39
        2. Physical condition of POWs and Fabian Ream 39-40
        3. Internees temporarily returned to Bilibid 40
            a. Ream Family possessions looted 41
            b. Reunion with family in Santo Tomas 42
            c. General MacArthur visits Bilibid 42-43
    B. The journey home
        1. Internees evacuated to Leyte 43-44
        2. Ream Family decides to return to the United States 44
        3. The trip home on a Dutch troop ship 44-45
        4. Arrival in the United States 45-47
    C. Looking back
        1. Katie reflects on the hardships during internment 47-48
        2. Positive thoughts about her wartime experience 48
        3. Long term effects of imprisonment on the Ream Family 48-49
        4. A positive view of Ruth and Fabian Ream 49

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Oral History - Tool #1	ii
Legal Release	iii
Biological and Genealogical Information	iv, v
Interview History	vi
Interview Outline	vii, viii
Table of Contents	ix
Oral History Interview	1 - 49

Interview with Katherine (Katie) Ream Sobeck, Interview I
Date of Interview: July 8, 1989; Davis, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

R. Ream: Prior to December 1941, Katie, will you tell me who was part of your family, and tell me their names.

K. Sobeck: We lived with my mother and father, Fabian and Ruth Ream, my older sister, Nora, myself, my sister, Sally, and my brother, John, in Baguio in the Philippines.

R. Ream: Was anyone else part of your household?

K. Sobeck: We had on occasion a couple of little boys staying with us. I don't remember immediately before the war--I think Bertrand Bandman was living with us just before the war started. His mother worked in Manila and they had lived in Shanghai and she needed a boarding house for him. We kept him with us.

R. Ream: Were there any servants that were considered part of your household, that lived on the property, for instance?

K. Sobeck: Yes, we had a gardener named Clemente Rillera and two house girls, Josepina Rillera, who was a cousin to Clemente, and Maximina Altura.

R. Ream: Tell me a little about your parents. Let's start with your father, Fabian Ream. Can you just tell me a little bit about him and what brought him to the Philippines?

K. Sobeck: He was born and grew up in Idaho, a member of a large family--farming family. He went to normal school--became a teacher--sort of bummed around. He drove a motorcycle all over the west coast--worked in mines in Idaho. It was almost depression time and there was just not a lot of work.

And during World War I, before he was married, he had a passion for flying and really wanted to be in the Air Force, such as it was. But he had bad ears, couldn't make it, as an alternative went to the Philippines as a teacher. They had a program a precursor to the Peace Corps. He went as part of the Thomas Plan, which was the first Peace Corps, as a teacher and worked in Munoz in the

Philippines as a teacher and as the principal of the agricultural school there.

And he came back to the States. I guess he'd had a taste of travel and didn't find a job that was anything that he could or would do. After he was married [they were] very poor. They [he and my mother] lived in a tent. They were so poor they didn't have bullets to shoot the sage hens, they tossed rocks at them to kill them [for their meals].

Then he got an opportunity to go back over to the Philippines and manage a bus company--transportation company. So they took it and they went, my mother and my dad and my oldest sister [Nora], who was born [in the U.S.]. She was only about a year old at the time.

R. Ream: Do you remember the name of the company that he worked for?

K. Sobeck: Nora remembers it. I used to think it was the Batangas Bus Company, but I think there's more to the name than that.

R. Ream: Tell me about your mother, Ruth Ream.

K. Sobeck: Ruth was born in Kerkhoven, Minnesota. Her parents had come over as very young people in their late teens from Denmark to the "free" country. All the children were born here in the United States, but were christened in Denmark. My mother was about four years old when she went over with them [to Denmark] They [her parents] were well educated. Her father studied law, but never practiced. He was a dairy man; he became a government dairy inspector. They were very independent people. He was very involved in local politics and in school board. They were very good friends with the Sondergaards,[1] who were well educated Danes, also.

The [Johnsen] girls all grew up to be strong, independent individuals. All had whatever education they wanted. My mother studied piano and was a very excellent pianist and used to play for the silent films in the theater. Her younger sister [Helga] marched in the early women's rights groups for women's vote, women's suffrage. My mother went to normal school, and was a teacher for awhile.

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[1] Gail Sondergaard later became a famous Hollywood film actress.

She went to Cook County School of Nursing. At the time my father's sister, Aunt Beulah, was the head of the nursing school or the nursing supervisor. All three Johnsen girls went to Cook County Nursing School. Her younger brother became a doctor, also, but I don't know where he got his degree. She [Ruth] moved out to Salt Lake City and worked in Utah as a school nurse for awhile--met my father through his sister, Beulah.

R. Ream: Now it's December 1941, does your family have any idea that a war is about to begin--that the United States is about to go to war?

K. Sobeck: Well, several months before December [the U.S. military] had started to move out the military families--out of Camp John Hay, which was the military establishment in Baguio. Beulah had elected to stay anyway. But there was no real thought of war. I don't know why somebody didn't think about it, but I was only twelve years old anyway, so maybe I just didn't catch the thought. Maybe there was more knowledge about what was going on than people here [in the United States] apparently had. They dropped the bombs of course on my birthday--the nerve (laughs).

R. Ream: So you were turning twelve?

K. Sobeck: I was twelve on December 7th. Actually in the Philippines, Pearl Harbor happened on the night of December 7th. So although I say they started the war on my birthday, it was really midnight that night.

R. Ream: Are you putting the blame on my birthday, December the 8th?

K. Sobeck: Yes! (laughter)

R. Ream: What was your first awareness that war had begun between Japan and the United States?

K. Sobeck: Well, that's easy. That was the very next day we went to school. The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor and apparently, simultaneously, had landed in both Vigan and Aparri, which are in the northern part of Luzon. We went to school, which was an Episcopal church school, Brent School. And we were in chapel--each day started with chapel--and we came out of chapel and here were the planes flying over.

Everyone went out to look at the airplanes. And suddenly there were all these sounds of explosion. Not too much was thought at that immediate time and we went up to the classrooms. Then suddenly..."We are going to close the school; your parents have been notified. They have bombed Camp John Hay." They [the school staff] wanted everybody to go down into the woods, however, my mother arrived at that point. She had been downtown at the Chinese bakery--the grocery store--and had heard that this was happening. She came immediately to the school and picked us up and took us all home.

R. Ream: Did you stay at home?

K. Sobeck: Yes, school was closed. They had no more school. We stayed at home until we could find out what was going on. The Japanese progress in the Philippines--the army's progress--was very fast. There was very little opposition. There was a small American contingent in the Philippines, but it was not a fighting army. The Filipino soldiers had never really done any fighting at all before.

The stuff that Aunt Beulah was going to send back to the States, her Chinese end tables and that sort of thing, had been boxed at our house. My mother had a lot of foresight. She had us all out there painting the military names off all the packing cases. She opened up all the furniture and put it all around the house and painted off all the names on the packing cases, so they wouldn't think it was a military establishment.

There were bombings daily in Camp John Hay. My dad was very involved because he had the major trucking business there--he and Mr. Zuganoff, a white Russian who owned[2] the trucking and busing company. They used ...trucks and...drivers to drive supplies and men...for the Army, down to the lowland...areas where the Japanese were fighting down in Bauang, the Lingayen Gulf area. By then [the Japanese] had landed there also. There was just very little that the Americans could do. The Japanese had planned the invasion and the Army was not prepared for invasion. But being good Americans, we were going to win the war and there was no problem that the Japanese would be wiped out in no time at all.

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[2] Both Fabian Ream and Mr. Zuganoff managed parts of M.P. Tranco and its affiliates, according to notes left by Fabian's wife, Ruth.

To save his beautiful young daughters from the advancing army my dad decided to send my older sister and myself (my older sister was fifteen and I was twelve) up into the mountains to stay with a friend of his around the sawmills. His name was Jorgensen. So he had his good friend, Sy Sorrell, walk us up the mountain. We may have had horses the first trip. We took the little Filipino ponies and we had to drive down to some mine and then walk up some trail. It took us all day to do it--way up in the hills. We got there and Sy left immediately and left us two girls there.

[The Jorgensens] had a building--I think it was used for entertainment like a dance hall--where they bedded us down. But they had realized that other people from the mines were coming up, too. The next day they were inundated with all the men and the families from the Itogon Mines and it was too much for me. I cried the whole time I was there. I think we were there about a week. I cried the whole time, I was so homesick. I was only twelve years old. They wanted me to eat stuff I wouldn't eat (laughter). When they finally let me call my mother, it was all tears, "I want to come home!" I think my parents realized (it was a few days before Christmas) that the Japanese were coming in. The American Army moved out of Baguio. And as a matter of fact they came through the area where we were. They walked through the Jorgensen's area. I remember I was sitting there--I was probably the last one in the family that said goodbye to Sam. (Tears come as Katie remembers that goodbye.)

R. Ream: Tell me who Sam was.

K. Sobeck: Sam was [Aunt] Beulah's husband, who was a major in the Quartermaster Corps, and had no business being a fighting soldier.

The day after I called my mother they sent Sy up the mountain to bring us girls back. And so we got back and were able to stay at home and have a good night's sleep before the ex-mayor of Baguio, Mr.Speth, decided that they would make things a lot easier on everybody; they would have everybody turn themselves in to Brent School, so [the American civilians living in Baguio] would be there when the Japanese came to town.

Since the soldiers had quit the town we declared it an open city and there would not be any bombing. It was understood that we would be interned. Somebody came to the house, I guess...the day before Christmas and collected all dad's guns. We had our little Christmas and I think it was the day after, we got our stuff together and went to Brent School.

And here again my mother used a lot of foresight in realizing the possibility of not being released immediately and not having access to food. So she packed a number of canned things and I remember the old metal bread box she had packed with sandwiches and peanut butter and things like that. [She] also brought cans [of food] and changes of clothing and that sort of thing. She had the foresight to bring those things along.

She didn't pack up the whole house, but also she had the foresight to tell the gardener to take the ponies we had--Nora's horse and my horse and the yearling colt--and to take them home with him before the Japanese took over. I forget whether they gave him the dog also. She dismissed the servants so that there would be no recrimination against them and had the gardener take the horses and go home down to the lowlands.

R. Ream: And then what happened?

K. Sobeck: Then we went to Brent School. Everybody else in town had gathered there. We sort of sat around waiting for the Japanese; we were there for at least one night, maybe two nights. The Japanese then told us to get together and we were going to walk to another place. They did not tell us where. Everybody had to walk. So we all split the goods that we had with us to carry. Even little kids had to walk. Babies--little babies and the old people--they finally got trucks to take them and some of our heavier baggage. Mostly we carried what was given to us...and I don't really remember what we carried [as we] walked to Camp John Hay.

R. Ream: Who did you walk next to?

K. Sobeck: I don't remember. I remember the walk--the family must have stayed together is all I can say. I really can't believe that my mother would have just gone off and let us all string out. I'm sure that we all stayed together. The thing I remember on the walk--I remember the gate into Camp John Hay--and I remember that the Japanese had announced to the Filipinos to come and watch us and nobody showed up.

R. Ream: So that there was no one to see you as you walked through town?

K. Sobeck: No, that's right.

R. Ream: How long a walk would you say it was?

K. Sobeck: Oh my goodness, I had never gone that trail before. My guess is that it probably was about three miles. Nora and I used to ride everywhere on our horses and I had never gone that way. I would say that it was probably about three miles to the barracks.

I think there were three barracks buildings there. I really didn't get a good look from the other side of the parade ground, being as how we were inside the barracks, inside the fence enclosure. There were several tennis courts and at least with the Caucasians we had two barracks buildings.

Mr. Speth had been an old buddy of my dad's and had sent us a couple of mattresses. While we were there all six of us slept on two mattresses. There were single bed mattresses, but they at that time were a little bit wider than the mattresses here. We had five of us across, going left ways, and one across the bottom. The first few days we were there we spread our mattresses on the porch of the barracks. My mother talked about waking up in the morning looking into Father Richardson's face on the mattress next to hers (laughter). He was a handsome man, that wasn't too bad.

R. Ream: Well now, was Bertie Bandman with you?

K. Sobeck: No, he was not there--I don't think so. Now that I think about it I don't really remember. I think his mother must had taken him, but I don't remember.

R. Ream: Was your Aunt Beulah there?

K. Sobeck: Aunt Beulah was there. I don't remember where she was in relation to where our mattresses were. She wasn't right there next to us. She had a little kid, Lee; I don't remember how old Lee was. When we finally staked out our area in the barracks, we were close to Edna Miller and Jane Gilbert--these were teachers from Brent--Evelyn Martin and her mother and the Brussolos were there.

Evelyn Martin was my age. She was an only child. I guess she went to Brent. Most of my friends before camp were Filipino girls, except for Audrey. I sort of tailed after Nora when we'd ride. A lot of Nora's friends were the girls that I knew. But I was just a little kid tailing along (laughs).

R. Ream: You didn't have much privacy, did you?

K. Sobeck: No, there was no privacy. That was really very hard when it came to going to the bathroom, because it was a regular barracks bathroom where you had a row of sinks in the middle and a row of toilets on either side of the sinks. I think most of the time I waited until night time to go to the bathroom, because there were essentially no lights allowed. You had a little tiny night light--it was black out. Lights off at nine or ten o'clock. They finally rigged up some curtains in front of both rows of toilets, so the men were one side and the women the other side. But still if you didn't have the very end toilet, you had people walking in front of you all the time. That's bad enough as an adult and it's terrible as a teenager.

R. Ream: Were you able to shower? Did you have showers or bathtubs?

K. Sobeck: Yes, there were showers there. I wonder how often I showered. I don't remember bathing at all at Camp John Hay (laughs).

R. Ream: How long were you there (laughter)?

K. Sobeck: We were there until April 1942, so I must have showered somewhere along the line (laughter), 'specially since I was sleeping in the same bed with everybody else (laughter).

One of the memories I do have of Camp John Hay is Donald McKenzie, who was a little, little baby. And he cried and cried and screamed; he had the most horrible scream--just really screamed--colic, I suppose. His poor mother--after several days of this--this big barracks had a double row of bedding down the middle and a row on each side against the wall. And this sentry used to walk up and down the aisles and one night he just picked up the baby and just walked with him. Everybody was happy. And every night the guard would take the baby and walk with the baby.

Interview with Katherine Ream Sobeck, Interview I
Date of Interview: July 8, 1989; Davis, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 1, Side 2

R. Ream: That's a wonderful story. Tell me about your treatment by the guards.

K. Sobeck: We had not had any problems as far as I know with the guards or the commandant, who was Nakamura...the carpenter who had built our house. Everyone in the camp knew him personally. There was one incident where he did knock down one of the high school kids who sassed him and should have known better, because he [Nakamura] really had to save face in front of the army and prove that he was indeed a loyal Japanese. There was no fear [on the part] of the mothers of teenage girls. The soldiers had never made any attempt at rape or to take advantage in any way of any of the young women or of the older women in camp during the whole three years.

R. Ream: Were these combat ready troops?

K. Sobeck: Well, the ones that we started out with in Camp John Hay were combat troops, yes, because they were the ones that landed and invaded, entered and held Baguio. Later during the three years of our internment the guards were the soldiers convalescing from wounds or battle fatigue. They were mostly very young men and very homesick men.

R. Ream: Was your camp very well organized as far as the roles that each person took in the camp?

K. Sobeck: Yes, unfortunately I was too young at the time to know exactly who it was that was the organizer, but they, immediately upon our internment, got a group together to make some kind of rules. You have to have some kind of order. They appointed Alex Kaluzhny, the Pines Hotel (prewar) head chef...head of the kitchen. The man that was in charge of the electric company before the war in Baguio was in charge of all the electrical care. Everybody had some kind of a job--the doctors had clinics. In Camp John Hay I'm not quite sure about vegetable preparation although we did have a garden that we worked in.

Even old Mr. Kingcome, who was very old--he was in his eighties--was the gong man. He used to sit at the door and he would announce meal times and he'd say, "Women and children lunch time." He had his little job too.

We were very fortunate to have two little missionary ladies; one was a very little lady, Miss Spencer, and the other was Nellie McKim. They had lived and I think grew up in Japan, but they had lived in Japan a very long time and spoke very good Japanese. They became our official interpreters.

At this early stage even in Camp John Hay, Jim Halsema, who I think was a young newspaper man in town, put up a...blurb every day outside--a little printed sheet--about the news in camp, including the menu for the day. It was put up near the front door and everybody could read it. They didn't have enough paper and supplies to go ahead and print out everything for everybody.

We did start a school in the dining room, even at this early time--no books. There was one really neat thing that happened at Camp John Hay that I remember and that was Sue Burnett and maybe someone helped her, but Sue Burnett is the name that I remember, wrote a little play about life in camp that was called "Behind Barbed Wires." All of the kids--maybe this was through the school that she started doing this--all of the young children had parts in it.

I don't remember who Nora was, but I remember that I was Nelly Van Schaik, who was an eccentric old lady and she always sort of mumbled and talked to herself; she'd walk around talking to herself all day. One of the scenes, the one that I was in, was where people were lying down and someone had to go to the bathroom, I guess, and was stumbling and she rose up irate, "What's going on around here?" (laughter) The stage was a number of dining room tables put together and then the benches were set out for the audience. I don't know how many people remember this play, but I remember it very, very well.

R. Ream: Tell me about your father's role in camp.

K. Sobeck: In Camp John Hay?

R. Ream: In Camp John Hay--we're still there.

K. Sobeck: I do not know, I do not remember too much about Camp John Hay, because we were there for just a few months. It was kind of a scary time. I remember only things like the separation of the men and the women after I don't know how long and how the men could walk past the women's barracks to get to the tennis court and they had half the tennis court to walk in. There was six feet between the men's side and the women's side. The women and children could walk on one side and the men on the other side. I spent a lot of time with my friends, Evelyn Martin and Betsy Harold, drawing paper dolls on the steps of the barracks and telling ghost stories.

One of the vivid memories I have in Camp John Hay is the fall of Bataan. The Japanese just made the biggest noise over this, you'd think that they had conquered the world, when Bataan fell. They drank all night and partied all night long. They hammered up a sign "BATAAN HAS FALLEN!"

R. Ream: How did you all feel about that?

K. Sobeck: In the first place there were very few people who knew where Bataan was or what Bataan was. Corregidor, I guess, was where we knew that the [U.S.] army was. I guess that there was some knowledge--very hush hush knowledge about MacArthur's leaving--and the battle in Corregidor and Bataan. In the whole picture that was a very small part of the war but they [the Japanese] blew it up to be something magnificent, which says something about the [U.S.] soldiers who fought at Bataan.

R. Ream: Did your mother have a role in Camp John Hay?

K. Sobeck: I'm sure that both my mother and my father did, but I do not remember. I'm sure that Aunt Beulah as a doctor did. I really don't remember what the adults did except for Alex [Kaluzhny] and Mr. Kingcome and Jim Halsema. I just really don't remember much about the adults in Camp John Hay. I don't remember too much about the school there either.

R. Ream: Can you describe the food situation--the quality, the preparation, the quantity?

K. Sobeck: Not really. I was not really one who cared terribly much about food, because I was a super,

super, horribly picky child. They had the nerve to have lamb curry (laughs). It didn't bother me at all not to eat that day. I personally did not feel any lack of food. I know that there wasn't a lot, but I did not like food much anyway, so I was not terribly concerned about it.

I feel very sorry, thinking back on it, for mothers with children. What a terrible experience that they had to worry not only about themselves, but about all their children also, and about the kids who were left in the boarding school while their parents were in the southern islands and they had no parents. But they were all taken care of. There was somebody, the teachers mostly, the school personnel took care of them.

R. Ream: Were there any health problems in your family at this time?

K. Sobeck: Not really. Well that's not true. Sally had a kidney infection and she had to go for a short while to the hospital, Notre Dame Hospital, in Baguio. My mother was allowed to go with her. This time and later in the camp when my mother was not there I don't remember any problems about not getting along without her, which is kind of weird. That should be a traumatic experience, but I don't recall it (laughs). But Sally did have a kidney infection and had to be hospitalized and it seems to me was gone quite a long time.

R. Ream: Are there any other memories of Camp John Hay that you would like to share with me before we go on to your next camp?

K. Sobeck: I do recall when Mrs. Delahunty had fallen and broken her leg. Then there was the Dudleys, Butch Dudley and Mrs. Dudley. I don't remember what her name was, she had been a casualty in the Camp John Hay bombings and she had an amputation. Her little boy had numerous shrapnel wounds and he had been in the hospital for a long time. This little kid was so precocious--he was a two year old--he was a darling, darling boy to talk to. He couldn't walk, but boy he could talk a steady stream; he was really interesting.

We did have a baby born to the Scotts. Guess what his name was, John Hay Scott (laughs). I don't know if he still goes by that name, maybe it's just John, but he was the first baby--born in the middle of the night, no real facilities.

R. Ream: Who delivered him?

K. Sobeck: I don't remember that.

We used to make our own soap. I think mom did that as a matter of fact. Other than that I don't have too many memories of what really went on in Camp John Hay. We did have a little garden--I think it was down the hill--you had to walk to it.

R. Ream: Do you know why the decision was made to move you to another camp?

K. Sobeck: I don't really know, but I suspect that they realized that they were going to have to do something with us. There was not [sufficient] room to have us there. They also had interned the Chinese, and there were an awful lot of Chinese there. There was a Filipino military constabulary camp down in Trinidad Valley, which was not terribly far away. It had a larger facility, easier to guard, not in the middle of a town full of Filipinos, who were friendly to us. I believe that we made that move the end of April. I'm not positive of that time, but I think that's when they made the move to Camp Holmes in the Trinidad Valley.

R. Ream: How did you move there?

K. Sobeck: It was by truck. It could have been walked; it would have been a very long walk. I know that in Trinidad Valley [there] was also the Seventh Day Adventist Agricultural School. We had been there before the war. Probably the director of the school had lived there and his daughter, Dorothy Douglas, was a friend of Sally's. We had taken my mare down to have her bred to an Arabian stallion they had there. So we had to ride the horse there, so it couldn't have been terribly, terribly far. But we were moved to Camp Holmes. They gave the Chinese one two-story barracks, the women and children the other two-story barracks and the men a single-story barracks.

R. Ream: What were the sanitation facilities like there?

K. Sobeck: Because they were set up as a barracks, although they weren't set up to handle so many people, they did have reasonable bathrooms. The toilets were booths, although they didn't have a cover in the front. There was running water, the water was gathered from the rain, and in the dry period of the year you had to be really careful you didn't flush until you had to. We in California know how this goes now.

And one of the things that we did was--the clothes washing facilities were outside--people would wash their clothes outside and save the water in buckets. There was a bucket of water by each toilet and we would flush the toilets by pouring a bucket in, or part of a bucket, instead of using the full tank of water to flush it. They had showers--they were community showers. I don't know that it really never bothered me terribly much. I guess probably because you would get together with a bunch of friends, so you didn't have little kids and old ladies and teenagers. Probably all the teenagers would be in there together (laughs), so that didn't seen to bother me much.

R. Ream: Girl and boy teenagers?

K. Sobeck: No, no! The boys were in the men's barracks.

R. Ream: Tell me about the food situation at Camp Holmes.

K. Sobeck: By the time we got to Camp Holmes we were pretty well organized as far as the governing body of the camp. It was a community with a governing council. Each person in camp had to do so much community service: the doctors were doctors--they worked at the hospitals, they ran clinics; the dentists had their little jobs to be dentists; the shoemaker repaired shoes.

My mother at this time, although she was a nurse, there were a lot of young nurses that took on the nursing at the hospital, but she took over the vegetable preparation, she was in charge of preparing vegetables. That didn't mean that she did it all by herself, but she organized vegetable preparation--the cook said this was what we were going to have--then they [mother and other helpers] would get them out and wash vegetables and pare them or take the bugs out or whatever. There were a certain number of women that would work in the vegetables and they would do... between one and three hours a day of community service. The rice had to be picked, not off the vine, but they had to pick out bugs and stones out of the rice. You want to know how to do that?

R. Ream: Would you like to tell me?

K. Sobeck: You take a handful of rice and put it on the table in front of you and you sort of pull the stones and unhusked rice (which we called palay) out to the side and then you scooped the good stuff off into your hand and into a clean pot. Mostly we young kids did the rice. Then they had a garden and the younger people worked in the garden Saturday mornings mostly, because of school.

The teachers fulfilled their community work as teachers. There was a garbage crew and a wood crew. Because our stoves were wood burning, we had to have a crew go up into the hills and cut the trees and chop the wood and bring it down and stack it, so it could be used to fire the stoves. The garbage crew built a wagon to carry the garbage cans out. They would take [the cans] out of camp with a guard down the road wherever they dumped the garbage and come back.

My dad's job at this point was as head of the shop. This was to repair cooking utensils, to repair things from the hospital. He at this point was a putterer. He figured out how to make tin cans into drinking cups and how to roll the tops, so you don't cut your lips, and to make a little handle on the side, and how to make a ring of metal, heat it up and put it on the glass bottles and dunk them in cold water, and knock off the top of the bottles and make glasses out of those. [He filed] down the tops so you didn't cut your lips when you drank. He repaired glasses and instruments.

The doctors and nurses at the hospital ran--one of the staff buildings at the facility was turned into a hospital--one of the little houses was turned into a baby house, so all the women with all the little tiny babies could be together. They had their own bathroom and laundry. One of the buildings near the entrance to the facility was a guardhouse where the commandant and the guards lived.

There was another big building that was near the gate also...it was a house, it wasn't a big building, it was apparently a staff house that we turned into a school house. It was mostly the high school house. And as I say, those who had teaching credentials became teachers.

There were preachers. We had our own religious services. We had a little hut that was a school hut also that was for the elementary school, and that was church on Saturday and Sunday. We had all kinds of religions--the Seventh Day Adventists had their worship on Saturday, we had Catholic services and we had Protestant services. I don't think there were any Jewish services or Mormon services, those were all pulled together into the Protestant services.

We had a wonderful choir. We had a library; it was a little tiny hut--tin hut--it was open x number hours a day and one of the missionaries, Lucy Vinson, was the librarian, and she was there during her afternoon library hours. The reason that we had books and school books was that we tried to be on very good terms with the Japanese commandant. We talked them into letting us go back to the schools and get what school supplies we could get.

The one thing that they [the Japanese] insisted on in the schooling in the high school, everybody had to take either German or Japanese. And we said, "Fine, no problem." There was no problem with that at all. And they did. We taught it all during the schooling in camp--they taught either German or Japanese--it was the choice of the students.

R. Ream: Which one did you take?

K. Sobeck: I was not in high school, except for that third year. For some reason I did not have to take that language. I think I took Spanish and nobody caught on to that in ninth grade. I was there in ninth and half of tenth grade and did not have to take German or Japanese. I think it's because things relaxed a little bit and nobody pushed it. Nora, I'm sure, took German.

R. Ream: How would you rate the education that you received during the war years?

K. Sobeck: I think excellent. The classes were very small. In my class we had four kids. There was June

Crouter, Carroll Walker, Evelyn Martin and myself, and that was my class.

Father Gowen was the principal of the school. He had been principal of Brent School at one time, I think. He wasn't at the beginning of the war, but he was at one time. He came in late, he wasn't interned at the very beginning. He had to come in from the mountains--he and his family. He had been a missionary in China for many years. He was fantastic. I have never known anybody that could teach Shakespeare like he could. We would use these little Shakespeare books and he would give two pages--that's three speeches. And so, it takes two minutes to read that, right? You'd come to class and you wished you had spent two hours, because he had more questions on those two pages then anybody I've heard of before (laughter). It was a very, very excellent education.

Now my dad taught. My dad stood in for one geography class one time. I think it was Sally's class. And he made some round wood balls and he made people draw a map, so that it would fit onto the globe. And they had to think about how to do that. They drew it flat and they had to make it with the little triangular top and bottom, so that when it was on the globe it was a complete globe. It was quite an eye-opener for the kids to have him teach.

I have a funny school story. Are you ready for a funny school story? I was a rebel; I was a very bad girl. I was a horrible child (much laughter). I hated the art teacher. I refused to take art. The Americans were coming soon, why did I even need to even go to school? And I refused!

R. Ream: What happened to you?

K. Sobeck: My dad came and talked to me. We had a long talk and I said, "It doesn't make any difference, the Americans are going to be here. What difference does it make? I won't have to go to school." So he talked me into going back to school. If I went back to school I would not have to take art. But I couldn't just go and play. So they would have the art class and they would give me a book and I would go and I would memorize a poem. And I'd come back and I would spout my poem off to the headmaster of the school--the principal.

R. Ream: That was Father Gowen.

K. Sobeck: No, of the elementary school--this was still in seventh and eighth grade. I think it was Mike Shaffer's dad [who was the elementary school principal]. That was fine with everybody (laughs).

R. Ream: Do you remember if there were any health problems in this camp due to improper sanitation or poor diet?

K. Sobeck: There was always dysentery. That's understood in the tropics. There's just always dysentery, and I don't see how anybody can get away from it. We did have a major outbreak of infectious hepatitis. I was very ill with it. I don't know if anybody else in my family got it, but I was really, really sick and in bed for a number of weeks.

R. Ream: Were you put in the hospital?

K. Sobeck: No, because there were too many people [with dysentery] and it would have contaminated the hospital.

Interview with Katherine R. Sobeck, Interview I
Date of Interview: July 8, 1989; Davis, California
Interviewer and transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 2, Side 1

I remember as I was beginning to convalesce--it involves the liver, so your food is critical at this point--my mother had got some sweetened condensed milk for me. Also there was a lady who used to run the bazaar--the little gift shop--at the Pines Hotel. Her name was Tex Moyer and if ever there was anyone who looked like a gypsy, this was a gypsy. She had a husky voice and she had jangly bracelets all the time and she wore the most garish earrings. But Tex had a birthday on December 7th [this was Katie's birthday, too] and on December 7th she brought me a big bunch of bananas. And that was one of the few foods that I could eat. So I ate bananas and sweetened condensed milk to recover from my hepatitis. It was really kind of interesting, because if I lay down I didn't feel sick, but as soon as I sat up it was like taking too much codeine--your mind is way up in the sky and everybody is so far away that you can't hear anything.

Most of the time we were in Camp Holmes we had a store where they would bring food in from outside then you could buy it in camp. Also the Filipinos were allowed to send things in to people. And of course my parents had a lot of Filipino friends. There were a few people that didn't have friends, but most everybody was able to get a little bit of something extra.

The meals that we had--for breakfast we would have rice with a little bit of syrup. It was either hard rice or soft rice. Soft rice was a mush, hard rice was just the kind of rice that you eat for dinner. After awhile we figured out how to make yeast out of bananas, so that people could get their vitamin B. I never did. I didn't eat that kind of stuff. Yucky (laughs). And my dad fixed a machine so that they could have a yeast producing machine at all times.

My dad was very inventive. He invented a lot of things; he invented a peanut cracker that would crack the nuts and dump the peanuts down here and the shells down there. He did a lot of stuff. He also fashioned the first bakias--the clog shoes, the wooden shoes that the Filipinos wear, they call them bakias--where you put a strip of cloth across the toe. So the shoemaker after he could repair no more, he would take the pieces of leather or the pieces of cloth and hammer them onto the wood forms that were made.

Let's see, I was back at food. For lunches--I think there was only two meals a day--the dinner meal was really pretty good for people that liked food (laughs). Alex [Kaluzhny] was very clever. They made bread out of casaba flour. We had rice. We had camotes, which are sweet potatoes. We had some kind of meat almost regularly, not a lot [of meat]. He would stuff cabbage--he'd have stuffed cabbage and stews. I think he was really quite clever in his use of the food that was available. We had greens and we did for awhile keep cows and goats and chickens. Mostly these were for the baby house. That sort of takes care of the food. Talking about the cows and chickens reminds me that our big theft--our big major crime--was that somebody stole three chickens and killed them and ate them (laughs). And they had a major investigation.

R. Ream: Was the culprit found?

K. Sobeck: The culprit was found and made to sit up in a room for two days--big deal (laughs).

R. Ream: Tell me about the activities of the teenagers.

K. Sobeck: I was going to tell you about the cultural life in camp. It was really very interesting. We had a lot of very creative people. One of my mother's friends (and has been a dear friend ever since of course) was Joan Turner, who was the dance instructor. She had a private studio before the war and she did tap dancing and Spanish dancing and modern dancing. She organized one of our first big shows in camp, where people sat on the hillside and looked down on what were like... tennis courts. We had a moonlight dance. She used all the kids--all the little kids and the big kids--all the kids. I think that my sister, Nora, was Diana the moon goddess, the hunter with all her little moonbeams. I'm sure I was a little moonbeam (laughs).

We had a lot of really neat shows. We had community night on Saturday nights and then it turned into Wednesday and Saturday nights in the dining room. There was a group of singers (most of them were missionaries, but not all of them) with wonderful voices.

I remember they did a musical version of Othello. The curtain was a little cloth on somebody's back and they'd flit across the front of the stage moving this little curtain like wings (laughter). That was curtain up, then curtain down was the other way. The show that I remember mostly in this particular little [series]--they did a whole bunch of them--was Othello. I remember Jack Vinson came on and said, [sings in a deep voice] "I am the black man who lived long ago, oh Othello, Othello." And then there was [sings in a falsetto], "Oh Desdemona, Desdemona, Desdemona" (laughter).

It was wonderful, so they did parody or little musicals on the Shakespeare plays. Of course "Our Town" is just made for this sort of thing, where you don't need any costumes. You don't need anything but two ladders. That was the best "Our Town" I have seen ever anywhere. Nora was Mrs. Soames and it was just wonderful, it was wonderful. They made "The Birds' Christmas Carol" into a play, which was heart rending. That was one of the Christmas plays.

They had several religious pageants. One was just absolutely out of this world; they could not have done better if they had all of Hollywood to do it for them. We had a terraced garden--we called it the sunken garden--a terraced garden where we put the audience on one side and then on the other side they set scenes. This must have been an Easter one, because it was a crucifixion. They had Jesus in the garden, they had Pontius Pilate and they had the cross--the nailing of Jesus to the cross. What they did was they just turned on the light at each scene that they wanted to illuminate. And it was musical; they had the chorus, the choir singing. It was just out of this world. It was just absolutely breathtaking.

And that brings me to the choir. The choir was directed by one of the missionaries, Marvin Dirks, who was a music teacher and that was his job in camp--choir. Anybody who wanted to be in the choir could be in the choir and they sang when they had the church services outside...And they sang not just church songs, they sang villanella[3] and a lot of just wonderful choir songs.

R. Ream: Were you in the choir?

K. Sobeck: No. Nora was in the choir. Nora was an alto. We had some wonderful singers. We had Mary Dyer, who was a music teacher in the school, and had a beautiful voice. We had a lot of beautiful voices in camp.

Other nights what we did was we played bridge. There were a lot of card games going on--pinochle, cribbage and bridge.

As a teenager what did I do? One of things that we did was mostly the boys made jewelry for the girls. And what you make jewelry out of is mostly coconut--the hard part of the coconut--not a green coconut, but the kind you get in the grocery store now, the ripe coconuts. You take the meat out, you empty the coconut and then you have a rough outside. You have to scrape that roughness off and then you sand it and then you rub it and polish it. This is what they make buttons out of in Hawaii now, but we made buttons, we made pins. The boys would make pins. You could get a coconut that was not real old and ripe and had a very light color brown when you got all the stuff off the outside--all the rough stuff off. The older the coconut the darker and darker it is--dark brown or black...And some of the guys would take the light [coconut] either inlay it or glue it to the top of the dark and make beautiful, beautiful little pins--brooches. David Bergamini made a couple for Nora and David Longway made one for Sally.

But Katie did not have any boyfriends, but Katie's dad, Fabian, made a lot of nice things for her. Because this was a military establishment to start with there was a shooting range and we used to spend a lot of time digging the slugs out of the hill. There were a lot of marksmanship medals around, too, and they were silver.

My dad kept a lot of the silver and he used in it making a bracelet for me. What he had done--he made the links, very crude links--but he had picked up little rocks. My dad had a very good eye for rocks, and he had picked up rocks right there on the gravel road and they were fossils. But he could tell they were fossils just by looking at the kind of rock it was. He took them and just for his own little project he made little geometric figures--three dimensional figures--about an inch long and maybe half to three quarters of an inch through and he made different little geometric shapes. And using the marksmanship silver [he] made links through them and made a bracelet for me. I treasure it to this day.

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[3] A rustic Italian part song without accompaniment.

He took an old fire extinguisher and made a beautiful copper kettle for my mother, which has been lost. It was lost in the retaking of the Philippines. He also broke his dentures. With the help of the dentist he made a cast and poured aluminum and to this day we still have his aluminum lower plate, which was quite an accomplishment and the laugh of the camp when he drank his first coffee too hot (laughs).

R. Ream: Tell me some of the other things that you personally did in the camp.

K. Sobeck: What did we used to do? We played a lot of baseball; there were baseball teams. We organized baseball teams--softball, not baseball. There were the Juniors, which were the teenage boys and the Seniors, the older men. There was the girl's team. We had a couple of girls teams. I used to play softball.

I worked in the garden. I used to read, I used to read a lot of poetry. I don't know. I did kind of bum around type stuff that everybody, every kid does, I guess. I had a small group of friends, because at my age there was just a small group. There was Audrey and Betsy and Evelyn Martin and Sue Graham. We sort of kept to our age groups.

There were quite a number of deaths in the camp and they were buried up on the hill. They had a regular grave yard. To this day "Abide with Me" is a funeral song (laughs).

R. Ream: Did anyone that was close to you die during this time?

K. Sobeck: I don't believe so. Shirley Trimble's father died, he had a brain tumor, and he died. Shirley was Sally's friend.

R. Ream: Was your Aunt Beulah still practicing medicine?

K. Sobeck: Yes, she was.

R. Ream: Now this is Camp Holmes.

K. Sobeck: This was Camp Holmes. Aunt Beulah moved to Manila. There was a time when they moved some people to Manila to reunite families, like some of the kids that had been stuck in Brent School, because it was a boarding school. Their families had made their way to Santo Tomas, so they were moved down to be with their families.

Aunt Beulah was pregnant when the war started and she had her second child when we were in camp. She was allowed to go out to the hospital in Baguio, this was Notre Dame Hospital, and my mother was allowed to go out and take care of her there. One of the surgeons in camp went out to do the surgery. Her second boy was Henderson and he was born on the Fourth of July.

There was no word from her husband at all, nothing. Everybody assumed that he was in Bataan, but nobody knew whether he was alive or not.

R. Ream: Did she remain with you throughout that camp?

K. Sobeck: No, she went to Manila. She went to Santo Tomas.

R. Ream: Why did she go to Santo Tomas?

K. Sobeck: I don't know whether it was because she wanted to be closer to where maybe Sam would be. I'm really not sure why she went.

R. Ream: Now at this point she's probably in her thirties?

K. Sobeck: I think she was in her forties.

R. Ream: In her forties and she has a son and an infant and she's going down to Manila. How did your family, especially your father and mother feel?

K. Sobeck: Well, we had family in Santo Tomas. We had Aunt Helga [Diehl] and her family.

R. Ream: We haven't discussed Aunt Helga. But how did your father and mother feel saying goodbye to this dear sister and friend to see her go off with her young family?

K. Sobeck: I don't know how they felt. I think the general feeling at that time--I think it's hard to explain to people that grow up in this country now. There isn't a great feeling of nationalism now of God and country sort of thing--where then we were Americans and we were going to win the war. There was nothing bad that could happen to us. I think that sort of feeling was that there was nothing bad could happen. She was going to be fine and she was going to be with Helga. Maybe they [my folks] felt that was a way to get information to Helga that they were okay.

R. Ream: So now Helga was [at Santo Tomas]. Tell me about Helga and what she was doing in the Philippines.

K. Sobeck: Helga was my mother's youngest sister, who came out to visit my mother and dad long before the war back in 1930 or there abouts, maybe even 1929, I don't know. I don't know what date she came out, what year.

And Helga met my uncle, Theo Hoffman Diehl. He was from Germany...and he was working for Baker's Coconut. They got married--must have been before 1930--because I think Evelyn was born in 1930. Their honeymoon cruise was a trip around the world on a steamship. You know in the old days they used to do things that way (laughs).

He became an American citizen and their three children were born in the Philippines. They had three homes: Their major home was in San Pablo Laguna where the factory was, and they had a house in Manila a block from the American school, and they had the house that we lived in Baguio. The Baguio house they came to maybe once a year for about a month. However, very often one of the Diehl kids lived with us. So we were very close, and one or two of us used to go and visit during school vacation time in San Pablo. That was wonderful because they had a swimming pool and a bowling alley and a whole bunch of neat things. They were interned in Manila and they were in Santo Tomas for the whole time.

R. Ream: So Beulah was not going down to be amongst a group of strangers. She was with a dear friend.

K. Sobeck: Beulah lived in Manila most of the time. She had just moved to Baguio not too long before the war started. She had lived in Fort McKinley; her husband was stationed in Fort McKinley, that's just outside Manila. She had lived down in Manila. She had come over to visit also, and she had met Sam Allen and married there and set up her practice.

R. Ream: Did you have any outside news of the progress of the war while you were at Camp Holmes?

K. Sobeck: We had one censored letter from our family here in the states. I'm not quite sure who [it was from] particularly, but I think it was my mother's family. We could listen to Tokyo Rose all the time, and you could tell by what she was admitting how things were going (laughs). But as far as really knowing--I think there was an undiscovered radio in camp and maybe many of the people knew what was going on. I was only a young teenager and I didn't know what was going on. I knew we were winning!

We did have one incident where the guerrillas came close to the camp one night. There was a lot of shooting in the middle of one night for about an hour or so. Then everything faded away. I don't know what the purpose was. I don't know if anybody ever really found out.

At the time--I would say it was probably about the time they [the American military forces] were landing in Leyte--we could see right down the canyon all the way down to the sea, which was at least twenty miles from Camp Holmes as the crow flies--maybe it was more than that. I have no idea how far that was. You couldn't see any buildings or anything. You'd see that the haze was the ocean, and there was some kind of a major thing going on down there one day at roll call. We had roll call every morning on the parade ground and right after roll call broke up you could hear the booming. Right after roll call broke up right straight up the canyon came a fighter plane. It wasn't fifty feet above the camp--right above our camp. It had a blue and white marking--a white star on a blue background with a bar through it on either side--and that was not something we were familiar with. Because when the war started, the American insignia was a red circle in the middle of a star. Apparently they did away with the circle because the Japanese had a red circle and it wouldn't do too well (laughs). We didn't realize [that the insignia had changed], but that was so exciting, so exciting.

Then of course we got our Ouija Board out. This was another thing my dad did. He figured out how to make a Ouija board. He made a three footed board with a pencil as a third foot. It was kind of scary, because I was one of the few people that could work the Ouija board (laughs). And I really believed in it and I was scared to death.

R. Ream: What did the Ouija board tell you?

K. Sobeck: Well of course, who am I going to marry--that sort of thing. Actually the name they gave me was Fred [Fred Sobeck is Katie's ex-husband] (laughter). We would say, "Who are we talking to?" "Is this William Ream," that sort of thing. One of the things the Ouija board did tell us--we asked, "Is there going to be another war?" They [the Ouija board] said, "Yes," and they [it] said, "1964" or something like that and "Where?" and they [it] said, "Burma." Now how close to Vietnam can you get? Of course all the missionaries pooh-poohed it--they didn't say it doesn't work they said it was the work of the devil (laughter). So they did agree there was something. The rest of us thought it was wonderful. I believe they [the Ouija board] told us the landing was going to be on the other side of the Philippines, not the Manila side, but the eastern side of the Philippines--which fits in with Leyte. I think it gave us the approximate month. But how much do you believe stuff like that? It's fun, but I certainly wouldn't put all my money on it.

R. Ream: As the war progressed in favor of the Americans, how were the Japanese guards treating you?

K. Sobeck: They were still very good. There were incidents. Every once in awhile they would pull someone out for questioning and they'd take them downtown and I'm sure that they tortured them. Some came back and some didn't.

Dad's friend, Sy Sorrell, who had taken us up to the mountains had tried to go home to his wife, who was a Filipino, they caught him right away. But they didn't tell anybody in camp that they had caught him. First time that we knew they brought him back--they apparently had really hung him by his thumbs and given him the water treatment and all that sort of thing. They made him stay at guardhouse and he cleaned and he cleaned. It was very obvious that he was there working for them. He was sweeping the floors and doing all the chores--all that sort of thing--which was quite heartbreaking.

They caught a couple of guys--one guy dealing through the fence and they beat him up. They had a couple of beatings in front of whole camp, but nobody went out to watch it. They [the Japanese] wanted the whole camp to come out and watch.

We had one commandant, I believe it was Tomibe, who just could not understand why under these terrible conditions--lack of food and no paper, being in the conditions we were in--"Why are you guys still laughing and smiling?" He could not understand. What he would do--he didn't try to make things worse--before he'd have some bigwigs visit, he'd go around and he'd say, "Please don't smile today. Please don't look so happy." (laughter) "We have a visitor coming and if you look so happy they're going to take away more privileges--don't do that!" I think we had a very good relation-ship with our commandants.

As I told you before the guards--many of them--were very young. A lot of them were from Formosa and they were very homesick. They weren't really Japanese, the guys from Formosa. They didn't think they were Japanese and they were very homesick and they really loved the children. They really loved the little kids.

R. Ream: Is there any other memory of Camp Holmes that you would like to share with me?

K. Sobeck: You mean other than the little toilet cloths that you hear from everybody (laugh) when we ran out of toilet paper? Then what happened is that then you just had a little six by six inch square cloth. You used that cloth when you needed to and then after you wiped yourself, you rinsed it out --washed it out--and hung it on the rosebush outside the front door of the bathroom. And each person had his own little color cloth. You knew which one was yours; you recognized the material (laughs).

R. Ream: I had not heard that story in that form. That's great.

K. Sobeck: There are lots of things. When they decided that the women and men could have an hour to mingle and talk to each other and be close to each other--it was an important thing for families.

Interview with Katherine Ream Sobeck, Interview I
Date of Interview: July 8, 1989; Davis, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 2, Side 2

R. Ream: Camp Holmes--are there any other memories that stand out in your mind?

K. Sobeck: It was kind of interesting when we were able to move--after about three months they had moved the Chinese out of camp and they took over the barracks for the men's barracks and the other two barracks for women and children.

I think back on poor Freda Grose, who was a very bad diabetic and had to have insulin. I wonder where she got her insulin--whether the Japanese supplied her with that or what?

We had lots of wonderful characters: old Miss Leggett, who was a withered old, she probably wasn't that old, but her hair was white and her skin was like leather--it was really brown. She was a Theosophist. She used to grow seeds--she would grow her greens in little seeds that would sprout like alfalfa sprouts. But everybody thought she was weird and crazy. She'd set these little tin cans down the edge of the steps and she would grow her own little vegetables in them. And Tex Moyer and Monte, the fellow that looked like Santa Claus and played Santa Claus every year at Christmas--lots of very creative people.

One time when we had the Red Cross packages that was excitement, let me tell you. The only time Red Cross packages came through. They had a group of people that had to sit down and go through each box, because there were cigarettes in each box--I think it was Camel cigarettes...They had to cut the patriotic label on each single pack of cigarettes (laughs). With all the goodies that you got in each box each individual including the kids got a Red Cross box. Then of course there were those of us who didn't smoke and they could trade their cigarettes to those who did for other things that they wanted more than cigarettes.

R. Ream: Was there any candy for the kids in the boxes?

K. Sobeck: Oh yes. There was everything--candy--mostly canned goods. But it only came once.

We also had one fellow from our camp--I think he was the fellow who was the electrician--who went home as our representative from our camp on the Gripsolm, which was a ship. It may have been a Swedish ship. The Japanese allowed [a few] people to be repatriated in the middle of the war. It may have been a Swedish ship. I don't really remember the whole story about it, but we had somebody from our camp that was allowed to go home on that ship and he took letters from everybody. Our relatives here received those letters.

There are a lot of memories of course. I think that you tend to want to remember the good things. There were a lot of hardships. But you have to make the best of situation when you have a hardship. And you have to deal with a small amount of food, you deal with water rationing and you deal with not having a lot of games to play like Monopoly and things like that. You make your own games.

Our decks of cards were so well used we washed them--we'd take a damp rag and wash them off and then you put a little bit of powder on them so they don't stick together. I'll tell you we used...decks you couldn't even find in the Good Will; the Good Will wouldn't even accept them, I'll tell you.

And clothing was a problem, because they just had no new clothes. We did have one [a seamstress] later--her camp job was mending--she mended the men's clothes like the garbage crew and the wood cutting crew. They got so they wore G-strings when they were up on the hill cutting wood, so they wouldn't wear their clothes out. And [she] made things for the hospital and for the kitchen. I remember one time we went down to watch them butcher the cow (laughs). Big deal.

R. Ream: Clothing must have been a problem, because so many of you kids were growing and changing sizes.

K. Sobeck: Yes and you just had hand-me-downs. For quite a long time in the camp we were able to get stuff from the outside. Fortunately there wasn't any freezing weather. It was wet, but it wasn't all that cold. You could get by in Baguio with a sweater, even without one you wouldn't freeze to death. It's similar to Nairobi where it just isn't that cold, one light blanket is enough for most of the year.

One thing that I did get for my birthday, my dad had made me a little suitcase. He had made it out of wood and my mother had a piece of fabric, yellow with daisies on it, and she covered the inside with this and he had the outside covered with canvas. It had brass hinges that he probably made out of an old fire extinguisher, like he did the kettle, and a lock. I still have it. I don't know why I still have it.

R. Ream: You're very fortunate, so much was lost.

K. Sobeck: That's right. One of the things I think camp was good about was that we talked a lot to our parents. We learned a lot about mom's early life, about dad's early life. Because when lights are out what do you do? You can't read. They were really good about sharing their past with us.

R. Ream: It would be good to record that at another time so that everyone in the family would have those remembrances of their [the Ream parents] childhood.

Toward the end of the war you were moved to a third camp. You were moved to Manila. Do you remember the month and the year?

K. Sobeck: Yes, as a matter of fact it was the end of December in 1944. We hardly had any time to get ready. They decided you know--almost tomorrow--we're moving. I think they gave us two days, but we had to decide what we were going to take and it was very limited, because we were moving in trucks.

By this time my dad's health had gotten really bad. He was very thin. I think the men suffered more than anyone else in the camp as far as far as food went.

They gave us a share of rice--they cooked everything that they had in camp before we left. We left early, early, early. It was dark in the morning. It [the move to Manila] was all in one day I think. There were two sets of groups that moved and they moved us in open trucks.

My dad really suffered because he was so thin and he couldn't sit in these trucks and it was just bouncing, bouncing along like they carry rocks in the back of these trucks. He had diarrhea and the guy sitting next to us had diarrhea and they wouldn't stop often enough. It was hot and miserable. The cooked rice that they gave us spoiled. There was essentially no water. We couldn't take mattresses and things like that.

My mother took her picture of Bill, my older brother who had died when he was two years old, and it was her only remembrance of him. She took the kettle that my dad had made and we had a few of those things, but very little were we able to take--very little. We left like at 5:30, 6:00 in the morning.

I remember old Dr. Haughwout, who was a very old man. He was retired and he had a wooden leg. He had been keeping notes for a book--no, no. He took Renton Hind's notes and he put them in his wooden leg, so that nobody would take them away. So it was smuggled down to Manila, because Renton Hind had been keeping a diary[4] and it was written in very faithfully all through the camp. Dr. Haughwout smuggled it out in his wooden leg and he was in the group that went with us.

We stopped a couple places along the way and that was kind of traumatic to us teenagers. Here we are we are going to make a bathroom stop, but [the guards said] "Don't anybody go anywhere where we can't see you." They didn't want anybody to disappear--to get away. But you got to go. I think I kind of block that--I don't really remember that because I didn't want to face it at the time probably.

R. Ream: Were you in the truck with all of your family?

K. Sobeck: Yes, all my family was in the same truck with quite a few other people too. I don't remember anybody else except old Mr. Larson, who wasn't all that old (laughs). He was a Swede and he had blonde hair all over him, all over his back and chest and shoulders and everywhere (laughs). Can't forget that.

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[4] Hind, R. Renton, Spirits Unbroken, San Francisco, CA: John Howell, 1946. Spelling of the internees' names is taken from this source whenever possible.

We got to Bilibid Prison in the early evening. We had stopped for a lunch break and all our rice was sour. Bilibid Prison was an old Spanish prison. It had been condemned as a prison before the war and then the Japanese took it over and put the military prisoners of war in this horrible, horrible building. It was probably adobe or cement and steel.

We were driven through the compound to the back part, which was walled off separate from the rest of the prison buildings, the cell blocks. There was a big two-story building with one or two sets of cell blocks going off to the side of it in that compound. It had been, originally, the hospital building for the prison. They had moved all the military prisoners out of there and probably into horrible, worse conditions into regular cell blocks.

There was a roof on the building. There were no windows in the building itself. There were openings. Because it had been condemned nobody kept it up. The windows were all open...some had corrugated iron--corrugated galvanized iron--flats sort of, so that they could close the window or you put a stick out to prop it open. In Manila the heat was really oppressive, it was terrible. The windows that faced the street they had closed off, except for one. If you got in one particular place you could sneak a peek out the side of this window and see the avenue, the boulevard, out there. It was really kind of depressing, because we had nothing. We were put in a city where anything that there was left in the city was gone.

The Filipinos were not doing too well in Manila either. The water system was questionable; they had a well, but it was over by where they had buried the graves of the military prisoners of war. There were quite a few graves, there were at least fifty graves I would say. There apparently had been a little garden and there was a few little "greeneries" and I'll tell you they got eaten up right away--picked and eaten.

My dad was so very thin and really quite ill. They had taken over the open cell block as the hospital; it was a relatively new cell block. The walls between the units were solid, but the outside walls were bars, so there could be some air circulation. My dad was put in one of those...in the hospital.

We were able to get a few camotes, sweet potatoes, that I remember that we cooked and a couple of cooking bananas--I don't know where we got them from--and built a little fire and cooked them and shared them all. The cooking facility there was an open kitchen with a roof on it with two big pots and a stove. The rice was so bad we didn't even pick the worms out of it anymore. There was no way, if you picked it there would be no rice left. They just cooked it with worms and everything. They also brought us soybean curd. They had ground the soybeans and had squeezed all the nourishment out of them, and then what was left they gave us to eat.

I didn't suffer in this area very much, because I didn't eat anything, I didn't need to. There's some of us who--I have a son this way too--we are such picky eaters that our bodies learn from very young that we just don't need much of anything. I don't know that that's the way to be, but it certainly helps you to be a survivor.

My mother kept us pretty clean there. The toilet situation was quickly set up with our regular ingenuity. They did just have a latrine trough for the prisoners of war. But what we did is we set a half barrel up on a bar--sort of balanced on a bar--and had the water dripping into it [the barrel]. Then when it hit [reached] a certain point it tipped the water down into a trough that ran through the trough and washed everything down into the sewer or into a big hole, I don't know what it was. You sort of squatted over the trough. There were beams on either side of this tin trough and you squatted over this trough. So you could have a little privacy they put little dividers, so that there were about four or five little places where you could do your thing by yourself. But I'll tell you, you see everything comes sailing through under you (laughs) when that thing flushes. No secrets.

There were three showers--they must have taken turns with men and women. I remember being out in the showers during bombing raids--the Americans were bombing Manila. It didn't bother me at all; I lived a charmed life. I was an American, nobody could kill me. The situation there was really rather poor. We were there for a month.

R. Ream: You were there for a month before the Americans...

K. Sobeck: Before the Americans came. Do you want the story about the Americans coming?

R. Ream: Well, I want to be sure that you have no other memories of this camp that you want to share before we go on and discuss the liberation.

K. Sobeck: There wasn't much organized at that point, because we were sure that things were going on. They did not organize the school. This move left everything behind anyway. It was obvious that things were going on and it was not going to be long [before the American forces arrived]. The only real organization was the medical facilities and the food and the plumbing facilities, really. We kids, young people, really didn't have very much to do, when you're in Manila in that heat, you just don't want to do anything. There's just not very much to do.

We were able to see out of the front window a little bit, where we could see where the Japanese officers in charge lived. They kept pigs right outside their door, right outside our gate. One of the sad things that we did see at that point was like in the evening they would throw their garbage out to the pigs and what American [military] prisoners were there would grovel out there trying to get it away from the pigs. They had nothing, they had nothing. I've never seen anyone so thin in my life.

R. Ream: Were you in fear for your life from the Japanese at this point?

K. Sobeck: No, never, never.

R. Ream: Tell me about the first American soldiers that you saw that came to rescue you.

K. Sobeck: Two days before the Americans really came in there was a lot of commotion in camp, because somebody had heard a voice over the back wall where we couldn't see. Someone heard a voice say--I'm trying to think of exactly what they said--"Hey

Harvey, I thought you knew where you were, I thought you knew this place" or something to that effect, which was very American, very American. I'll tell you that got all over camp, all over camp.

The day that we saw the American tanks come into Manila--that morning the Japanese told us that the Americans were on their way; the army was in Tarlac, which was twenty miles away out of Manila. Within a few days they would be [in Manila]. Well that night about five o'clock in the evening there was a commotion--there was a bang, bang, bang--and some commotion.

People could see out the window...we could see the boulevard. There was a guy standing out on top of the tank and his tank coming down the street. We thought, oh, the Japanese army is retreating. Then you could hear American voices and pretty soon there was all this shooting and banging and the Americans [soldiers] said, "Everybody come down, come stay downstairs, you're gonna get hurt."

Everything broke loose; it was war. There was a big ammunition dump that was not too far away from our camp that went up in fire and smoke. It was pretty exciting! That was on the third of February in 1945. On the fourth in the morning--and this was all night, I don't think anybody slept all night--the Japanese said, "We are giving you your freedom, but suggest that you don't go out the gate, because you might be killed." So everybody stayed inside waiting (laughs). And on the fifth the American soldiers came into the camp, they were big and tall and brown with white teeth. They came in and took the POWS, military prisoners out first--those they could.

That night, I believe it was that night or after Ang Tibay, someone came from the military prisoners. Of all the people downstairs in front of the building this guy came up to me and said, "Do you know Dr. Beulah Allen?" And I said, "Yes, she's my aunt." He said, "I want you to know that--I would like her to know that--her husband died in the Death March." (The narrator and the interviewer paused to regain composure.) So I went and got my mom and she came and talked to him. I cannot tell you why he came up to me and not to somebody else.

R. Ream: Do you remember his name?

K. Sobeck: No. I think it was that night that there was so much fighting going on and everything was burning and the Japanese--they clung onto every inch of Manila--the Americans had to fight them off at every inch. Everything in the town was burning and they [the Americans] said, "Well we've got to move these guys out." They said, "Leave everything, everything will be okay." We stayed together as a family. They had us go out the side gate and get on a jeep and that was really, really scary, because when we got on the jeep--the buildings right there were not shooting flames--but looking down the side street that was so hot that the street poles were just bent over. They were just red hot.

They took us back in the jeep, back behind the lines to the shoe factory on the edge of Manila called Ang Tibay--it's a factory. We stayed there, I think, two days. When we were there it was exciting for us to see Americans, it was exciting for the Americans to see us.

R. Ream: What makes you say that?

K. Sobeck: Oh the soldiers--they hadn't seen any American civilians for a long time. They had fought in the Pacific, a lot of them had fought in Guadalcanal. Here were young women and old women and kids. The first people that we saw [we asked] "Who's president?" They had to have an election, right. They said Truman.[5] Who's he. (laughs)

R. Ream: Do you remember any reaction on the American soldiers' part to your condition?

K. Sobeck: I don't think so, because this was just a quick stop. They were on their way across the river into the Walled City. This was front lines. There's a difference on front lines. They were of course appalled at the condition of the military prisoners of war--that was just terrible. Some of those guys only lived long enough to know that the Americans were there, and died.

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[5] Roosevelt was still president of the United States. Manila was liberated in February 1945; Roosevelt died April 12, 1945.

R. Ream: Your father couldn't have been in much better condition.

K. Sobeck: No, no. He was in a lot better condition, a lot better condition, because he could sit up. But he was a hospital case.

We met a lot of those young men that went through--we met again on Leyte. They had been wounded as they went on into the war. They had been wounded and ended up in the convalescent hospital on Leyte, where we were transferred before we left [the Philippines].

R. Ream: Let's back up for a minute. You said that you were at the shoe factory for...

K. Sobeck: And we were fed all kinds of C-rations that all the soldiers thought were just awful and we thought were absolutely wonderful. It gave us the worse case of diarrhea (laughs), because we ate everything. The canned butter was delicious--rubbery, but delicious. They thought we were crazy.

R. Ream: After those two days where did you go?

K. Sobeck: They brought us back to Bilibid. The Filipinos had not realized that we were coming back and they had looted the place. They took just about everything. However, somebody found the picture that my mother had hung onto of my brother, Bill and brought it back to her. Just about everything else was gone. We took what we could find there.

Of course the army gave us what they could. The water had been damaged. We couldn't use any water. They had to bring water in by tank, they had to bring tanks of water in for our use.

We had a constant stream of soldiers coming to see us and visit us. As soon as they cleared up that area in the back we were allowed to communicate with Santo Tomas.

Interview with Katherine Ream Sobeck, Interview I
Date of Interview: July 8, 1989; Davis, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 3, Side 1

R. Ream: We were discussing your father's gruffness and his interaction with the Japanese soldiers. Would you care to repeat that to me?

K. Sobeck: I was just remembering about an incident in Camp Holmes when he was in the shop. A Japanese soldier brought his glasses over. He wanted dad to repair them. My dad, you understand, could never bear to have anyone whistle in his presence. And while he was working on these glasses this Japanese soldier started to whistle and my dad just told him, "Oh shut up!" And he did (laughs).

R. Ream: That was very cheeky of him. Any other remembrances?

K. Sobeck: They [the Japanese] had a lot of respect for old people.

R. Ream: Your father was not actually that old.

K. Sobeck: But he looked it. His nose was all broken and he had no hair and he was gruff, he had big eyebrows and was scary.

R. Ream: Do you remember any other incidents where he was cheeky with your guards?

K. Sobeck: No, I don't really, but they were very careful around him. Not that they were afraid he would hurt them. Their culture, I think, taught them to love children and respect age. And I think that's want I remember about the Japanese in camp.

R. Ream: Let's go back to your liberation. When we finished that last tape, as it ended, we were discussing the fact that you went back to camp [to Bilibid from the shoe factory at Ang Tibay]. The Filipinos, believing that you would not be returning, had taken just about everything. There was a photograph of your dear little brother, who had died many years ago, that your mother had treasured--that was found. Was there anything else of yours that was found?

K. Sobeck: What they [the Filipinos] didn't take they left in a great big pile of stuff, just like a big garbage heap in the front of the building. People went through the heap to find what they could of what was theirs. I think it was at that point that my mother lost the copper kettle that dad had made her. I was able to keep my little suitcase--I wonder if I had brought that with me [to Ang Tibay]--with my stone bracelet and the little box that my dad had made for me.

R. Ream: Did you remain at Bilibid much longer?

K. Sobeck: Yes, we were there for about another month, two months maybe, and we were freely given passes when we wanted to go places. We had to have passes to pass the military guards, the sentinels, in different places in town. There were spots where you couldn't pass, because there was still a lot of fighting. We were able to go freely between Bilibid and Santo Tomas.

R. Ream: Prior to your liberation did you have any idea if all of your family members, the Diehls and the Allens, had survived.

K. Sobeck: We didn't have any idea, but we had faith. How's that! We knew that everything was fine, but we did not know for sure.

R. Ream: Can you describe your first meeting?

K. Sobeck: No, I don't think I can.

R. Ream: Do you remember walking down to Santo Tomas?

K. Sobeck: Yes, I remember parts of it, not very clearly. I do remember very clearly when MacArthur came to Bilibid. He came to visit. He was a very dramatic individual. He stayed very briefly and shook a lot of hands. I do remember that day and there were big crowds surrounding him.

R. Ream: How did you all feel about MacArthur?

K. Sobeck: I think that at that time he was a hero. I still, deep down inside, I really think he was.

R. Ream: I think without his persistence they probably would have bypassed the Philippines.

K. Sobeck: He was very dramatic, but that was an old style, that's the old style fighting man. But he was a very good soldier.

R. Ream: When you left Bilibid where did you go?

K. Sobeck: We were flown in a small plane to Leyte, which was one of the southern islands. While we were in Manila we were able to go out and go on some of the merchant ships and on some of the mine sweepers and whatever was out in the bay. We were able to walk partly into the Walled City and around the ruined parts of Manila as long as there was no fighting.

About a month after probably the end of March, first part of April--I don't remember the day--we were flown to a convalescent hospital in Leyte just north of Tacloban on the beach, tropical beach, what more can you ask for?

We had our own little area that was ours, but also around us were...convalescing soldiers, who were getting better from their wounds. Some of them were ones that we had seen at Ang Tibay and we had really great times. They had a canteen, they had movies every night, just like the old war movies. It was lovely and peaceful and the water was warm. Go out swimming everyday and loll around every afternoon under the palm trees and go to the canteen and the movies at night.

R. Ream: Did you hang in there with your sisters and your brother, or were you on your own?

K. Sobeck: I think we mostly were on our own. Nora was eighteen and in great demand among the soldiers. I was fifteen and didn't know anything (laughs). I really don't know what Sally and John did. There was always somebody around with an amphibious vehicle to give us a ride out into the ocean a little ways. We just had a lot of fun.

R. Ream: What were your parents doing?

K. Sobeck: I don't remember dad there at all, which is weird, because we were all together. I do remember my mother and the cot that she slept on in our tent. I'm sure that dad was trying to gain a little weight and some strength, but I do not remember. I know that my mother--we went to a lot of movies together. I do remember my mother's presence there. We were there about a month.

A very interesting thing happened to me. The night before we left everybody was partying. I just decided that I don't want to do this anymore. I feel terrible. I want to go for a walk on the beach. I went out and I bawled--I cried. I felt like there was such sadness and not because we were leaving--that didn't make any difference to me--I'd never been to Leyte before. There was such a heavy sadness and I was just bawling by myself. I went back to my tent and I lay down crying. And my mother was crying and she said, "What's the matter?" And I said, "I don't know, but I feel so very sad." The next morning before we left they announced that Roosevelt had died. I believe that was the morning we left. I'm sure it was, because that was why everyone was partying [the night before]. We left on a Dutch troop ship.

R. Ream: Was your decision to return to the United States an automatic one on the part of your family or was there any debate?

K. Sobeck: There had been debate.

R. Ream: Your family had an option?

K. Sobeck: Yes, they had an option. If my dad had had any kind of funds in the States I think he probably would have opted to stay, because his whole career had been there. He was a big man in the Philippines. He had nothing in the United States. He had no place that was home. He had no job.

I think that the thing that made them decide to go was that all these kids growing up--college age kids that had to go back home for schooling. I think they felt it was more important for their children to be back in the United States than to stay in the Philippines. The future was uncertain in the Philippines. Had he had money like Marsmans or the Diehls had money, he probably would have opted to stay and send his kids back to stay with relatives.

R. Ream: Tell me about your trip home on the troop ship.

K. Sobeck: It was long; it was about three weeks. The bunks were hammocks below the deck. I went down there once and I spent the rest of the time on deck. I slept on the hatch covers. I never, never went down and slept in the hammock, ever, on the trip. There's no way at this point in my life that I would ever, ever go under the decks ever, anyway, because that's a hang-up of mine. At that time I don't think that was it. I was uncom-fortable, I wanted to be where I had a chance if there was any trouble (laughs).

We girls offered to wait on tables. It was just a pleasant, peaceful trip. It was our first experience with detergent. I assume that's what their salt water soap was--they had soap that was salt water soap. Our showers were all salt water.

The only clothes we really had were--we had a couple of rags left over and then we had a Red Cross issue (laughs). I don't even recall that we had shoes on our feet when we got off the boat--a lot of us didn't have shoes, we had those wooden clogs when we got off the boat in San Francisco.

R. Ream: What were you wearing?

K. Sobeck: I was wearing a WAC skirt, I think, and obviously some kind of a blouse. I just don't remember. It may have been a leftover blouse. I think wooden shoes; I don't think we had any shoes.

There was a little bit of a problem, because of questionable citizenship. When my mom and dad went back to Philippines their passport was a very old passport[6], which had mom and dad and one year old Nora (laughs). And now it's mom and dad and Nora and Katie and Sally and John (laughter). They got that all straightened out. Then we had to go to the welfare building to get all their other papers straightened out and make appointments with doctors to be checked out properly and x-rayed and all that sort of thing.

R. Ream: Do you remember where all those procedures took place?

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[6] The passport was issued as a family passport for three--Fabian Ream, his wife, Ruth, and their small daughter, Nora.

K. Sobeck: In San Francisco. I remember the welfare building. It was on Bush and Stockton.

R. Ream: Do you remember where your appointments were?

K. Sobeck: No, I don't. That may have been in the welfare building also.

We were met by my mother's family and Uncle Milton and Aunt Helen.

R. Ream: Now besides Uncle Milton and Aunt Helen [Ream], you said your mother's family. Specifically, who do you remember?

K. Sobeck: Kris and Norma [Johnsen] and Sine [Haas]. Maybe Lona Belle [Sine's daughter] was there--I don't remember that. I'm sure grandma was there, she had to have been.

Helga and Theo--I don't think they came over on the same boat we did. They were met by a limousine from General Foods and put up at the St. Francis, probably with a gift certificate to I.Magnin's (laughs).

R. Ream: Were they there to greet you?

K. Sobeck: I don't remember.

R. Ream: Now I'm going to ask you a very personal question. Were there Johnsen tears?

K. Sobeck: (Laughter). How could you ask (laughter)?

R. Ream: Well, I thought perhaps you had cried all the tears.

K. Sobeck: No, no. There's no such thing as crying all the tears. You know that. The Johnsens used to cry the boats out of the harbor, let me tell you (laughter).

R. Ream: Where did you go after you were met?

K. Sobeck: We went to Hayward to Milton's place. He had a little guest house on his property and they turned that over to our family. The Johnsens came over there. The Johnsens had got together and brought all kinds of clothing and all kinds of pictures and things. We went through all the boxes. I didn't stay around, I don't think, to talk to the adults. I'm sure that there were all kinds of tears.

And Beulah came to live with us in that little house also, and her mother [also Fabian Ream's mother].

R. Ream: And her two boys [Beulah's sons]?

K. Sobeck: ...I don't know where Lee was, or Hendy. That's weird. Maybe she just came very shortly to bring grandma. But grandma stayed with us; my dad's mother stayed with us. And Beulah was there, she may have just brought her along and had her boys in her house in San Francisco. She had a house in San Francisco.

R. Ream: Would you discuss with me any negative aspects of your internment--a summary?

K. Sobeck: Negative to you or negative to me (laughs). Things are relative and when you're in a bad situation you make the best of it and don't cry a lot about what you haven't got.

I was only twelve years old when the war started. I did not have the cares that the older women had who had children. As I say, everything is relative. If I were a little bit older, I think that it would have been a very--well, I was going to say a heartbreaking experience, but I don't think so. I think you overcome those things. The worry of the parents must have been terrible, because they had to provide for their children. Those who were there without their husbands and didn't know where their husbands were, or what was happening, must have had a lot of unhappiness.

Generally, the feeling in our camp was everything was pretty good. There was a shortage of food and there was a shortage especially in the end. I do not feel that the Japanese shorted us on purpose--I really do not feel that they did anything overly cruel to the majority of the camp because they wanted to starve us. I think that they had problems themselves.

I can't, of course, condone any torturing; our family was not touched with that. Nonetheless, it was very heartbreaking--a lot of the torturing that went on. I didn't mention the escape of Rich Green and Herb Swick, which was very cleverly plotted, very cleverly plotted. And of course that brought in a lot of people [Japanese military police, who took charge of the investigation]. They took a lot of people down for questioning and Japanese war questioning is not gentle. And I can't condone that.

I also cannot be really bitter about the whole experience, because that's the price of war and where you are at the time. Guys grow up in the ghettos that have it worse than we did.

R. Ream: Any positive aspects?

K. Sobeck: I think that we learned a lot about each other and our parents. I think it was a good social experience for those of us growing up there, where you learn how to get along with people in close quarters. I think it also was great--the creativity that was shown in camp was wonderful. The things that you can do with nothing--it was wonderful. I would not willingly go through the experience, say, "I am going to go through this experience." But I think that there is always some good that can be got out of anything.

R. Ream: Let me ask you about any long range effects that you noticed first on your father and then possibly on your mother.

K. Sobeck: I don't know what dad's medical condition was before he went into the camp, other than the fact that he used to come down with malaria frequently. I suspect that his colitis was developed in camp, which left him not too well for the rest of his life. I think that it was kind of a depressing thing for him that when he came out of it at age 50--age 50 is not a time to start a new life. He could not get the stature in business that he had before. I'm sure that was terribly depressing to him and very frustrating.

As far as my mother goes I think that she came out better than my dad, because she learned in camp that she was a person. She was not just a wife, she was a person on her own, and she was smart. She was not a dummy. She met a lot of very independent, educated, smart people that remained her friends all their lives. She learned to read when she was in camp; I don't mean just ABC's. She learned to read in depth and she learned a lot from her reading. She became very interested in

Theosophy and a more spiritual outlook on life. I think that experience made her the kind of person she was when we knew her in her old age.

R. Ream: What do you think were the long range effects, if any, on you?

K. Sobeck: Well, this is a point where I could blame my weight on this, couldn't I? I learned how to live on nothing, so now I have plenty...Other than that I don't think there was any long range effects on me.

R. Ream: One last question? Looking at all the other families in the camp, how would you rate your own parents for getting you through?

K. Sobeck: I think that they were well up near the top. I mentioned what I felt was my mother's ingenuity all through the interview. I think that they were very involved in the community work. They were supportive of the community. I think that they did not enter into any bitter disputes. I don't think they were unfeeling, even though we were not religious, but my parents did not put anybody down for their beliefs, and I don't think they let us do it either. I don't think that we would. I think I would rate them up near the top as far as community spirit and family care.

R. Ream: Thank you, Katie.

PART VI

NORA REAM KUTTNER: CIVILIAN PRISONER OF WAR IN THE PHILIPPINES, 1941-1945

An interview conducted by
Renee Ream
November 24, 1989

ORAL HISTORY - TOOL #1

Narrator: Nora Ream Kuttner
Interviewer: Renee Ream

Why this narrator was selected to be interviewed:

> Nora Ream Kuttner was chosen for this oral history interview because she has valuable insight to offer on life as a civilian prisoner of war in a military zone during World War II. Her remarks reflect a teenager's point of view of events that took place over forty years ago.
>
> It is hoped that information from this interview will be a valuable addition to the small body of literature about civilian war prisoners in the Philippines. All of this literature is recorded from the point of view of an adult's remembrances.

Purpose of this interview:

> To record some of the wartime experience of Nora Ream Kuttner during her internment in the Philippines during the years 1941-1945. We will discuss the periods immediately preceding and following the Ream Family internment.

Place to deposit the interview:

> The tape and transcript of this interview will be deposited in the Kuttner Family Archives, which contains other diaries pertaining to life as an internee in The Philippines during World War II.

Donated Tape Collection

The Kuttner Family Archives
1641 Valley Lane
Fullerton, California 92633

We, Nora R. Kuttner (Narrator) and Renee S. Ream (Interviewer)

do hereby give to The Kuttner Family Archives for such scholarly and education uses as the Curator of The Kuttner Family Archives shall determine the following tape-recorded interview(s) recorded on November 24, 1989 (date(s)) as an unrestricted gift and transfer legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift precludes any use which the interviewer may want to make of the information in the recording.

Nora R. Kuttner
Signature of Narrator

Nora R. Kuttner
1641 Valley Lane
Fullerton, CA 92633
Name & Address of Narrator

November 24, 1989
Dated

Accepted for Kuttner Family Archives by

Nora R. Kuttner
Curator

November 24, 1989
Dated

Renee S. Ream
Signature of Interviewer

RENEE S REAM
320 YALE AVENUE
KENSINGTON, CA 94708
Name & Address/Interviewer

November 24, 1989
Dated

Nora R. Kuttner: Internment in the Philippines, 1941-1945
Subject of Interview

GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Information gathered by:
Nora Ream Kuttner

Phone #: (714) 525-6981
Date: October 2, 1989

Name of narrator:
Nora Ream Kuttner

Name at birth: Nora Ruth Ream

Date of birth: October 26, 1926

Place of birth:
Salt Lake City, UT

Home address: 1641 Valley Lane
Fullerton, CA 92633

Phone: (714) 525-6981

Date of marriage: May 23, 1958

Place of marriage:
Los Angeles, CA

Name of spouse: Ralph Kuttner

Place of birth: Beloit, WI
Date of birth: June 10, 1927

Name of former spouse:
Eugene Noel Robison

Date of marriage: July 8, 1947
Date of divorce: 1958

Name of father: Fabian D. Ream

Place of birth: Dingle, ID
Date of birth: Dec. 17, 1891

Name of mother: Ruth Johnsen Ream

Place of birth: Kerkhoven, MN
Date of birth: August 31, 1896

Grandparents

Father's father: William Ream

Place of birth: Chariton, IA
Date of birth: Oct. 29, 1859

Father's mother:
Nora Ellen Crockett Ream

Place of birth: Logan, UT
Date of birth: Dec. 28, 1868

Mother's father: Kristian Johnsen

Place of birth: Denmark
Date of birth: June 21, 1868

Mother's mother:
Abelone Katrina Nielsen Johnsen

Place of birth: Denmark
Date of birth: Aug. 14, 1871

Names of brothers and sisters and dates of birth:

1. Katherine Ream Sobeck	December 7, 1929
2. Sarah Lee Ream Connelly	June 3, 1932
3. Fabian John Ream	November 28, 1934

Names of children and dates of birth:

1. (Bill) William Scott Kuttner (born Robison)	April 21, 1951
2. John Allen Robison	July 3, 1932
3. Kenneth Neil Kuttner	November 6, 1960

Narrator's profession: Homemaker

First family members to come to this country:
Thomas Crockett who came to New England in 1633

Mother's family from:
Father's family from:

Education: B.A. Calstate Fullerton, 1975

Travel: Europe - 1973, Philippine Islands - 1981, around the U.S. some, Canada and Mexico

Military Service: None

Date family moved to this area:

Where did your family come from:

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The interview with Nora Ream Kuttner took place on Friday, November 24, 1989 between 11:00 AM and 3:00 PM at the Ream Family home on Yale Avenue in Kensington, California. There was one other person in the home for awhile, until Nora's husband, Ralph Kuttner, arrived. The telephones were answered by others in the home.

The narrator and the interviewer sat at the dining room table with the microphone between them. The tape recorder was turned off at one time while the narrator and interviewer discussed some sensitive information about one of the internees, who was not part of the family. It was the narrator's decision not to discuss the subject on tape.

Nora Ream Kuttner was fifteen when the war began. She retained an excellent amount of information about her own activities and her immediate surroundings. She was frank about not having answers to some of the questions asked of her. If she had only a vague recollection of an incident, she would say that she did not know, or she would label her answer as "possible or probable." Early in the interview, Nora's voice reflected great sorrow as she remembered something her mother had said during their internment. At that point the tape recorder was turned off while she regained her composure.

In the final transcript (laughter) was used to indicate that both the narrator and the interviewer were laughing, while (laughs) was used when only the narrator laughed. Information in brackets was added by the interviewer to clarify the narrator's statements. Lengthy sentences were sometimes divided into shorter sentences for easier reading. When a copy of the interview was sent to Nora for approval she added or corrected several facts, which were bracketed or footnoted in the final copy.

Nora was 63 years old at the time of the interview. She lives in Fullerton, California with her husband. She is an active member of the Fullerton Recreational Riders, a group which promotes safe horsemanship and trail use, and she owns her own horse. Nora is the mother of three married sons and has four grandchildren.

INTERVIEW OUTLINE

Page Number

I. The Ream Family unit as of December 1941
  A. Household members named 1
  B. Parents' background
    1. Father 1-2
    2. Parents meet 2
    3. Return to the Philippines 2
    4. Mother's background 3

II. War with Japan
  A. Talk of coming war 3-4
    1. The family prepares for war 4
    2. Japanese attack Pearl Harbor, bomb Baguio 5-6
  B. Japanese military arrives 6
    1. Katie and Nora sent into mountains 6-7
    2. American forces retreat through mountains near Lusud 7
    3. Katie and Nora return to Baguio 7-8

III. Internment at Camp John Hay
  A. American civilians assemble at Brent School 8-10
  B. Internment at Camp John Hay 10-11
    1. Housing 12-13
    2. Ages of family members 14
    3. Camp rules 14-15
    4. Sleeping arrangements 15
    5. Christmas prior to internment 15-16
    6. Meals 16
    7. Sanitation 16-17
  C. Internees organize camp
    1. Camp government set up 17
    2. Mother organizes bathroom facilities 18
    3. Teenage girls asked to hostess at Japanese officers' club 18
    4. Visitation rules between men and their families 18
    5. Lack of activities for children 19
    6. Treatment by guards 19-20
    7. Description of a few internees 20-21
    8. Parents adjustment to camp life 21-22

IV. The move to Camp Holmes
  A. Living arrangements and work places 22-24
  B. Japanese administration of camp 24

- C. Internee governing committee 24
    - 1. Work details 24-26
    - 2. Dad's contributions to camp life 26-28
    - 3. Other camp jobs 28
- D. Camp conditions
    - 1. Sanitation facilities 29-30
    - 2. Meals 30-32
    - 3. Health problems 32-33
- E. Camp life
    - 1. Aunt Beulah and family move to Manila 34
    - 2. School days 34-37
    - 3. Nora and her classmates graduate 37-38
    - 4. Social activities 38-42
        - a. holidays during internment 42
        - b. other cultural activities 42
- F. The outside world
    - 1. Red Cross packages and other mail 43-44
    - 2. Lack of war news 44
- G. Treatment by Japanese guards 45
    - 1. Roll call 45
    - 2. A few internees escape 45
    - 3. War rumors 46
    - 4. Mistreatment after internees escape 46-47
    - 5. New camp commandant 47
    - 6. Missionary women serve as translators 47
    - 7. Bootleg radios provide war news 47-48

V. Final phase of the war for the Baguio internees

- A. American planes sighted 48
    - 1. Fears of not being liberated 48-49
    - 2. Commandants reaction to American planes 49
- B. Remembering a few camp internees 49-52
- C. Transfer of internees to Manila 52
    - 1. The trip to Manila 53-54
    - 2. Description of Bilibid Prison 54-56
    - 3. Commingling 56-57
- D. Camp conditions
    - 1. Food supply 57
    - 2. Dad's health 57-58
    - 3. Mother's health 58
    - 4. Recipe swapping!! 58
    - 5. Sanitary conditions 58-59
    - 6. Military POW's isolated at Bilibid 59
    - 7. No internee organization at Bilibid 59

VI. American military presence in Manila

- A. Bombing and strafing over Manila 59-60
    - 1. Fighting around Bilibid 60-61
    - 2. Japanese military leaves Bilibid 61
- B. First contact with American liberators 61-62

- C. Liberation 62
    - 1. Temporary evacuation to Ang Tibay 62-63
    - 2. Effects of first U.S. Army rations 63
- D. Return to Bilibid 63
    - 1. Possessions looted 63-64
    - 2. Effects of war on the Filipinos 64
    - 3. Fighting continues around Bilibid 64
    - 4. Visiting Santo Tomas in Manila 64-65
- E. Leaving Manila
    - 1. Transported by military to Leyte 65-66
    - 2. Rest and recuperation in Leyte 66

VII. Return to the United States
- A. Nora's separation from her family 68-69
- B. Nora finds work in the shipyards 69
- C. Reflections of life as an internee 69-70
    - 1. Effects of the war on Nora's parents 70
    - 2. Discussion of parenting during internment 71
    - 3. Quality of people interned with the Ream Family 71
- D. Ream children have a health check in the U.S.A. 71-72
- E. Effects of internment on later decision making 72

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Oral History Tool #1	ii
Legal Release	iii
Biological and Genealogical Information	iv, v
Interview History	vi
Interview Outline	vii - ix
Table of Contents	x
Oral History Interview	1 - 72

Interview with Nora Ream Kuttner, Interview I
Date of Interview: November 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

R. Ream: Nora, would you tell me who the members of your household were prior to December 1941. What I'm asking for is a list of family members and any other household members.

N. Kuttner: There was my father, Fabian Dewine Ream, my mother, Ruth Johnsen Ream, and the children in order of age: Nora Ruth Ream, Katherine Ream, Sarah Lee Ream and Fabian John Ream. We also had a boy who lived with us, Bertrand Bandman[1], and some servants, Josepina Rillera, Paterna (last name not remembered)[2], Clemente Rillera, a gardener. Well, actually he did not live with us. He lived down in Pacdal. I guess that's all who were living there at the time.

R. Ream: Tell me what each one of them did for you. What was Josepina's role?

N. Kuttner: I think Josepina may have been the cook. Paterna may have been the house-cleaner. We always had a girl that cooked and one that cleaned. And we had a lavendera that would come in and wash. [For a] time my mother did it [the wash] herself and I can't remember--she may not have had her at the time the war broke out. And then Clemente was the gardener.

R. Ream: I'd like to talk with you about your parents' background, and if you would start with your father. Just give me a kind of brief sketch of if you remember approximately when he was born and something about him as a person. And don't worry if you don't remember dates.

N. Kuttner: I think my father was born around 1892, but I would have to check my book to be sure. He was born in Dingle, Idaho in ranch and farming country. Do you want a sort of little biography?

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[1] Spelling of names is taken, whenever possible, from: Hind, Renton R., Spirits Unbroken. John Howell, Publisher, 1946.

[2] Immediately following the interview Nora remembered that it was Maximina [Altura], not Paterna, who lived with the Ream Family prior to December 1941.

R. Ream: I think what would be good is just a sketch of him from his high school graduations--just the highlights until his first trip to the Philippines.

N. Kuttner: You don't want any of the tales of hardship, milking cows and things like that? He came from a farming family and they had some difficult times some years. Anyway, after my dad graduated from high school he taught school for awhile in a country school.[3] I think at one time he applied for law school, but he was impatient at having to go through the many years that were required, and so he decided not to do that. He went over to the Philippines in 1914 as a teacher at Munoz, which was an agricultural college in the lowlands, and he lived there--in fact he became the principal of Munoz at one time. And he lived there until about 1921, when he came back to the states. At that time I believe he went to work at Garfield Smelter. One time in the period after he came back he worked at Garfield Smelter in Utah.

He met my mother through Aunt Beulah, who [later] became Dr. Allen. She [Aunt Beulah] was in nurses' training at Cook County in Chicago, where my mother met her. And she [Aunt Beulah] kept saying you have to meet my brother, who's this handsome guy from the Philippines...and Aunt Beulah introduced the two of them. At that time my mother was a school nurse in Utah. I guess my mother fell for him right off the bat; they got married shortly after.

Pop had the yearning to go back to the Philippines; he'd been offered a pretty good job out here as the west coast representative for some insurance company, but he was contacted by Max Blouse, who ran the Laguna Tayabas Bus Company in San Pablo Laguna, which is somewhat south of where he had worked before at the college. Max had known him in the Philippines and gave him a chance to manage the Laguna Tayabas Bus Company in San Pablo. My dad took it [the job in 1927] and moved there with my mother and me. At that time I was about seven months old.

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[3] Nora later added, "Pop taught in a one-room school and some of his students were bigger and older than he was!"

R. Ream: I'd like to ask you the same kind of information about your mother--just highlights of her life up until the time that she met your father.

N. Kuttner: My mother was born in Kerkhoven, Minnesota, which is a farming town. Her father was a dairy farmer in Kerkhoven and both of her parents were immigrants from Denmark and they had settled there to farm--run a creamery, I guess. Anyway, she lived in Fergus Falls and after she graduated from high school, moved to Chicago and took nurses training. All the time she was an ardent pianist and practiced very hard, hoping at one time, maybe, to become a concert player. But I guess her father objected to her going to the big city, that type of thing.

But she went to Cook County and took nurses training in Chicago and got her RN there. That's where she met Aunt Beulah, and as I mentioned talking about my dad, it was Aunt Beulah that introduced them. She got a job as a school nurse in American Forks, Utah.

One thing that she commented a lot about was the importance of the children getting a good breakfast before they go to school. All our lives ma stressed the fact that we should have a good start in the day; I guess that's one reason I'm a big breakfast eater, you know.

R. Ream: Let me now take you to just prior to Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and if you could, tell me were you aware that war was approaching between Japan and the United States?

N. Kuttner: I personally as a teenager--I had just turned fifteen--I think all the time we always expected there was going to be a war, but heavens they wouldn't even think of attacking us until 1946, which was when the Philippines was scheduled to have its independence.

There was a lot of quiet activity going on. It seemed to me it wasn't like everyday always was, one day after the other. Things were happening. I think my father knew a lot. I'm not too sure. Right now I'd like to talk to some people, who are still living, to find out what he knew. I believe my father had some kind of knowledge about transport ships that were already in the

China Sea or in the waters around the Philippines. I'm not sure how he happened to know, whether he had some connections with military intelligence or what. He had been there [in the Philippines] a number of years and obviously was pretty trusted. But nobody told me exactly, because I was just a kid, but I just couldn't help but pick it up on my antenna--my personal antenna.

R. Ream: Were there any family preparations in that there would be war and that the Philippines would be attacked?

N. Kuttner: Alright, one thing my mother did was set up a store of groceries. I think she had toilet paper and things like that in a closet under the stairs that went upstairs.

And she also bought some kinds of bonds or something that Natalie Crouter had been promoting and had to do with getting back yard smelters for Chinese cooperatives. Natalie was a friend of Edgar Snow and I'm not sure just what side they were on...but she knew a lot of people and they were trying to get these little villages to have some kind of industry and be more self sufficient. So my mother had bought some of these [bonds] to support them and she had a hole dug in the backyard and she buried these documents so that in case the Japanese came in and found them, they wouldn't associate her with them, because she thought that perhaps it might bring a lot of trouble.

This is prior to December 7th [1941]?

R. Ream: That's right it's prior to the Japanese landing in the Philippines.

N. Kuttner: I can't remember anything other than that of what we might have done.

R. Ream: Were there any preparations by your father?

N. Kuttner: I don't recall. I don't know what he could have done. I'm thinking in terms of the home front. Now whether my dad had money or anything...I really can't frankly remember anything beyond that.

R. Ream: Now it's December 7, 1941. How did you hear about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

N. Kuttner: Well my dad dropped us off on the street in front of Brent School and we walked up the road. This is a boarding school and the boys lived on the second floor and the classrooms were on the first. As I came in on the first floor in the hallway, I could hear radios upstairs with the news [turned on]. One of the kids ran down and told me that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. It was in first period when we were having an algebra quiz, when we heard the drone of airplanes outside and they had come in along--our school was on a little ridge--and they had come in just slightly above eye-level down the little valley as they passed us.

R. Ream: Who is "they?"

N. Kuttner: The Japanese--some Japanese bombers. I think there were more or less about a dozen, give or take a couple. And we thought after hearing this news that the Americans were showing some strength, and we cheered them on. And as they passed us a few minutes later, we heard some rumbling, and in fact they were Japanese bombers that had bombed us the same day they had bombed Pearl Harbor. Their target was Camp John Hay, which is an army camp within our city limits.

R. Ream: What happened after the bombing; did you stay at school for the remainder of the day?

N. Kuttner: We stayed at school for a couple of hours and the teachers decided to send everybody home. This included getting the buses from the mines that had brought the kids up--the school buses--and sending the mining kids home and all the day students went home. And they [the school staff] were going to think about what they would do next, but that was the last of Brent School for the time being.

R. Ream: Was your mother waiting for you when you got home? Do you think she was aware that the war had begun?

N. Kuttner: Oh, she probably was waiting, because she really didn't go very many places, except when she had to go downtown to shop. So I imagine that she was there, but I don't recall exactly. I don't think the full importance had sunk in on us, frankly.

R. Ream: When were you first aware of the Japanese presence on Luzon in the Philippines?

N. Kuttner: Let me go back a step. One thing my mother did after the bombing occurred. She had a little trench dug into the side of the hill, just below the garden, so that in case we were bombed again we could run in and get some type of shelter. Of course, by the time the airplanes came to where we could hear them, they were already past us, because the little hill kind of cut it off [the sound of approaching airplanes] and so it was almost useless to have it. And they pretty much flew over; we were almost in the path of the bombers as they went toward Camp John Hay.

What was that question again?

R. Ream: When were you first aware of the presence of the Japanese?

N. Kuttner: On the island?

R. Ream: Yes. Probably in Manila is where they would have come.

N. Kuttner: No, actually they landed on northern Luzon in Aparri. They landed in Lingayen Gulf. Those were the ones that were more relevant to us. They may have landed other places, but the two roads that came into Baguio were from the Lingayen Gulf and one from a little further south. [Baguio] was up in the mountains and it was pretty hard to get to.

I don't know, but I heard some rumblings about their landings, but my father must have known more, because out of concern for Katie, who was twelve, and me at fifteen, he had us taken up to a lumber mill in the mountains, Lusud, which is where their friends the Jorgensens had a mill. You couldn't reach it by road, it was just a walk, a long walk, like six hours. So we got up there to Lusud and there were a lot of people from the Itogon Mines up there and a lot of soldiers retreating through.

It was a madhouse, frankly, and [there was] not a whole lot of food, because it is...an isolated place. After a couple of days Katie, who was a little bit fussy about her food, would not eat properly and Ola Robinson, whose husband was the general manager of the Itogon Mining Company called down and said that they'd had to send somebody to fetch us. [Ola] wouldn't take responsibility for us anymore, because Katie wouldn't eat. And in a way it was a wonderful favor to us, because the people who were caught out there--a lot of them suffered greatly later on. Anyway, Sy Sorrell...was married to a native and I guess he was a mechanic in town--came up (walked up) and picked us up and took us back to the family. I suppose we knew at the time that they [Japanese military forces] had landed, otherwise, why would the [American] soldiers be retreating over the mountain?

We ran across Uncle Sam Allen, Uncle Beulah's husband...amongst those soldiers that were lying around the hillside there by Lusud. We happened to be out there with the other kids serving up tea and water and stuff to these guys who were exhausted...Anyway, when we got back home it was only a matter of a few days before we had to turn ourselves in.

R. Ream: Let me just back up for a second and ask if you know where those troops were retreating to?

N. Kuttner: They had been the troops that were stationed probably at Camp John Hay and around and they probably realized that the Japanese were approaching up the Naguilian Road. They probably thought if they got into the mountains, they could fight a holding action up there, but they were terribly outnumbered and didn't stand a chance. They were being pinched off, so to speak.

The Japanese came in in hordes and they weren't always well-equipped, but they came in huge numbers and we weren't ready for them. In time a lot of them [American soldiers] were caught in the mountains anyway and a lot were killed in the battles.

R. Ream: You returned to your parents home and were there Japanese soldiers in Baguio at that point?

N. Kuttner: I don't know if the soldiers were in Baguio yet, I believe at that time the Japanese civilians, who ran stores in town like the Rising Sun Studio and the Japanese Bazaar, came around to the house--to the homes of the Americans, I guess--and said that they would like us to congregate or leave so they could take a count of what we had, you know, like an inventory of what we had at home. And they inferred that we would come back. At least this was my understanding.

Shall I tell you about how we went to Brent [School]?

R. Ream: Yes. Did they give you notice that you were to assemble somewhere?

N. Kuttner: Right. That was my understanding that they gave us notice. The soldiers weren't in town yet, but the Japanese civilians took over...In times of war you get a lot of rumors and I don't know whether they had been working with the invaders prior to this or whether they were conveniently tapped to do it [round up American civilians], I'm not sure. We'd heard that some of them were spies and working with the Japanese before the invasion--that's just throwing that out for what rumors I heard.

The first time I knew that there were soldiers was after we had already left home. Shall I tell about our arrival at the Brent School?

R. Ream: Yes. So you drove over there?

N. Kuttner: We drove over to Brent School; we had this 1939 Buick, six passenger car, I guess you'd call it. So there was our family...I can't remember if my dad drove or if he sent the chauffeur up to take us...[while] he was down at that the office. I can't remember that right now. But anyway, someone drove my mother and four of us kids and Bertrand Bandman--that's six right there. And we stopped on the road and picked up Mutt Walker and her children; I think there were three of them, Mutt and two children. And this is with our little bunch of belongings. They [Japanese civilians] said just take along enough to last for a weekend. So we took a change of clothes. I took my trusty little first aid kit and a little enamel American flag. I still have the flag today.

R. Ream: I bet it means a lot to you.

N. Kuttner: I don't know. I just think of all the things I saved, you know, that was a funny thing to save. (Laughs).

R. Ream: What happened when you arrived at...?

N. Kuttner: We went to Brent School, which was I don't know how many miles away. It couldn't have been very far. Distances are so different when you are young. I would say less than five miles. Anyway, it was the school that we attended for our education. And we were told to assemble in the Toddlers Hall, which is in the dining room section of the Toddlers Hall. And they had a lot of people; there wasn't enough room, if you put pads on the floor, there wasn't enough room for everybody to lie down and sleep at the same time. But we were told to stay put.

R. Ream: Did they do a census taking, did they take everyone's name or check your possessions, anything like that?

N. Kuttner: I don't recall. I have a feeling at some time they didn't want us to have knives and everything. I did have a little pearl-handled pocketknife in my first aid kit, which I didn't declare, but who would have suspected me anyway, a fifteen year old girl? They must have taken a list, but I don't remember, because I was too young to be involved in business affairs. If it were today, of course, my whole personality is changed and I would know everything that went on. But I was just being like zen--the zen attitude.

R. Ream: Do you remember if any of your family members had anything to declare--any knives or anything like that?

N. Kuttner: I was probably the only one that had a pocket knife. Well, my dad always carried a pocket knife; it's very likely he kept it. I don't remember too much. It was probably the next day that I think the Japanese [military] came into town.

R. Ream: Did you stay there that night?

N. Kuttner: We spent the night there at least one night, possibly two, but not very long.

R. Ream: How did you get your meals?

N. Kuttner: I don't recall. All I is remember there wasn't very much and we scrounged. We may have brought a little food with us to last the weekend, but I really don't recall.

R. Ream: What happened the next day?

N. Kuttner: The next day we were told to assemble on the tennis courts and some Japanese officer yelled and screamed and told us we were going to be moved. We couldn't go back to the...Toddlers Dorm and pick up what we had left there...I think somebody persuaded them to let us go back, at least and pick up our clothes. But we could only take what we could carry. We were then reassembled, an hour later or so, and everybody had to take what he or she could carry and we were walked across town to Camp John Hay, which is an army camp, and put in the barracks there. I've heard that in crossing town that all the Filipinos stayed off the streets, because they didn't want to put us to shame, if they saw us walking and carrying all of this. It was a long walk and things got pretty heavy. It was interesting the kinds of things that people would think that were valuable to take with them like costumes from plays and things like that, which seemed kind of ridiculous (laughs).

R. Ream: Do you have any idea of how long it took you to make that walk to Camp John Hay?

N. Kuttner: I don't remember how long. It must have taken a couple of hours.

R. Ream: I bet it felt like forever.

N. Kuttner: It seemed like forever, putting one foot in front of the other. It was a little hilly, because Baguio is built on hills like Rome's seven hills.

R. Ream: Were you walking with friends at that point?

N. Kuttner: I can't remember if it was [with] friends or family. But one thing that was kind of touching, we passed one of the barracks that housed the West Point Cadets. They had some West Point program there for American soldiers...I guess to give them some special kind of experience and these guys had become sought after socially amongst all the school guys. There was one kid named Greg, who was nineteen, that I danced with at a...[ball at the country club] for the British war relief...not too long before. And that was the barracks they were all in and it was empty now. Incidentally, he was also one that I saw up there in Lusud, that group of kids.

R. Ream: Retreating with the military?

N. Kuttner: Yes.

Interview with Nora Ream Kuttner, Interview I
Date of Interview: November 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interview and transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 1, Side 2

R. Ream: Tell me what the conditions were when you arrived at Camp John Hay? Can you describe the camp?

N. Kuttner: Camp John Hay is really an absolutely stunning, beautiful camp and if you could cross the parade ground, if you weren't fenced off, you could see rolling mountain ranges. Of course, we were behind barbed wire, behind a fence. I guess this had been used by the Americans to intern some Japanese right after the bombing, and now it was about face, and they put us in the same place.

There were two or three buildings of single story barracks. It's funny, but I can't remember if there were two or three, because I was always in the first one where the women were kept. And there were Chinese taken in, because they [China and Japan] were at that time at war, and they were put in another barracks. It's a little hard to describe.

There were two or three single stories...in a row. Maybe there were just two. Did anybody else remember? Anyway, there were tennis courts at one end and the fence was close to the building so you didn't have a lot of grounds to roam around on. I mean, there was a walk in front of the building, then there was a fence and the guardhouse outside of the fence. And this building had a large room with a big veranda, and running from one end to the other and on the back of it were the dining hall and the rest rooms.

As I recall, it seemed...that when we first went there everybody, not the Chinese, but all the rest of us were in the one building packed like sardines sleeping on the floor. If you were lucky enough to be strong enough to carry a pad with you, you had a pad to lie on, otherwise you slept on the floor, which fortunately was wood and not cement.

R. Ream: Now did you sleep with your family at this point?

N. Kuttner: At the beginning, I have a feeling the men were at one end and the women and [children at] the other end. That's my best recollection. I may not have been exactly with the family; I was in the general vicinity. I remember sleeping with the Chinese amah that came with Beulah's family...for awhile, and I was delegated to sleep with her and she didn't want to have head to head, so it was head to foot. So I slept with my head at the Chinese amah's feet and she slept with a coffee can under her head as a pillow (laughter). But anyway, it was extremely crowded and to those of us who were used to living in some degree of luxury, and some in more luxury than we had, it was a real comedown. But people still had a sense of humor, somebody put up a little poem out on the wall, tacked it up, and said:

> Tinkle, tinkle little can,
> Friend of child and lazy man,
> How I wish they'd put a ban,
> On that midnight tinkle can.

But after awhile the men were moved to the adjoining barracks, and we had a better chance to spread out. My guess is they probably put the people with the little children separate, because the kids were up in the middle of the night and noisier. A lot of people without children didn't want to be near them, so they probably put them in one area, and those of us who were older in another one.

R. Ream: Remind me again how old you were.

N. Kuttner: I was fifteen at the time...My mother and sisters and my brother, too, because he was still young, ...stayed with the women in the women's dorm. They were across the hall, which is like four feet of floor, and I slept with Jane Gilbert, who was a sixth grade school teacher and very dear friend of my mother's. She and I shared a [twin bed] pad that she happened to have, which was convenient. And she snored; she's a dear lady, a very good friend of my mother's...

R. Ream: Did you ever try turning her onto her side when she started snoring (laughter).

N. Kuttner: No, I was a polite little girl, I never spoke up to people.

R. Ream: Something I should have asked you earlier. Any idea how old your parents were at that time as the war began?

N. Kuttner: Well, I always had to add my age to theirs. I guess my mother was forty-four, forty-five and my dad would have been fifty.

R. Ream: And tell me the ages of your sisters, starting with Katie.

N. Kuttner: Katie was twelve, Sally nine, John seven, I think, give or take a few months.

R. Ream: When you arrived at the camp, who greeted you and was it a civil greeting? Who was there to show you what to do?

N. Kuttner: Well, I don't remember particularly...At that time our commandant was Nakamura, who had worked as I understood it, for Mr. Herold, who had a lumber mill in town. Mr. Herold kind of fell into leadership and my guess is he probably kind of organized it with Nakamura. But nobody said how-do-you-do and so on.

But I do recall that they did have...a station where everybody was to turn in money and that sort of thing. You had a very small amount that you could keep in accounting. My guess is they probably used it to buy food with or something. The Japanese wanted all this stuff turned in to them.

R. Ream: Were there any threats made to you or to your family?

N. Kuttner: I don't recall any, but we were told the rules and men [were to] stay away from the women and no commingling, except on Sunday evenings for an hour in the evening. And you could walk out and walk around if it was a family member. You couldn't go out with a boyfriend or anything like that.

R. Ream: What did commingling mean?

N. Kuttner: Commingling meant just to talk with or visit, or anything like that. You were supposed to have nothing to do with the members of the opposite sex.

R. Ream: So that husbands and wives were separated, except for this short period of time?

N. Kuttner: Yes.

R. Ream: Is there anything else you recall about the housing conditions at Camp John Hay only.

N. Kuttner: Well, it was just a big barracks with no privacy whatsoever, sleeping [was] on the floor with or without a pad.

R. Ream: Was that the entire time you were there?

N. Kuttner: In Camp John Hay, yes.

R. Ream: How long would you estimate that you were at Camp John Hay?

N. Kuttner: About four months.

R. Ream: From when to when, because I failed to ask when you were sent from the assembly center?

N. Kuttner: I believe it was December 28th [1941]--that's the date I've been telling everybody all these years--that we went to Brent School and a couple days later we went to Camp John Hay.

R. Ream: So that you were there from approximately the end of December [1941] to would you say early spring?

N. Kuttner: April, something like that.

R. Ream: So that first Christmas after Pearl Harbor were you in your home?

N. Kuttner: We were at home for Christmas.

R. Ream: Do you remember anything about that Christmas?

N. Kuttner: Nothing in particular. I think we gave the servants their usual thing, which was a few yards of material to make dresses out of and I can't remember anything else. We were fairly casual about holidays.[4]

R. Ream: Let's discuss the food situation again at Camp John Hay.

N. Kuttner: There was not much food. It was very, very little. I don't know where it came from at first. Of course, we had to get our own internee group organized to have some kind of power, so to speak.

R. Ream: So this was a central mess hall?

N. Kuttner: It was a central mess hall. Some people had brought little things with them, you know, the people like us who had been told to be prepared for a weekend. But we had a central mess. I worked as one of the waitresses to dish out what little we had; it was really very little. For lunch we may have a radish. I remember it [food] was so tight that I was baby sitting with my cousin Lee Allen, because my Aunt Beulah being a doctor was always at the hospital working. I remember sitting there with Lee Allen, who was turning his nose up at the food, and saying "you have to eat, you're going to sit here until you eat," because I knew how critical it was. The word got back to Aunt Beulah and there was a new babysitter, because I was coming down too hard on Lee. I didn't think it was right; I knew that he had to eat, because there just wasn't anything there and our stomachs were really, really painful from hunger during that period of time.

R. Ream: Was there any illness or disease as a result of poor diet or sanitation?

N. Kuttner: I don't know about the diet, I would say sanitation. There was a period of time when our water was off due to some kind of damage to the water supply. It isn't that they went out and turned a valve, the water supply was damaged. They brought in enough for us to have a very small amount...[probably a cupful two times a day]...and that was to last us. This happened several days in a row and we were in really dehydrated shape. Naturally the toilets wouldn't flush and so the men built a latrine out at the side--dug a trench--and for seats they got the supports that the fire buckets were on on the porch of the barracks and they put those [over the trench] and that's where you would sit.

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[4] Nora later added, "We observed holidays simply with a Christmas tree and modest gifts within the family. Pop's boss, Hank Marsman always sent over lovely things for us kids."

R. Ream: They were the right size were they?

N. Kuttner: They were the right size round holes. And they had a divider between the men's and women's, but of course not drinking much water you didn't have to use it. I mean I'd go once a day in the evening, and I'd always go after dark, because the boys would go and stand on the other side and peek over and yell at you. They were really naughty. But anyway, it's very likely because of the lack of water that we may have had dysentery cases. I can't say for a fact, because at that time I wasn't working in the hospital yet. My guess is that it could have contributed to it.

R. Ream: I'd like to discuss with you any camp organization. Was everything organized by the Japanese or did the internees have their own organization at this point?

N. Kuttner: The internees set up their own government. The Japanese had their basic rules and we took it on ourselves to do it. Mr. Herold was the one who organized it at first, and it was a good thing. His knowing Nakamura,...Nakamura knew his personality...and was able to do the best by the camp. He [Herold] knew how much he could push him and they had to organize kitchen crews, cleaning crews, all of that. So we had our own camp government, but it wasn't elected at this point. As far as I can recall it was volunteer.

R. Ream: Did each adult and child have a role?

N. Kuttner: Well, at this time we weren't terribly organized, but everybody was supposed to do something. Camp John Hay was small in size, same number of people, but we didn't have to go out and cut our firewood or anything. We had to get kitchen crew for which you had volunteers, like as not they were people who wanted to be close to the food, so there was some advantage there.

Someone had to organize the bathroom facilities; my mother was the one who took charge of the bathroom detail. Because of her background as a nurse she set up standards of sanitation to help keep disease down and distribute what little toilet paper there was. So whenever anyone went in [to the bathroom] they were given the amount that the committee thought they needed for what they were going to do. They had people who would run around and pick up trash and rake up what little grounds there were.

Because the women had to work, women with little babies, teenagers like me were supposed to also find a child to babysit with. There was another reason we had to do it, that is because Mr. Herold was asked by the Japanese to get some young girls to go down to the Pines Hotel [in Baguio] and be hostesses at the Officers' Club. Well this sounded pretty dangerous, so he said, "Well you know you get the women so busy that we have to have someone to take care of the kids and if you want your old job back after the war, and the war isn't going to last forever, you'll forget this idea." So they forgot the idea, but in the meantime I had to babysit. I took care of a little girl for awhile that was the daughter of the British Vice-Consul, little Penny something-or-other (can't remember her name). But I really didn't warm to babysitting or childcare. I was much happier when I went on the ground cleaning-up with Mrs. Simpkins at Camp John Hay.

R. Ream: Did your father have a role in this camp?

N. Kuttner: I don't recall what my dad did in Camp John Hay. It was pretty hard, because...[men] couldn't talk to...[their] families except one hour...[once a week on Sunday] evening. I mean you could talk to them across the space of ten feet, if you were husband or wife, or if you had business with each other. And one time when this principle was violated, one young kid (a young high school boy), who was dating a girl before the war wanted to talk to her and he got his ears cuffed and [that] broke his eardrums. You just didn't visit with a member of the opposite sex. I pretty much did my own thing, I don't know what my dad was doing. Of course, being the kind of person he was he must have been doing something in the handy-man type of thing.

R. Ream: Did your mother have any other role or was she strictly in charge of the sanitation or on the sanitation committee?

N. Kuttner: As far as I can recall that was it there.

R. Ream: Did either Katie or Sally have a job?

N. Kuttner: I don't remember what they did, they were little kid sisters (laughter), I don't know that I was paying them that much attention.

R. Ream: Did school start for you?

N. Kuttner: There was no school there. We spent most of the time lying around and feeling hungry, maybe playing solitaire and battle, playing cards with the kids who brought in decks of cards, reading. If anybody had any books we'd trade them around.

R. Ream: Were there any social activities?

N. Kuttner: Not there, other than what you did on your own, like sit out and talk on the porch. Not with me anyway.

R. Ream: I would like to have you comment on the treatment by the guards. Were they civilian guards?

N. Kuttner: I think the guards were military; the civilians were--Nakamura was the civilian in charge. I think the ones that walked up and down with bayonets were military.

R. Ream: Were there any threats against you?

N. Kuttner: Not me personally, other than that invitation to go to the Pines Hotel. But there were others.

R. Ream: Do you recall any incidents?

N. Kuttner: Yes, I remember three missionary men that were taken out and given the water cure and other tortures and one of them was killed by the water cure, Reverend Gray, twenty six years old.

R. Ream: Do you know for what reason they were treated in that manner?

N. Kuttner: No, I don't. Somewhere I'd heard it, but I've forgotten it. Why they picked those particular three men I don't know, but they were missionaries.

R. Ream: Were the women ever in danger from the Japanese guards at this camp?

N. Kuttner: Well, not that I know of, but I think the women tried to keep a low profile. You didn't run around with a lot of makeup or provocative looking clothes and things, because it was a fear that everybody had.

R. Ream: You did say that Aunt Beulah was a doctor and she was in Camp John Hay with her son, Lee. Did she remain in Camp John Hay through the four months or so that you were there?

N. Kuttner: Yes she did. She worked at the camp hospital which was across the parade ground. They had to go out of the gate to a building across the parade ground. She was there most of the day as a doctor. She delivered the first baby born in camp to Isabelle Scott, who named it John Hay Scott.

R. Ream: Was he at the reunion [held early August 1989 in southern California]?

N. Kuttner: No, he wasn't. And she died about two weeks ago.

R. Ream: Are there any other memories of Camp John Hay that you would like to share with me?

N. Kuttner: You mean personal memories, little things like Delphine Greenbaum getting a pair of some boxing gloves somewhere (laughs)?

R. Ream: Anything. This is your chance, but I would like you to keep it at Camp John Hay.

N. Kuttner: Delphine was a tomboy and she was there without her parents. She was a boarder at the [Brent] school and one day she got some boxing gloves and she decided that we were going to have a go at each other. I didn't want to do it, but we went a minute or two. I just couldn't believe her, honestly (laugh). She was a cross to bear in many ways.

R. Ream: It must have been difficult for her being away from her parents.

N. Kuttner: Actually, Delphine said that she preferred camp, because she never did get along with her father and stepmother, anyway. She was much happier in camp--I wouldn't say she was happy at Camp John Hay necessarily, because it was new to her and she hadn't found all the people who were her surrogate parents.

R. Ream: Who, primarily, looked after her at this camp or was she strictly on her own?

N. Kuttner: She was pretty much on her own I would say, she may have hung around with some of the Brent School people, but as camp went on into the years her friendships branched out.

Delphine was the girl that had lost her two front teeth in a tennis accident and the facings had fallen off her bridge--it was later at Camp Holmes that my dad made new facings out of a soup bone for Delphine.

R. Ream: Anything else stand out in your mind, any person? How was your mother adjusting to camp life?

N. Kuttner: I don't know, I just live life as it comes and I don't believe I even talked to her [about that]. Now that I've grown up it would have been interesting to talk her and some of the other people to see how they coped with the fears and the worries and everything.

R. Ream: Now your parents were older parents and their world was knocked out from underneath them. It's sad that we don't know how they felt--what they were going through at that time. Any clue, having talked with your mother, perhaps, in later years?

N. Kuttner: My mother always used to say that she always kept her mind on the potatoes she was peeling and I imagine she did the best that she could do day in and day out and not go crazy with...I mean I can imagine she would be worried, because you don't know what's happening.

R. Ream: Was your father the same kind of person?

N. Kuttner: I would say he is. Make the best of a situation, however, how can you be in something like that and not worry?

R. Ream: They had a tremendous responsibility with four children and they couldn't provide for you. It must have been very difficult.

N. Kuttner: That's right.

R. Ream: Now it's spring of 1942 and a decision is made to send you to another camp. Where was that camp located?

N. Kuttner: It was at the far end of Trinidad Valley, which is the vegetable growing capital, you might say, of the Philippines. It had a lot of truck gardens down there and it was a constabulary camp. Trinidad Valley was on the outskirts of Baguio, and it was fairly far. I don't remember the move at all, but I think it had to have been on a truck, because it wasn't walking distance.

R. Ream: What was the name of the camp?

N. Kuttner: It was Camp Holmes--Camp Holmes Constabulary Camp or something, and it became Camp Holmes Internment Camp Number 3 or something like that. Japanese Internment Camp--Camp Holmes?

Anyway, it was situated out in hilly country right next to the Mountain Road, which goes up farther into the mountains. It had a big parade ground out in front and a single story barracks and two double-story barracks [one of which was] occupied

Interview with Nora Ream Kuttner, Interview I
Date of Interview: November 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 2, Side 1

N. Kuttner: (continued) by the Chinese [civilian prisoners of war], who a few months later were released into the community, and that barracks then became the men's barracks.

The middle two story barracks was the barracks that had the women with children upstairs, and downstairs had the dining hall with the kitchen. Then the single story barracks was for women without little children, although one room at one end was occupied by my mother and her children, except me. I lived out with the older people, just through the wall in the main part of the building--the Grahams, the Woodsons and the Crouters [also occupied the end room with ma and three of her children].

There was also a little room [in that building] that was used for a doctor's office for a little dispensary. [At] the other end of that [building] was a room called 606, which is where the Army VD patients were before the war, and this became the "society" room--all the young women--the exclusive club, you might say, the ones that were gorgeous and put makeup on and everything else. Each one of these barracks had its own bathroom facilities off of the back.

Also, we had a building that probably had been officers' quarters before and it was used for a camp hospital--down the hill a little ways, a few steps away. And then there was another officers' quarters that was used as a guard house.

At the far end of the parade ground was a little shop building where pop spent the whole day fixing things. And from the edge of the parade ground you could look across rolling mountain ranges and fifteen to seventeen miles away, as the crow flies, was Lingayen Gulf. You couldn't really see it, but later in the war when the American bombers came, it was great to have that picture window, so to speak.

Across the parade ground on the other side from the view was a hill that went up (not too huge a hill) but they started clearing that part away.

The edge of it had a section that was our graveyard--as people died they put them there. And there was wood to be cut up the hill, where we got our firewood and a big rock outcropping (this big stone face) it was kind of a marker. I don't believe there was a fence up on the hill, but the guards could see it. I never went there, because I didn't want to be caught out of the way. The camp was surrounded on three sides with a barbed wire fence. In fact at some points there were two barbed wire fences with a no-man's land in between.

R. Ream: Tell me about the administration of the camp--the Japanese administration of the camp. What can you tell me about that?

N. Kuttner: The Japanese had a mixture of civilians and military down at the guard house. I can remember some of the civilians like Hayakawa, who worked at the photo studio in town, and Suda, who worked at the photo studio, and the commandant was generally military after Nakamura left (Nakamura being the carpenter that worked for Mr. Herold). There was Lieutenant Oura, Mr. Tomibe who came before Oura, I believe, and then the guards were all military. I think some of them were probably Formosan, not always Japanese. But they left the running of the camp to our committee.

R. Ream: Tell me about the committee.

N. Kuttner: Our committee eventually, I can't tell you exactly when, became an elected committee...I can't remember how many men [were] on it, and it was men at first. They only...allowed men to vote for much of the time. There was the chairman of the committee. We had a finance officer, he was the one who would go down with the grocery detail to town and get the food supplies. I don't remember who all we had; we had several people on the committee, though I don't remember what their departments were.

R. Ream: You don't remember generally how the camp was organized, whether there was sanitation, mess hall...?

N. Kuttner: We had different work details. We had a kitchen detail and the hospital of course, they were the people who were higher up the social ladder, because they had more access to food, I guess you might say. Alex Kaluzhny ran the kitchen detail. ...One end of the middle barracks where they had the women and children...they had this big Army kitchen with huge cauldrons and cooking utensils, pots and things. [There were] the dishwashing crew and the people that served the food. At the hospital [there were] the doctors and the nurses and aides. And you had the food preparation, which my mother was in charge of after she resigned from the bathroom detail. I can't remember, it might have been Mrs. Little who took that one [the bathroom detail] over. But my mother set up the standards which they followed the whole time.

Then mom became the head of vegetable preparation for the remainder of the camp. Imagine being in charge of fixing vegetables for 500 people every day of the week.[5] Maybe Mrs. Little was in charge of the rice. We had the rice detail that would sort the rice and get all the stones and bugs, or weevils out of the rice. They'd sit at the tables and put little piles in front of them and pass all the grains in front of them and pick out all of the bad stuff.

R. Ream: So that was always done manually?

N. Kuttner: Manually, until two-thirds of the way through [the war] my dad developed a little rice sorting machine. They would pass the rice along and it had little zig-zag strips of metal on top of this shaking table and everything that went down this slightly sloped table, that was shaken down, would go into a reject or accept bin. Based on a shaking table used in the mining industry.

We had a wood crew, they would get out of camp and then they would dress in G-strings to save their clothes--what few clothes they had. They would cut wood which was burned in the stoves for cooking food, not for heat. We had no heat, even though Baguio has a rather cool climate, sometimes quite cold.

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[5] Nora remembered this after the interview: According to the interpreter, Nellie McKim, Ruth Ream, Nora's mother, was the woman the Japanese respected most in the camp. They could see her dutifully taking her husband's lunch to him at the shop him everyday. Many women in camp kept their husbands busy with domestic duties, which was not admired in the Japanese culture.

The garbage crew would haul out the garbage to a dump everyday. I'm very impressed, when I look at how much garbage we throw out every week, I think the 500 people in camp had about that much every day--three or four cans--I mean everything was used to the bitter end.

R. Ream: What happened to the garbage?

N. Kuttner: I think they must have taken it to a dump. I should know because David Bergamini was on that crew. Whenever he wanted to get a gardenia for me, he would go out and pick one off a bush along the way.

R. Ream: Tell me about your father's role in camp.

N. Kuttner: My dad was in charge of the--I haven't finished all the work details--my dad was in charge of the shop. He spent almost all day out there, so he wouldn't have to be around the hordes of people, I think. Plus he liked to be creative. He had a little forge and a few tools. It was a little tin building at the end of the parade ground, just across the road from the guardhouse out by the flag pole. He had a few men out there like Doc Skerl and Mr. Lenze that puttered around. Kids would come out and work on little projects. And he kept the equipment in camp in working order, like all the kitchen pots and pans and kettles and equipment. He made wooden shoes, and when people's shoes wore out, he'd make wooden shoes using old fire hoses for straps to go over the toes.

You want more on the shop or shall I go onto some of the other crews?

R. Ream: Yeah, anything you can remember about the shop and your father's activities...now this is strictly at Camp Holmes.

N. Kuttner: Pop being very handy, there were no end to the things he made. He made a peanut butter machine to grind peanuts. He made a banana machine, so there would be no favoritism in distributing the bananas--there were so many different sizes. The man that stood there, Mr. Smeddle, would just crank a handle and the bananas would just fall out randomly and they came out of this--well it was based like on a mill wheel. He never knew who was coming through the door, so he couldn't save the big fat ones for his friends.

Well, what else, [he] fixed things and he made jewelry, buttons out of coconut shells.

R. Ream: Did he make anything for the family?

N. Kuttner: Eating utensils, plates and things like that--I think he made a tea kettle, didn't he? He made a tea kettle, which unfortunately we lost at the very end.

R. Ream: What did he make that from?

N. Kuttner: I believe it was copper, I don't know what it started out being. He made false teeth out of an aluminum kettle with a little technical advice from Dr. Walker, our only camp dentist. And he wore those teeth--he made them in, my guess is 1943 or something, because I remember him drinking coffee from the Red Cross packages...at the end of 1943--how hot they were when he drank hot liquids. But he wore them and every time they needed a little adjustment he would take them out and adjust with his pocketknife, because aluminum is soft metal. I would have to meditate to remember how many different things he made.

R. Ream: Do you know how he made those teeth?

N. Kuttner: Somewhere I've written it down, so I wouldn't have to remember. He got some plasterboard and baked the water out and made it into powder, which he used as the material for making the mold. I don't know how he got the impression. But, anyway, he melted down the aluminum kettle and swung the molten metal around at the end of a rope (centrifugal force for the molten metal to go into the mold that he had made). It took a couple of attempts before he got one that worked. I guess in many ways pop was really in his element, because he really was an extremely inventive person to make things from practically nothing. He was very resourceful.

R. Ream: Did he do any work for the Japanese guards and administrators?

N. Kuttner: Off and off they would bring things. As a matter of fact in my book of souvenirs I have a note written to him by a soldier where he had repaired his spectacles for the soldier. The soldier brought a note that said something to the effect, "please repair these spectacles for this soldier" and so on in very poor English. I have that note, yet. One repair job, maybe that was the one, he was given a little tiny pork roast by the soldier as a gift for doing it. So he had a reputation out there in the guardhouse as being handy. I can't remember what else he might have fixed.

R. Ream: Do you remember anything else about any of the other workshops or work details?

N. Kuttner: We had a shoe repair shop, that was Johnny McCuish who ran that. He resoled shoes with pieces of old fire hose. We had people that cleaned the grounds, then the bathroom detail of course. After the schools started we had teachers. Sid Burnett pretty much ran the entertainment program. He kept things going on Saturday night. Everybody was expected to do some kind of work.

R. Ream: What was your role?

N. Kuttner: Well, when I wasn't going to school--school exempted you, supposedly--you'd have your class time and then your homework. During the holidays and after I graduated I worked as a nurse's aide in the hospital. I always helped my mother when she needed help out there...if she was shorthanded.

R. Ream: That was with the vegetables?

N. Kuttner: With the vegetable. I helped in the bathroom when she was in the bathroom details, but then I went to vegetables when she needed me.

One detail was a one-man detail and that was to ring the gong to call people to meals--first call, second call, last call. But another thing the gong man did, that was Renton Hind, was to put out a call for vegetable workers or rice pickers, when they needed the people, he would walk up and down and ring the bell. If you had any time or if you were on those details you were expected to show up. Nobody said you had to or kept track of how much time you put in, but everybody was supposed to do something. There were a few people that didn't do anything and they were really looked down on and talked about and not respected because they didn't pull their own weight. Though mainly they were women with children.

R. Ream: Were they expected to work?

N. Kuttner: Yes, they were expected to work, too. There were other things they could have done, like rake leaves or something like that and the kids could have been with them.

R. Ream: Describe the sanitary facilities.

N. Kuttner: Well, in this camp [Camp Holmes] we had regular flush toilets in the bathrooms, just...open like you would have in an Army camp [with no full partitions] and open showers...but in the women's middle barracks they had some kind of a screen up, so that you could bathe behind it. The water was cold. The other bathroom [for the single story building was] an out building with old fashion pull chain toilets and a shower room.

Now if you wanted a hot bath, which you very often wanted because it was so cold, you could take over a tin like a five gallon gasoline can and the men at the shop would put wooden handles on, so that you would have something to hold it with. [You would] take it to the kitchen at night where they had boiling water and they could fill it half full with boiling water, carry it back to your barracks bathroom and cool it off. Then you'd have a tub of water to take a bath with.

One time we had a water shortage when we got there. In one barracks we had collected rain water to drink. I don't know where the water from the faucet came from, whether it was from some cistern on the hill, or whether it was totally rainwater or if we had a pump or not. We had a severe water shortage and they put buckets under the taps. The wash basins were on the outside of this bathroom building--you know a big community wash basin--underneath they would put fire buckets. You would take a little dribble and brush your teeth in the dribble, spit in the bucket, and wash your hands in the dribble and it would go into the bucket. When the buckets were like two-thirds full the bathroom detail would put those in line in the bathroom to use for flushing the toilets. The toilets got flushed only when it was important to flush the toilets. It was really critical there for a long time, but we did eventually have enough so that we could be more normal.

R. Ream: Did you always have toilet paper, for instance, and soap?

N. Kuttner: No we didn't. Toilet paper was at a premium. A lot of people ran out early on. We were in an army camp, so we had a lot of invoices to use and old newspapers. We didn't have newspaper delivery, so I don't know where they came from. They were just old papers lying around and you cut them up in squares and rubbed them between your hands to soften them. Of course, your hands got black from the newsprint. As time wore on the paper got smaller, and a lot of people went to their personal little rags, which they would wash and hang on a bush outside--toilet cloths.

Soap. There was some native soap. There was a time when we could get a little stuff from the camp stores. The native soap was really strong, really full of lye and that's what we brushed our teeth with by the way. It was just awful to brush your teeth with soap. I must have had a toothbrush last the whole time, because I sure don't remember being able to buy any toothbrushes; it must have been very flat looking (laughter).[6]

R. Ream: Describe for me the food situation. I think when we talked about the kitchen we didn't discuss what the meals were like. Did you get three meals a day?

N. Kuttner: We got three meals a day. Meals depended a whole lot on how the war was going for the Japanese. You have to remember that the Islands were occupied by a big invasion army, which also used up a lot of food. I guess by the time the war was over almost 90 percent of the livestock was slaughtered and before the war they had to import rice from Burma to supplement what they grew.

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[6] Nora later added that, "At the time of our liberation our teeth were really dark gray from lack of proper care and attention. We were so very impressed with the soldier's white teeth."

That was before the war. So in comes an invading army and they have to feed the natives, the army and the Americans.

There really wasn't a whole lot of food to be had. Of course the Japanese were on a budget with everything concerning us. They didn't see why we needed so much food. How much there was varied according to the way the war was going for the Japanese.

Our food for a typical breakfast would be a choice of soft rice or hard rice. Rice that's cooked dry the way we know it or cooked mushy and with maybe a little tablespoon of brown sugar syrup made from panoche balls. The Philippines does grow sugar cane, so there was sugar available and panoche was made in coconut shells. If you ever melted it down you would be astonished and your appetite ruined by the junk that's in the panoche like flies and crud (laughs). I mean if you ever melted it down you would strain it, it's awful. We'd have a spoon of that and then coffee. Baguio was also a coffee growing area and if we were lucky we had coffee. We would use the grounds over two or three days after that and have progressively weaker coffee; it would be called first submarine, second submarine, third submarine and then hot water. They used the grounds that were used up and throw them on the floor in the dining hall and clean the floors by using push brooms and they would clean. I don't why it does, but it does it, and it takes up all the dirt with it.

At lunch they might have a piece of cornbread and that type of meal. For dinner maybe some vegetables and rice and a little meat dish. Now it's not like you have a steak. You have very little meat. You might have a scotch pie, which would have a few hunks in using sweet potato as a cover. To show you how much meat we got, like one time they brought in 65 pounds of fish to feed 500 people and by the time it passed the "sniff" test only 15 pounds were not too rotten to eat, but some of it must have been rotten, because everybody was up half the night running to the bathroom with ptomaine poisoning. We had quite a few vegetables; I don't like a lot of them to this day like chayote, sitao beans, gabi (stuff you make poi out of, it's really not exciting), okra (I hate okra, they didn't make it very well and it was slimy). But we were lucky to have vegetables that we had being so close to Trinidad Valley.

If people were lucky enough to be able to supplement from packages that the Filipinos could send in...at times they might get just minimal food. You were hungry, every meal you were ready for food. But we had bananas at times for breakfast.

R. Ream: Any health problems because of sanitation or diet?

N. Kuttner: A lot of people got dysentery. I got a form of hepatitis that was caused from bad sanitation, not the horrible kind [of hepatitis]. In fact I went to the hospital with that for six days.

R. Ream: In camp?

N. Kuttner: Yeah, I had a fever and I was walking down to the bathroom, which is this out building and I passed out. Next thing I knew I was on a stretcher going down to the hospital. My eyes were yellow. It used to be fun to roll my eyes and show my elbows to the kids and they'd scream (laughter. I was terrible. Oh yes, it was fun.

R. Ream: Any other illnesses in your family as a result of diet or sanitation?

N. Kuttner: I don't know if the other kids got dysentery. I never had dysentery and I'll tell you why. When my little brother died and I was four; he was two and a half. He died of dysentery and one day he was there and the next day he wasn't. I said to my mother, "Well, what happened to Billy?" She said, "A fly landed on his mashed potatoes and he got dysentery and he died." I never to this day eat anything that a fly has been on. I really am very careful. I take a lettuce leaf or whatever and throw it out--that's the reason I'm almost neurotic about it, eating anything with flies. And the hepatitis--it could have been food handlers or whatever, but this is why I always wash my hands before I fix meals, after going to the bathroom, everytime before I eat. I think some of the nutritional problems beri beri and everything didn't happen until the end of camp in general, because it was really bad then.

R. Ream: Was your Aunt Beulah still in camp with you?

N. Kuttner: Aunt Beulah was in camp for a period of time. I think she had Hendy July 4, 1942 and it was a few months after that that she arranged to be moved to Santo Tomas, and Dr. Nance moved to Los Banos. There had been some kind of a rivalry there.

R. Ream: So Dr. Nance did not stay in the camp?

N. Kuttner: Dr. Nance, no he didn't stay. He was in Los Banos.

Interview with Nora Ream Kuttner, Interview I
Date of Interview: November 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 2, Side 2

R. Ream: Let me ask you something. I want to talk to you about Aunt Beulah, actually, about your parents feelings. Now here is Beulah and she has two very small sons, Lee, who was born before the war, and Hendy, who was born during the war and has never been seen by his father at this point. Aunt Beulah was a dear friend of your mother's and a dear sister to your father. Do you have any idea how they felt when they saw her leaving this camp with her two small children, going down to San Tomas, quite a distance from where you were? Did they ever discuss their feelings of that moment with you?

N. Kuttner: No, they never did. My feeling would be that Aunt Beulah was such a self-sufficient woman, I don't know that they had that fear. Also, she was respected a whole lot by the Japanese; they respected her for being a doctor. I think if there would be someone to be confident of it would be her, but they never discussed it with me at all.

R. Ream: Let's discuss education. Your schooling had been interrupted by the war. The four months that you were in Camp John Hay there was no schooling. Was there school in Camp Holmes, and if so would you describe the school activities for me?

N. Kuttner: When we first went into camp we had no idea how long we were going to be there. In fact many of us thought we would be out momentarily. I slept with my clothes actually for months, thinking we would be saved one of these days soon. And when everyone could see the writing on the wall, that this was not going to happen, they felt that our education should continue. The committee approached the Japanese and asked if they could continue our school. And they [Japanese] said we could provided we didn't teach history or geography and we had to take Japanese--the Japanese language.

So they set up a school. Somebody went out and got some books from the community. There were not enough books to go around, but we shared them. They set up everything from elementary through high school. [For a time]...we were in the building that the guardhouse eventually was put into--for the high school part. The grade school was in the building up there by the...[single story barracks].

We had some of the same teachers from Brent School, who were brought in, and others were missionaries and businessmen or people from the community, who had specialties. We had a German teacher who was a missionary. I had a chemistry teacher who graduated from the Colorado School of Mines, and a physics teacher who worked as an engineer for General Electric and so on.

Our classes were very small, which was wonderful. We had virtually a tutorial program and we got to know the teachers very well. We had homework. We had to pass the books around to get our assignments done. There was study hall every night for people whose grades were not over the average. But if your grades were over B you went anyway, because it was a good place to get the homework done. We had languages; we had German, Spanish--I can't remember if there was a Latin class, if there was I didn't take it. Japanese...

R. Ream: What language did you take?

N. Kuttner: I took German and Spanish. I took German thinking it would be more useful to me than Japanese, but actually it wasn't too useful in balance, it was a waste of time. English--I had a wonderful English class [that] Father Gowen taught. Three years of my English was creative writing; we did everything from novelettes to Shakespearian Sonnets, catty letters, one-act plays. The catty letter was just a one shot thing.

R. Ream: What's a catty letter?

N. Kuttner: Well, it was just a lark. One time he said everybody write a letter to somebody that would be not favorable and write it in a clever way--kind of the Miss Manners way of writing, instead of being heavy handed, but that was only one time. We read Julius Caesar over and over for lack of books. We had a small library there, which--let me get to that after I describe the rest of the courses. We had two years of algebra and geometry and trig[onometry]. We taught history, ancient, modern, European and American and we taught it calling it biography. It was strictly a lecture course. And geography was called composition.

R. Ream: Why was that?

N. Kuttner: Because we were forbidden to teach history and geography; we taught it by lecture and gave it another name. Let's see--math and sciences--we had chemistry and physics, general science and biology. What is there besides language and English? And in our English Department we occasionally would put on plays, which we produced for the whole camp--one-act plays. We did "Our Town." It was a three-act play. Oh, and we had chorus, which was wonderful fun. All the girls had a crush on Mr. Dirks (laughs), including myself, I guess.

R. Ream: Who was Mr. Dirks?

N. Kuttner: Mr. Dirks, Marvin Dirks, was a missionary, who was a musical person and he had the choirs and the choruses, trios, quartets and so on.

But back to the library--they got some books in. I don't recall if it was from schools or the army camp or what. It was set up in a little, small out building and Lucy Vincent was our librarian. Everybody read. Those books must have been worn out. I read Don Quixote--there is an exhausting project. In fact I went to Father Gowen--and it wasn't required--I said, "You know, I'm going to read Don Quixote." He said, "Well if you read it, I'll give you an A for the grading period." So I went back to him--I had skipped a chapter on arms, it was so boring--but my conscience was getting me, so at the end of the book I went back and re-read that chapter. Then I went to Father Gowen and told him that I'd finished the book, a thousand tissue paper pages or something like that, and he took out his grading book and wrote down an A for that six weeks period for me, which was nice, he trusted me.

R. Ream: He did not ask you any questions?

N. Kuttner: He asked me no questions or anything; he knew I was an honest person.

R. Ream: He didn't even say, "Who was Sancho Panza (laughter) just to be sure?"

N. Kuttner: Right.

R. Ream: What grade did you start in?

N. Kuttner: I was a sophomore when we got there and I graduated in 1944. It was getting pretty hard towards the end of the war. Food was so scarce I could hardly concentrate, but I made it through and got a diploma. It was signed by Father Gowen and our committee head. We had an interesting little ceremony. There were just three of us. I was valedictorian, Billie Dosser came in second, no wait a minute--maybe it was Donald Mansell--all I know is I was first (laughs). Anyway, Mr. Suda came and said that he would like to do a samurai dance for us at our graduation, so he did a samurai dance.

R. Ream: Tell me who Mr. Suda was?

N. Kuttner: Mr. Suda was one of the Japanese civilians, who I think had worked at the photo studio or some place downtown in Baguio. He had known us kids back before the war. And he wanted to participate in it.

Now the afternoon before the ceremony, I thought it would be nice to have a corsage and I noticed some orange canna lilies that were growing outside the fence. And a guard was patrolling outside the fence with a face mask, so he wouldn't catch any germs from us, I guess. I beckoned to him and pointed to the flowers and he took his bayonet and whacked them off and gave it to me, so Billie and I each had a little corsage.

R. Ream: So Billie was a girl?

N. Kuttner: Billie Dosser, Ann Dosser was a girl.

To go around the diploma my dad made a little ball and chain in lieu of a ribbon. And the chain was made out of the back of a tortoise and silver comb that somebody contributed for the cause. He hammered it all out and made these little sections and soldered them all together. And the ball was made out of fossilized limestone--a pink ball. Then some people...[donated] some ten centavo pieces, little silver pieces, which he filed down and put "C.H.C.C." for Camp Holmes Concentration Camp and the name on the back. I still have that. That was in 1944.

Now we went from that house--we were evicted from there so the guards could use it. And part of the time we had our school in the warehouse and partly outside in the sunken garden. Then eventually they built a building of sawali, which is a native kind of matting type of thing with tin roofs, but the tin was used formerly, so it had holes in it. When it rained you got water, so people plugged it up with tar and when the roofs got hot in the sun, the tar dripped and got on the benches and in our hair (laughter). Anyway, that's where we spent the last year of our high school. So the facility does not the education make, I guess you could say that. It's who is teaching you.

R. Ream: Tell me about some other camp activities--cultural activities.

N. Kuttner: Well, let me get to the sporting life first. We had sports, that's culture. We had a baseball league, it was a male league, I have to admit. Juniors, Seniors, Miners and Missionaries [names of teams] played softball, actually. But the kids also played softball in the afternoons; Sid Burnett was the referee. I thought he was a lousy one, because I thought he favored his daughter's team all the time (laughter).

R. Ream: And you weren't on that team?

N. Kuttner: I was not on the daughter's team, I was the opposing pitcher.

Anyway, we also had in the evenings--every Saturday night we had a lecture series. Sometimes we would have a play, sometimes musical programs. We had a graphologist who analyzed handwriting and she was surprisingly accurate. We had a debate and one time the Mansells did a demonstration of tumbling and my dad gave a talk on "Sheep versus Goats," which were the miners and missionaries (laughs).

R. Ream: Did that cause dissension?

N. Kuttner: No. It didn't cause dissension, people were amused, my dad was a character. We had dance programs sometimes. As a matter of fact, it was quite enriching when I think of it. Everybody went, it was well attended.

R. Ream: Any special event--cultural event or sport activity--that stands out in your mind.

N. Kuttner: I think the production of "Our Town." The high school put it on and it was really quite well done, I guess, everybody said so. It was very moving, in fact to the extent that when it was recently on PBS Betty Foley was telling me she could hardly bear to watch it. She told herself she wasn't going to watch it, because it seemed so fitting at the time we put it on. And that's the one thing that stands out the most.

R. Ream: Did you have a role in the play?

N. Kuttner: Yeah, I was Mrs. Soames in the graveyard and in the wedding.

R. Ream: Were any of your other siblings in it?

N. Kuttner: Sally said she was in it, and she was Mrs. Gibbs[7]. She wasn't even in high school, so with a cast like that they had to get the younger kids as well.

R. Ream: Well, there probably weren't too many high school students.

N. Kuttner: No, there were about fifteen...total at the time I graduated. It was funny because, I draw a blank over who all was in the play, except for Susan Burnett, who played the lead role of Emily. Katie may well have been in it; I'll have to ask her.

Another one that I keep referring to, because I think it is so true today, but they laughed at me--we had a debate and I was on the winning team--"Resolved that the internal combustion engine is detrimental to mankind." And I still believe (laughs) it, everything that this kid predicted in 1943 or whatever (laughter) has come to pass.

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[7] Sally did not play the role of Mrs. Gibbs during internment, but she did play that role in high school in San Leandro, CA.

R. Ream: Pollution included.

N. Kuttner: Pollution and necking in the back seat (laughter).

R. Ream: I mean there's a population boom because of the back seat.

N. Kuttner: Another thing a lot of people played, they had a bridge tournament. We had cards that were used over and over again. The packs got very thick, we wiped them off carefully and put a little rice flour on to powder them, and you couldn't just run down to the Sav-on and buy yourself new cards. I used to play tournament bridge for awhile. I quit when I felt like such a--you know whenever I did anything the least bit un-perfect my partner, who was David Bergamini an absolute genius, in his loud voice would criticize me and tell me what I should have done to do better. I was self-conscious, I shouldn't have been, but I was more mousey in those days.

R. Ream: Let me digress for a minute and tell me about David Bergamini in those days. He was very special to you.

N. Kuttner: David Bergamini was the son of an Episcopalian missionary/architect, who had done the Tokyo Hospital. Frank Lloyd Wright did the hotel, so his dad did the hospital or vice versa. I think his dad did the hospital. Anyway,...they came in a little later, because they had been up in the mountains.

He was a little younger than me, which made me a little bit self-conscious. But he was the best catch and the brightest guy in camp, literally a genius. Our dates consisted of walking up and down and analyzing the constellations (laughs) and also we did our homework together. He was so brilliant, he really didn't have to do a lot of it. That's how I got over my laziness and did so well in school, was because he would study and I would have to go [to study hall] as well.

Another thing David and I did--did I mention this before--playing partners in bridge tournaments and did quite well. The grownups used to croak; they didn't like that at all. We also sometimes on a cold night, we'd stand back of the chimney where they were boiling the water in the evening for baths and we'd stand there and talk to all these old prospectors and warm our backs. It was kind of fun. We'd go to lectures together. I mean it was really exciting.

R. Ream: That wasn't considered commingling then?

N. Kuttner: No, the commingling eventually fell by the roadside within the first year. We [the internees] just took more and more liberties, we just eased off. It was probably the result of [Commandant] Tomibe's regime as much as anything, because he was more enlightened than any of the others. But...different sexes still slept in different barracks, but we could go in and eat together and play cards together, that sort of thing.

David used to bring me gardenias, when he went out on the garbage patrol. There was a bush nearby where they'd go and...and the crew would bring gardenias back. The Filipinos knowing this, if there were not enough gardenias, would pick them from somewhere else and stick them in the bush. So they'd always have some flowers to bring in.

He also made me some coconut shell jewelry. He made a bracelet and a pin of a full-sail brigantine. It took umpteen, many, many tries to get one that didn't break, and I still have those pieces today.

In many ways I feel that I treated him shabbily towards the end of the war. I broke off the friendship, which I probably shouldn't have. I mean everything was happening; it was much too exciting...I just couldn't be bothered [with keeping up the friendship].

...He didn't even finish high school in camp. He studied up and took the New York Regents [examination] when he got back to the States, passed it, went on to Dartmouth was valedictorian [of his graduating class], became a Rhodes Scholar and studied in England. Then became the science editor of "Life" magazine. He did a book on mathematics and edited "The World We Live In" for children. Wrote several of "The World We Live In" articles, I think on the Brazilian rain forest. I think when he first started he did it under someone else's name, but he did the writing. He was a brilliant person. I'd seen him a couple of times after we got back, but he died recently at age 55.

R. Ream: How did he die?

N. Kuttner: He had cancer of the bile duct, it was sad. He was a handsome guy. My mother used to call him the blonde Adonis. He had golden curly hair, not very tall, but quite athletic--good sense of humor.

R. Ream: Tell me what holidays were like in the camp.

N. Kuttner: It seems to me the only holidays I recall observing to any extent was Christmas, and I would probably say about the best Christmases I ever had were in camp, because they weren't commercial. We got up early in the morning when the stars were still out, assembled at the flagpole--those of us who were in the chorus--then...went to different places and woke everybody up with carols, including the guardhouse. And people made homemade, little cards or homemade gifts and exchanged them. Generally nobody did much of anything on Christmas Day. The kitchen crew tried to horde a little food, save up a little food, so they could put on a nice feed for us on Christmas Day. But it was low-key. And of course, church, everybody went to church because there were so many missionaries and it was a religious holiday...

R. Ream: The Japanese did not interfere, then, with the celebration of your religious holiday?

N. Kuttner: No they didn't. Could I go back to what we did culturally, too? There were a couple of other things we did before we digressed to David Bergamini. One is we played volleyball when we still had the energy. The other one is modern dance--Joan Turner, who was a dance teacher and who loved flamenco dancing particularly, was interned in our camp and she had a group of young people (girls) and put on dance recitals. We did it to like Moonlight Sonata and Kamennoi-ostrow and the pianist would be Blanche Burnett. I was in a couple of those; it was really nice. We were down in the little glade.

R. Ream: And you participated?

N. Kuttner: And I was in it.

R. Ream: Any of your sisters or brothers...?

N. Kuttner: I don't remember--not my brother (laughs). I don't remember if they did. I mean I was older after all, you know. I ignored my sisters.

R. Ream: Did you receive any packages or mail at Christmas or any other time while you were at Camp Holmes from family or others?

N. Kuttner: From the States?

R. Ream: Yes, or other family elsewhere in the Philippines. Let's start with packages.

N. Kuttner: Well, we had one package in December of 1943 around Christmas 1943. It was the only Red Cross package that we were able to get through. Any previous packages had only made it to Manila and [were] used there. But with the help of...[Mr. Tomibe] we were able to send some people down in the truck and pick up the 40 pounds [per person], I guess it was, that were due us. It was the best thing; it was probably our life saving package. You had it and you could do with it what you wanted--stretch it out or whatever. There were canned goods, even canned butter, which we thought was great but the soldiers called it axle grease. Cheese, pates, cigarettes--to people who smoked it was a godsend, for those who didn't it was good for bartering. I can't remember what else. I have a list at home that...is an inventory of all the stuff that came in the package.

As to letters, I think there were some letters from the States, like postcards, but not very often. It probably came through the Swiss Red Cross and maybe took a year to get there, I recall. I may have one or two in my scrapbook as well. We did hear from Santo Tomas. For awhile the Japanese let us have some correspondence with Santo Tomas. They had a little form which is like a 4x5 piece of paper, and, of course, everything was read and censored as were the letters from the States--the few that we got were censored. We were told that we could send them [letters] back, I don't know if any got back. It was very complicated. We...were pretty much just able to tell the people, like on the Santo Tomas exchange, that everything was okay. At the time when the Japanese allowed some of the boarding school children to go to Manila and be reunited with their families, I made a deal with my friend, Ann Miller, that when she got there she could report to me in code: like "I'm getting fat" if the news was good, or "I'm getting thin" if the news was bad.

R. Ream: This is war news?

N. Kuttner: This is war news. I mean the rumors and everything, we thought maybe they would have heard more down there and she did, she wrote she was getting fat--actually, she was a little bit (laughs), because they had more food.

R. Ream: Did you get any news of Sam, your uncle that was in the Army.

N. Kuttner: I don't recall any. Maybe Aunt Beulah or my dad and mother got it, but I personally am not aware...See one of the problems I mentioned, my mother lived in the room at the end of the hall, and then there was a wall and a door and then the main part of the barracks where other people lived. I had moved away from the family and I was living, oh, maybe fifty feet away from them, but it was separate and so I didn't see them quite as much as if I were living right there in an adjoining bunk bed. So they may not have said anything.

Interview with Nora Ream Kuttner, Interview I
Date of Interview: November 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 3, Side 1

R. Ream: Any incidents, again, about the treatment by the guards, this time at Camp Holmes. Were there any incidents involving your family of mistreatment by the guards, or good deeds towards you by the guards?

N. Kuttner: Well, no mistreatment. As far as good deeds go I would say maybe the roast my dad got in exchange for repairing the man's glasses, or whatever, that type of thing. By and large we kind of kept away, although once in awhile a guard would come into the dining hall when we were playing bridge and want to sit in on a hand or whip out his pictures of his family. There's not a whole lot you can do. That showed they were human as well, but we really tried to keep a low profile and my only experience around them, other than when they came like that...[was] roll call and they just counted noses...

R. Ream: Was the roll call daily?

N. Kuttner: Roll call was twice a day. In the morning you stood up in formation and in platoons like a horseshoe shape, and they'd come out and--want me to say what they said? "Getsket," which means attention. Then we'd all bow at the waist and say "o-ha-ya go-zai-ma-su hay-tai san," which means good morning honorable soldier. And at night they would walk down the aisles of the dormitory and you'd stand in front of your bunk. They would count you off that way.

R. Ream: What happened if you missed roll call?

N. Kuttner: You didn't miss roll call!

R. Ream: Was anyone ever missing?

N. Kuttner: Ah, yes, there were a couple of people who did escape over the hills and...when two people, Swick and Green escaped and went to join the guerrillas. What happened then was the people who lived in the cubicles near them, that they [the Japanese] suspected might have known about the plot, were taken down to headquarters and mistreated.[8] However, our family was never involved in that. The one time I had anything to do at all and it turned out not to be a bad experience--we loved to do rumors and make them up and everything--it was a fun thing to do--and so I made up a rumor. I had seen a newsreel before the war of all these amphibious vehicles down in Florida and in one of those Fox Movietone News things, so I made up this rumor that they were using amphibious vehicles in the war and we passed it around the dormitory. One day soon after I was sitting on a bench at the edge of the parade ground and the Commandant, Tomibe, came over and sat next to me and said, "How did you know about the amphibious vehicles?" I said, "Oh, I just made it up, I had seen this movie." And he took my word, and I thought my god how did he know that I said it.

R. Ream: Did he speak English?

N. Kuttner: A little bit, very broken English, but I knew what he was saying. A lot of people had worried about the information that was getting back to the guards, and there was always some speculation as to who it could have been that was taking the information back. I don't know if they ever found anybody.

R. Ream: Tell me what happened after Swick and Green escaped.

N. Kuttner: Well, you mean as a way of camp punishment or something?

R. Ream: Uh huh, because we were discussing treatment by the guards.

N. Kuttner: Well they took these people down and tortured them for awhile...Jimmy Halsema was one of those. Anyway, that was when Tomibe took personal charge of the situation; he felt they had been there long enough and saw to it that they were brought back. As a result he was demoted--or transferred up to an infantry division up in the mountains. We got Lieutenant Oura, and that's about as bad a thing as could happen to you. I mean the whole camp--there was a whole lot of screaming and everything...they scolded us that sort of thing. I don't know whether it had something to do with our food being cut down, I don't think as punishment, but our food was not raised, as we were hoping. The worse thing that could have happened was getting that Lieutenant Oura...one of the worst, he was a horrible person.

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[8] The men taken to headquarters after the escape were tortured. Nora felt that "mistreated" did not accurately describe the extent of the abuse that these civilian prisoners of war received.

R. Ream: In what way?

N. Kuttner: ...I had heard that he had advanced syphilis and his brain was affected. I don't know whether this is true or not. It's not unlikely. He was just a cruel person who was just a different class of person than Tomibe. Tomibe...although he'd never known Americans before, he turned out to have some kind of respect for us and the way we made do and everything.

R. Ream: Can you describe any incidents that this Lieutenant Oura created?

N. Kuttner: Well generally speaking it was just--I can recall a couple of things that he did down at the guardhouse. I think it was in his tenure that Mr. Mount had gotten some liquor over the fence, and he should have known better, and he was beaten right there at the guardhouse. And Lieutenant Oura even got angry enough at one of his own soldiers that he beat him and made him stand there all day with his hands stretched out, which is pretty hard to do. He just was an ornery person and hard for our interpreters to deal with. Do you want to hear about our interpreters?

R. Ream: Yes, absolutely.

N. Kuttner: We had a couple of Episcopalian missionary ladies that were fluent in Japanese, little Miss Spencer, who was a petite gal, and Nellie McKim. They had lived many years in Japan. They were the ones that went down to the guardhouse and placated Lieutenant Oura and the guards--made life a lot better for us, because of their experience with Japanese. So a lot of things would have been worse had it not been for them, in my opinion.

R. Ream: Did you have any news of the war prior to seeing signs of it?

N. Kuttner: I personally didn't have any, because I was a kid, but there was a bootleg radio in camp and some people had been getting the news.

R. Ream: For instance, did they know how the war was progressing?

N. Kuttner: They evidently knew how the war was progressing, but not everyone was in on it. You had to be afraid, because you knew it had bad consequences, if they found that you had the radio and got the news.

R. Ream: Do you remember your first signs, that you could see or hear, that the Philippines were involved in the war again and this time the roles were reversed and the Americans or some other allied force had arrived?

N. Kuttner: My first recollection is a carrier-based plane with this insignia, which had been changed [since the internees had seen their last American plane]. It was a star and a bar[white and blue], instead of a circle, star, circle (red, white and blue). [The plane] came low over camp leaving a trail of smoke behind. At that point everybody kind of went haywire. It was the beginning of the end; that was the first sign. It was wonderful.

R. Ream: Were there other signs?

N. Kuttner: Well...it had to be a couple of months [later], when they started to bomb the Lingayen coast. And like I mentioned before, we were fifteen to seventeen miles as the crow flies from Lingayen Gulf. You could faintly see droves of airplanes going over and hear the bombs falling, because we were at 5,000 feet altitude they would practically be at eye level when you looked out over the range of the mountains. Now there may have been some guerilla activities from blowing up bridges and things. You could hear these distant explosions, but we were never sure. I mean we spent all these years--every little fire you'd see on the hillside you'd say that must be the guerrillas or that must be somebody to come and save us. We could never be sure of that like we could be sure of these signs.

R. Ream: Did you ever doubt that you would be rescued?

N. Kuttner: Oh, there were lots of times I wondered if we'd ever get out, not after we saw the signs of life. There was many a time I wondered if we would ever get out, the...months rolled by one after another, no signs of action. So every time a plane would go over way, way high...you knew there was a plane--we'd say it must be an American plane. It was probably a Japanese plane going from here to there.

R. Ream: So it boosted your morale, thinking it was American?

N. Kuttner: Yeah, there was some life outside of camp (laughs).

R. Ream: When the Americans were a presence again in the Philippines, any difference in the behavior of the guards? Did they become more repressive at this point when you were still in Camp Holmes?

N. Kuttner: Well, I don't recall anything like that. I think we got less food. Lieutenant Oura was always like that, a lot of ranting and raving. We did get less food, but I don't recall anything--maybe a little faster walking around the perimeter, I don't know, to keep us in. But no extra beatings up or anything.

R. Ream: Before we discuss the final phase of your internment, let me ask you if there are any incidents or any other remembrances that you have of life in Camp Holmes that you would like to have recorded?

N. Kuttner: There's a lot, let me think about it.

R. Ream: Tell me about some of the people in the camp; you mentioned Miss Leggett.

N. Kuttner: Miss Leggett was a heir to the Liggett-Myers tobacco fortune and she was a very thin lady, a Theosophist, with the most luminous blue eyes. She didn't believe in killing anything and she would get these prunes that you would get in the Red Cross packages and she would eat off the outside and then she would put the pits on the little ledge on the outside so the little insects could have their go at it (laughs). I think in the camp people were some of the most interesting things to me, and where else but in a camp like that can you find them and be so close to them. I still think I am a people-interested person. Anyway, Miss Leggett helped mother Delphine Greenbaum who was the gal who was separated from her parents. But I understand that she had a fortune from Liggett-Myers and the Leggetts were real mad when she died and she didn't leave her share to them.

Two thirds of our camp were missionaries, who were attending the Chinese language school in Baguio, and...they were all after us to convert us. Especially the Lutherans felt they had a prior claim on my mother, because she was baptized a Lutheran at age 5 against her will. She was such a brat, she kicked and bit the preacher, and the relatives in Denmark felt they should take care of her in case she died she wouldn't go to heaven. Anyway, all the Lutherans wanted to get us in the fold.

R. Ream: Were they successful with you?

N. Kuttner: No, they didn't get my mother [or me]. My German teacher who was a Lutheran minister asked me for an appointment. I was a very polite young woman and so I said okay. We sat at this table on the veranda and he said, "Do you know that if you should die tomorrow you won't go to heaven," because I'm not baptized in their church, of course I'm not baptized period. In my mind I was saying, boy if you can go I can go, too, because we had a chance to see how people lived close up and I felt my life was every bit as commendable as his. That was the end of my fear of not going to heaven. I said, "Well, I've got to go" and I left. He saved me from seventeen years of worry. That's one thing that was interesting about camp--the people.

R. Ream: Were there any activities that you participated with your sisters and your brother?

N. Kuttner: We ate together once in awhile but not a whole lot, 'cause I was a teenager. There were cliques amongst the teens, I mean, this was like a little community within walls. I was not in with the "soshes" [THE social set], but they did post your grades if you got on the honor roll...and they would...post them, which my mother thought was a barbaric thing, (it came from Brent School) but I was always up there. So at least I had that much going. You had a place in your constellation; you could walk down the road in front of the barracks and everybody knew everybody. They could see you and they would say, "Well that's Nora Ream, she pitches on the school team, she's in the dance thing, she goes with David Bergamini, she plays volleyball and she gets good grades and she helps her mom." So you had a persona. Your real self could be known.

But I think the lack of privacy and the crowding was really a factor in lots of ways. We were so crowded that our mats would be right next to each other, so in our barracks they raised...about half of them, slung them from the rafters, and I got one of these upper ones. I could lie up on my bunk and read and be away from people...

There was another character, come to think of it, who was in the bunk across from me, Miss Sproul (she had a hunched back) and she was the sister-in-law of the wealthy sugar plantation guy, the one that beat the gong. And everybody made fun of her because she said animals were better than people. After living in a situation like that (laughter) and seeing some of the people, maybe she has a point. So anyway, as they were all characters, we were exposed to characters a lot. My memories are like when Jim Thompson, my chemistry teacher, would stand under my window and call his wife "M'ree, M'ree!" He'd bellow like a bull.

Another thing about Miss Leggett, the Theosophist that didn't kill anything, she had a facility of mind over matter. We had this little wood-burning range, if anybody had anything extra to cook like a few onion leaves and you wanted to make onion soup you would put them in water. We used tin cans with wire handles or they would bend the lid back so you take hold of it and use those as cooking utensils. And she [Miss Leggett] would put them either on the range or down in the coals, and without any hotpads she would lift those out, I mean she had a real control. She was an object of fascination in a way. She used to go into trances a lot. One time my mother saw her with her legs crossed and looking off into air and the last call for dinner had sounded; my mother just smacked her a few times to wake her up and get her out to eat, because the poor woman wouldn't have any food (laughter). Course she was probably above that.

R. Ream: Let's go on then. It's the end of your time in Camp Holmes. What month and year approximately was that?

N. Kuttner: It was, as I keep telling everybody, it was three years to the day, that we were interned, December 28, that we were moved to Manila.

R. Ream: So that would be 1944.

N. Kuttner: Yes.

R. Ream: Do you know why the decision was made to move you down to Manila?

N. Kuttner: I don't know, but my guess would be that the Japanese would probably plan to make their last stand up in the mountains, because it was more easily defended.

R. Ream: Did you know that they were about to make a last stand at that time?

N. Kuttner: No, I didn't, because I wasn't privy to all the news.

R. Ream: Let's discuss the preparations for the trip to Manila.

N. Kuttner: The kitchen put together extra rice so everybody could take it. And we had one of these tins that crackers come in--big tins. We put all this cooked rice, our family's allotment into that, and what little other stuff we had. We got what we could carry, because we didn't have very much room. There were 34 of us--about that many--quite a lot of people in just one truck. We had to sit, literally, with our knees up to our chins in this truck. We couldn't carry a lot, but we were going to have our snack, our meal, at noon on the way. So we took what we could put in there and I don't know if they were going to follow with a baggage truck, but if so it wasn't going to be a whole lot--all our worldly possessions, which we carried the way we started. Then we rolled out, I think they moved the camp in two days, I think it took two days to do it. I'm concerned mainly with my truck.

R. Ream: Let me ask you, were there any other of your family members on the truck with you?

N. Kuttner: We were all there on the same truck. We went down the Kennon Road, which is a mountain road, like you go down 5,000 feet in 20 miles--the Zig Zag Trail aptly named--narrow with a river at the bottom, a deep crevice, and got into the lowlands. It was really difficult to have to go to the bathroom in the middle of the town square with all the soldiers looking on and all your prisoners of war looking on. I came up with the bright idea of the women holding out some article of clothing or something to give a little shelter, so everybody could piddle there in the town square, which we did. We went on to eat our lunch; we opened up the tin and found that it had all gotten bad, because of the heat, and so it was inedible. All that rice had soured. We were sort of disgusted, but you make the best of it, I guess.

The sun was really hot and I got blisters from the sun beating down on that trip. I was sitting towards the back and also on the back was this guy, he had diarrhea, and he had to hang off the back of the truck, which is really, really a bummer, disgusting, a turn-off. The guards wouldn't stop for him to go to the bathroom, of course, you would have had to stop every few minutes for him.

R. Ream: I'm surprised with so little in your stomachs, that he had anything...

N. Kuttner: ...We tried not to look or breathe, is what it amounted to. It was a 17 hour, 120 mile trip that normally would have taken--in this day and age it would go pretty fast--but before the war it would take us maybe six hours to make it, because you have a lot of livestock and the street and the primitive roads. We had a certain amount of stopping and starting.

And we rolled into Manila at dusk and they brought us into this prison wall built by Spaniards in the old days. We went through one gate and we heard the gate clanging behind us (CLANG!) and went through another and there was another clang; the gates were securely closed behind.

R. Ream: Let me ask you, before we go on to describe this new prison, any idea what caused the delays that the trip was seventeen hours as opposed to six, did you run out of fuel?

N. Kuttner: Well, slow driving and the stop in the town. There was something, I know there was something, some other people older than I have written about it. I don't know quite what it is.

R. Ream: Any military action going on?

N. Kuttner: No, well we could see the soldiers moving the opposite way to where we were going. They were riding bicycles and walking, but it wasn't fighting. We were not encountering fighting, because actually when the Americans did land they ...landed in Lingayan [several months later], which would have been north[west] of where we were. And the soldiers were going towards Lingayen [or north to the mountains] and we were going away.

R. Ream: Now the double sets of gates have clanged closed behind you. What is the name of new facility?

N. Kuttner: That was Bilibid Prison. Bilibid Prison was a prison that had been used as a prison by the Filipinos, and the Japanese turned the Filipinos out and they put American military prisoners in there. It was in two parts. The first part had cell blocks radiating out from the central watchtower and then at the back of that they had a long wall with an opening and through there was a building that ran lengthwise, which had been used as the prison hospital, and they were beginning to demolish it. The roof had been knocked off of the top floor already, so it was two stories rather than three. That was where they were putting us. They drove us through the military section, which still had military prisoners, and to the building in the rear, which was for us. When we got there it was dark. By this time my dad had slowed down, his health was really bad at that point. We kids had gotten used to fending for ourselves. I can't remember the sequence, but I think of two things: talinum and mattresses.

R. Ream: What is talinum?

N. Kuttner: Talinum? I'll tell you about each one and I'll try to think which came first. Talinum is a little green, like spinach, only little edible leaves. Someone who knew what they were looking at said, "Oh, talinum!" You could eat it, so we jumped off and ran down there and we kids... picked as much as we could--everybody going like a herd of locusts and picked all this talinum. Or maybe that was second, but I'll describe it first. It was all over the graves of the former prisoners and all over the courtyard. And we picked this talinum and when my mother went to cook it later, this great big tub, it all melted down to practically nothing just like spinach does (laughs), but it was so good.

Interview with Nora Ream Kuttner, Interview I
Date of Interview: November 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 3, Side 2

It may have been that the mattress episode [came] before. We knew that all we had was what we were sitting with, which was just the few things in our hands. So when we moved in in the darkness we saw these piles of mattresses, so we kids jumped off and we picked out some mattresses and we ran upstairs to stake out a nice place for the family to live. And we put these mattresses up on the second floor by a window and we could look out over this mango tree--with no mangoes on it, unfortunately. Anyhow, when my folks came up the stairs, my dad took a look at it and saw that these mattresses were soiled and full of bedbugs and feces and urine and everything which I hadn't noticed. We pitched them out of the windows. They had been used by the military prisoners in the hospital, probably for people that had dysentery and everything. So we slept on the cement floor then. We were trying to--like going to a sale--everybody grab what you can, otherwise somebody else was going to get it.

R. Ream: Now, were the six of you together [Ream parents and four children]?

N. Kuttner: This time we were all together.

R. Ream: And you had what kind of quarters would you say?

N. Kuttner: We were on the second floor, a cement floor, on the second floor of this building. It was very hot...there were windows... but they were always open, [there were] no screens or mosquito netting. They did, eventually, have a truck come down with some mattresses and stuff and we were able to get a couple of mattresses. I think we shared, as I recall, a mosquito net, which is very important down in the tropics, because of mosquitos.

I want to go back to one point about commingling. There was a big furor in camp about...

R. Ream: Which camp?

N. Kuttner: In Camp Holmes. "Why can't men and women live together?" I mean it was the issue, other than the women's suffrage which was another big issue, this was a major issue. I remember a lot of talking about, well, what will they do with all these babies and [no] birth control. And here I am with big ears, but they eventually did get optional living together of families. The other camps had this, and this is the one camp that never had it. Even the Japanese were wondering why this camp was singled out not to. They did eventually. And our family finally did move together just a few weeks before we were moved to Manila. So when we got to Manila, we all lived in the same cubicle--it was just all open...but down there we had bedbugs, you would pinch them off with your mosquito net, flies...

R. Ream: Describe the food to me.

N. Kuttner: When we got to Bilibid, the food was cut down drastically. We weren't near Trinidad Valley anymore. Of course the war was getting bad. We had probably about six hundred to seven hundred calories a day and bean curd, the residue from the soy bean after the good stuff is taken out, maybe sweet potatoes. I forget what all, but not very much. I remember one time it was so bad that we forced our little brother, John, to go down to the garbage can and see what he could find, because we girls wouldn't do this, you know. He came back with some peelings, some camote peelings (sweet potato peelings) and we pulled the bad stuff out (the worms and everything) and cooked it and ate that. Another time my dad somehow had a little money, and of course by this time everything was expensive, like $120.00 for a coconut or something. You're talking about money from a long time ago. They were able to get a few coconuts in and we got a coconut and we opened it up and it was full of maggots. Pulled the maggots out and cooked it, cooked the meat. But we were very, very weak at this point. We'd just go down and get what little they had, eat it, and then lie down and wait for the next meal. Somehow, because we started to realize that the end was coming, you could overlook a lot of the hunger.

R. Ream: Can you describe the health of your father?

N. Kuttner: My father's health--he was getting extremely thin. As a matter of fact it was much harder on men than women in camp, I think. At one point he couldn't even get up the...four or five steps before you'd get to the first floor and we were up on the second. He sat there and couldn't make it and a missionary gal came out and gave him a cup of tea or java that she had been hoarding and gave him a little energy. I don't know if it was Katie and me, the kids and I got his bed and moved it down to a solitary cell, which was used for a camp hospital and that's where he was at the end of the war. Aunt Beulah doesn't think he would have lasted many more days had we not been released the time we had been.

R. Ream: How about your mother?

N. Kuttner: My mother, let's just say she was still getting around, and she appeared to be always strong. She never complained, you know. We were all really skinny, and we started to copy recipes--everybody sharing recipes.

R. Ream: Were these camp recipes?

N. Kuttner: No, these were for when you get out. I mean, fudge, manok adobo, and, "oh, this is a wonderful recipe," and [shared with] all of our friends, Katie Poirier and Eleanor Moses and everybody. We were all sharing these recipes. I compiled mine in a little book and...I put the papers together and I put a little string cord through it and these were going to be what I was going to try when I got food. Aunt Beulah used to say that's a sign that your mind is going (laughs). Everybody was saving recipes .

I have to describe our sanitary facilities. Well, when we got to Bilibid, there were no flush toilets at this place. There may have been a wash house out in back...where people washed clothes in a bucket. I don't recall being very clean at this point (laughs)

...They devised some kind of a thing that was a kind of privacy enclosure and then they had a trench that was lined with tin that was on a ramp--a little ditch...on an incline. On the top was a barrel cut in half longitudinally and water dripping in at the top end. When it hit a certain point then the thing [bucket] would tip over and flush everything down and the way you would go was to squat over this little trench and then it would just wash everything down to the low end. And that was how you pottied.

The showers...were backed up to the wall, the stone wall of the prison, but there was also a little privacy fence and you could shower out there. Anyway, it was very interesting.

R. Ream: Any exchange with the military prisoners that were there?

N. Kuttner: You really couldn't have an exchange, because the wall was so tall. If you were on the second floor balcony you could look over the wall and see them down below. And when we first got there, actually it was my idea, I said to Dirks, "Why don't we have a concert and get our chorus together and sing for these guys?" He thought that was a great idea and we got together and performed a few songs and aimed our voices that way and I hope it meant something to them--different, at any rate. We would be afraid even to try to throw messages over or anything for fear someone would get in trouble. But at least we were aware of each other.

R. Ream: Can you remember what you saw, when you looked over the wall?

N. Kuttner: I just saw guys trying to walk around is all. You could see the cell blocks a little bit, it was hard because we were set back a ways from the wall. We couldn't see too much.

R. Ream: Was there any kind of civilian organization at this time or school or activities?

N. Kuttner: No, nobody was interested anymore. We just were living the war at this point and waiting to get out. I mean the first time when that plane came over and laid that cloud of smoke, I mean, that was the end of school. We had something now that we could look forward to.

R. Ream: Tell me about the military presence now. Could you hear or see any fighting?

N. Kuttner: Yes, at this point we were hearing--this was six weeks before liberation...

R. Ream: Can you remember the month, just approximately?

N. Kuttner:	Well, we were moved down on December 28th, so it would be [December] 29th to February 3rd, most of the month of January. We were getting strafing--P-38's, P-51's strafing, bombing--I think B-24's bombing the City of Manila and occasionally there'd be a Zero, but not many. I mean the Japanese were really--their Air Force was decimated pretty much...We saw one bomber that was hit by anti-aircraft guns and some people parachuted out. One person was caught by a falling part of the plane; I think another one, the parachute didn't even open, but, I think somebody got down and was captured.
R. Ream:	Did any of the strafing affect Bilibid Prison?
N. Kuttner:	No, we were far enough away from the targets evidently.
R. Ream:	Any difference in the treatment by the guards?
N. Kuttner:	No.
R. Ream:	There were no acts of kindness or cruelty that you can recall at this time?
N. Kuttner:	No.
R. Ream:	Had you any idea at this point if your family in Santo Tomas, across the town, were they still alive?
N. Kuttner:	Didn't know anything, didn't hear anything back and forth. As a matter of fact if you stood in an upstairs window, you could almost see Santo Tomas across the square, I mean, it was that close.
R. Ream:	Did they have any idea if you were in Manila?
N. Kuttner:	Not as far as I know; I don't think they did unless they got it in through some kind of underground source. I've never talked to them about it, but there may not have been that much time to get the word. There was information--I suppose Filipinos passed back and forth. A lot of the stuff you'd keep QT in case somebody would get in trouble.
R. Ream:	Do you recall the day and time that an American soldier or squad or platoon arrived at Bilibid?

N. Kuttner: Let me first say what I saw, which was I guess the night of the 3rd, evening or dusk, when we heard the sound of machine guns, but we saw nothing in the sky. We saw coming down the avenue...there had been some scurrying back and forth and some man was shot and killed and he lay there...

R. Ream: Was the man Filipino or Japanese?

N. Kuttner: I think...[he was a Filipino caught in the crossfire]. He lay there and nobody went out to get him and he was bloating. Some Filipino ran out and pulled his trousers off to get a pair of pants, you know. When we saw the Americans, they came down this avenue, and the vehicles were different color with different color faces on them. They had tanks, jeep carriers and so on. As they rolled down they started shooting at the Far Eastern University, which is kitty-cornered from us and I understood there was an intelligence unit there--Japanese intelligence. And there was quite a fight, matter of fact a fire fight all evening long. There were flares going up; it was like Disneyland. And because of how boring it had been for so long, you know, we were doing all these stupid things like looking out of the windows and everything, when we should have been staying down inside. Fortunately, because of these stone walls, we had ...some protection.

R. Ream: Where were the Japanese guards?

N. Kuttner: Well, the guards in anticipation had--several of the guards, I don't know how many there were in charge of us--several of the guards had taken a machinegun up on top of the building to establish a defense up there. At one point they were ordered...down and they went out the door...the day before the tanks came in. It was at that point the commandant called the roll and told us that we were not prisoners anymore, but he would recommend that we stay there...By this time the guards had gone and we were by ourselves...Then the Americans came in.

R. Ream: Do you remember your first contact?

N. Kuttner: With the Americans? Me personally or when they first discovered where we were?

R. Ream: Let's start with that. Had they any idea that you were there?

N. Kuttner: No they didn't. The First [Cavalry] encampment ...knew Santo Tomas was there and they knew the military, I guess, was, but they didn't know we were. The First...had an encampment that night just outside the fence--the wall--and somebody heard this scraping noise, and one of the prisoners looked out through this drain or something and the guy outside said, "How the hell did you get in there?" And this man said, "How the hell do you get out?"

Then that was our first contact and...somehow they got in and there was this exchange like, "Where are you from? Who's the president?--and all that. My first contact, I think, was when they came around to the front gate. And here these guys came husky, strong, thick muscular necks and we were all like plucked chickens. White teeth and our teeth were black from lack of care, no toothpaste and lousy diet and they were really hunks (laughs). It was really thrilling.

But the next day (I should really sit and analyze the time sequence) they had an encampment of rangers just outside the wall and a Zero came over, real low, and it was going to give its last bomb to us and it missed and it went over the ...[wall] and killed all those rangers out there, which was terrible.

R. Ream: What did Manila look like at this point?

N. Kuttner: Didn't get out to Manila for awhile, because...there was a lot of fighting back and forth and they evacuated us to the Ang Tibay Shoe Factory behind the lines a couple of miles.

R. Ream: How soon did they do that? Was it the same week?

N. Kuttner: It was a couple of days probably.

R. Ream: Why did they evacuate you?

N. Kuttner: Because of the fighting that was going back and forth over us. Right behind us they had artillery set up and all of the return fire--I mean it was just hard combat back and forth. So they put us in jeep trailers and told us not to take anything, because there was no room.

And as we were being evacuated in the darkness all these infantrymen were coming towards us. Some of them with little dogs--they were carrying pet dogs they'd found--they'd do a double take, "Are you an American?" We'd say,"Yes," and they'd say, "Oh, I haven't seen an American for three years," you know, they'd fought through New Guinea and everything, "Can I touch you?" So they were going down towards battle and we were going away from battle.

So they took us to the Ang Tibay Shoe Factory, and I have to tell you, they had cockroaches there that must have been three inches long (laughter). Across the street from the Balintawak Beer Brewery the soldiers on their way through had emptied a lot of their jeep water cans and filled them up with green beer (laughter). They were having a marvelous time. Anyway, I didn't sleep a wink all night long; this was so exciting...I was punchy from lack of sleep and wonderful food--spam and all that good stuff.

R. Ream: How did that food affect you?

N. Kuttner: All that food right at once really--it actually gave me diarrhea at first. Then the Army made us back off from eating that much and build up slowly.

But when we were returned...to Bilibid and they had done all of this literally holocaust over the camp, there was just a pile of stuff out there in the yard. We went and looked and there was a picture of my brother, Billy [who had died as a toddler long before the war began]...I don't know if my dad's teapot was there--and my high school autobiography, which was so hysterical and funny, but I thought oh well, it's just a class project, I should have picked it up, but I didn't. We took Billy's picture and that was it. One of the gals in camp was moaning and groaning, because she lost her vaudeville costumes, and I thought, "Where are your priorities?"

R. Ream: What happen to all those things [that were missing when the internees returned to Bilibid from Ang Tibay]--all of your belongings that were left, not that you had much?

N. Kuttner: We had nothing left...all wiped out.

R. Ream: You went to Ang Tibay without your belongings. When you came back were all the belongings that you had left...

N. Kuttner: Gone, except for this little mound.

R. Ream: What had happened to those things?

N. Kuttner: Well, they all got burned and probably looted by the Filipinos, but to them Billy's picture meant nothing, so it was a good thing we found that.

R. Ream: Why do you think the Filipinos took those things?

N. Kuttner: They probably had nothing either; they took what they could get.

R. Ream: I didn't ask that of the others and I was very sorry, because I thought it made the Filipinos look very bad. Because what I don't get into is the suffering of the Filipino [soldiers] and civilians and they had a hard time.

N. Kuttner: Well, just the fighting over them, look at that movie that John had, look at all that fighting with all those flimsy houses and everything.

After that there was a certain amount of fighting, because we had that artillery battery and they [the Americans] were cleaning Manila up. Originally there were 30,000 Japanese troops and 800 [troops of the] First Cavalry that came in and then it was joined by the 37th [Infantry Division], then they were able to mop up the Japanese. They were still up in steeples and taking potshots at people. They were also, evidently, hell-bent on destroying the city. When we could get out (I can't believe my mother let us go out, I mean I was the chaperon for my little brother and sisters and cousins). I mean I was eighteen years old and all the shooting--we can't believe it to this day.

R. Ream: What do you mean you were chaperon for your cousins? Your cousins were over in Santo Tomas. Did you have...

N. Kuttner: Well, we went over there and we looked up Evelyn and Ann Mills...these are kids that are Sally's and Katie's ages, and Katie and Betsy Herold and I would go. I was the oldest one, I was eighteen, they were all little twelve to fifteen year old kids.

R. Ream: Did your mother and father make that walk over to Santo Tomas to see their sisters?

N. Kuttner: I don't know, but they may have gone, but not with me. I mean we kids, when we had the chance to go we went, and we'd go around town and you would not believe the destruction. Those big concrete buildings, the post office and everything, were like Dresden--just all gone.

R. Ream: Did you get any news of Sam Allen?

N. Kuttner: No, I don't recall. I don't personally know how Aunt Beulah heard either, because she was down in Los Banos.

R. Ream: Your Aunt Beulah was not in Santo Tomas?

N. Kuttner: No, I mean Santo Tomas, excuse me.

R. Ream: So even after you were liberated, she still had no word?

N. Kuttner: I don't know what she heard. I really didn't see a lot of Aunt Beulah, you know. I was just a kid to them.

R. Ream: How did you leave Manila? And do you remember the day you left?

N. Kuttner: We were taken to (what's the name of that airport?) out of Manila and it was full of bomb craters and it was damp--it had been raining or something. We were put on C-46's and the pilot was 19 years old. I can't forget that; he was a kid piloting a transport. We were riding in bucket seats. There was a co-pilot and we girls would go up in the cockpit and visit with the pilot and the co-pilot, while we were flying down to Leyte--Tacloban, Leyte. There were windshield wipers...it was raining.

R. Ream: Do you remember what day it was?

N. Kuttner: It was about three weeks after liberation, which would have made it the end of February--I think about then. We were left there longer than the others. They evacuated the sick and the infirm, although they left my dad. Then we went to Tacloban, Leyte where they promptly forgot us. How long were we there, six weeks or something? I heard that they misfiled the papers or something and they forgot about this group of people until someone went and said, "Aren't you going to repatriate us?" He [a military clerical worker] says, "Oh, yeah."

R. Ream: They were probably enjoying the three beautiful Ream sisters.

N. Kuttner: There were 20 teenagers in that crowd and 2,000 soldiers in the convalescent hospital. It was really difficult.

R. Ream: What do you remember about Leyte?

N. Kuttner: Well, we were living in a tent on the beach...I guess my family was right in the same tent--and I remember all these guys, I swear, it was terrible (laughs). There were just too many to cope with...it was just one continuous social whirl. I'd go over to the Red Cross tent sometimes.

I'll tell you something I did and I'd never, ever do it ever again. I would go out at night in an inner-tube with a guy in an inner-tube, maybe Bill Kastapulos. And we would float around there in the gulf in Tacloban off the beach. I was worried about sharks. I mean, the Navy was anchored offshore and they would pitch everything overboard. One of the guys I met on a census interview--we got to talking about it...he had been a sailor in Tacloban and I was a prisoner of war.

Interview with Nora Ream Kuttner, Interview I
Date of Interview: November 24, 1989; Kensington, California
Interviewer and Transcriber: Renee Ream
Begin Tape 4, Side 1

N. Kuttner: I was telling you about this man I interviewed. I was telling him that I used to go out in innertubes in Leyte Gulf at night and see all the little phosphorescence in the water. He said when he was in the Navy...they used to pitch crates of oranges and all that stuff out. One time he went up there with his Thompson submachinegun, because of all the sharks that were swimming around, and he got a Mako shark and he shot him and shot him before he got it. And I thought, oh good heavens, here I got this phobia about sharks, and I didn't know anything about them in those days. They don't care if it's dark and you're swimming. I mean I could have been a target for a Mako shark off Leyte Gulf. I mean, I lived through the war and to be shark fodder (laughter).

R. Ream: So you had a wonderful social life in Leyte. Was there any debate between your father and mother about where they wanted to go, now that the war was essentially over [for the Reams]?

N. Kuttner: I'm not aware of any debate, but my parents never involved me in any of those decisions, anyway. I'm not aware there was any communication, I just know where we landed and where we went.

R. Ream: Tell me about your trip to the United States.

N. Kuttner: Well we were on the MS Japara, which was a Dutch leased ship made into a transport. All I remember is that it was rocky seas, because there was a typhoon, and I was at the very prow of the ship and in the bunk right at the point of the ship and it went up and down, up and down. I spent a lot of the time standing at the rail and we were also required to do some work and I worked as a kitchen-helper/waitress, and I ate a lot. I must have gained a pound a day going over. By keeping your stomach full you kept from getting seasick.

I also recall it was so cold. We went by Hawaii, and in comparison to the Philippines, it was cold in Hawaii.

R. Ream: Were you appropriately dressed for cold weather?

N. Kuttner: Oh, I don't think so...I can't remember what I had, it was probably a borrowed WAC [Women's Army Corps] outfit or something like that. It probably wasn't really cold, it's just that for us it was really cold.

R. Ream: What kind of shoes did you have on?

N. Kuttner: I had some WAC oxfords, brown oxfords.

R. Ream: Do you remember the day that you landed in the United States?

N. Kuttner: We landed in San Francisco and we were met by Uncle Milton, and the first thing we did was drive over to the Welfare Office, where my folks could get some dishes and coupons and everything for clothes. Then he drove us out to Hayward, and as we were driving along through the alleys and everything in San Francisco he was saying it was good to have full employment and I saw a bum eating out of a garbage can--getting food out of a garbage can--which was kind of amazing.

R. Ream: Who was your Uncle Milton?

N. Kuttner: Uncle Milton was my dad's brother, one of his brothers who was a doctor in San Leandro.

R. Ream: Were there any other family members there to greet you?

N. Kuttner: I don't recall seeing any others, but there could have been.

R. Ream: So then you were driving with Uncle Milton back to his home and you stayed with him.

N. Kuttner: They [Uncle Milton's family] had a little guest house at their place in Hayward and the family stayed with them for some time.

R. Ream: Now Nora you were a graduate, a high school graduate. How long did you stay at that home?

N. Kuttner: I only stayed there a few weeks...Aunt Beulah was going to go down to Long Beach to my grandmother's house.

R. Ream: Which grandmother?

N. Kuttner: Grandma Ream in Long Beach. And she wanted to know if I'd like to go too, and Hazel Dawn and Mary Ida, my cousins (Wesley's children) were down there. So I went down and they said, "Well why don't you stay and work down here?" So I did and I worked for a shipbuilding company for four months living with my cousins. So I was only with the family a very short time.

R. Ream: Was it easy for you to separate from them?

N. Kuttner: It wasn't hard, because actually in many ways even all through high school, I wasn't living in the same part of the building.

I made $140.00 a month, I'll have you know in shipbuilding (laughter). Can I tell you one thing of interest though?

R. Ream: Yeah.

N. Kuttner: When I was working at the shipyards and I dittoed ship's papers, you know, like the instruction manual for these big victory ships. They kept saying, "Well, why don't you go down and see a launching; they're going to have a launching today." So I said, "Okay," and I took off from work and just went a few hundred feet down to where a ship was being launched. And up on the launching platform there was a guy who happened to have been on the MS Japara coming home. He was one of the soldiers!...At the time they cracked the bottle over the nose, that was when VJ day happened. I was [at the] launching of the last ship to go out of a California shipbuilder on VJ Day.

R. Ream: Let me ask you now about any positive or negative thoughts that you have about your internment. Let's start with any negative thoughts.

N. Kuttner: Well, I would say the only negative thing I can think of in its way it is not representative of how life is really here, so...it's a little adjustment in a way. And I think maybe this is why we get along so well amongst the POWs that we meet now, even though some of us never had much to do with each other in those days. We all have that same understanding that it is different...there we were so close together and here you're not. You can turn all that stuff around to the good.

R. Ream: Tell me about that.

N. Kuttner: I think that since we lived through this experience, like my mother said, "Now that we lived through it, it was a great experience." It wasn't always exciting, sometimes it was extremely boring. But it was non-materialistic, even though material things were important insofar as we had so little to do with. We had so few clothes, so few belongings, every little thing was important; you made do, you stretched and you mended and you invented...it was interesting from that standpoint. And those things did matter...I mean it didn't affect your status whether you had a lot or anything in camp, which was kind of nice.

R. Ream: Any long term effects that you can recall on your mother or father?

N. Kuttner: Like healthwise? I think it may have been very hard for my dad careerwise, because when he came back it was hard for him to persuade anybody that he had value as an employee. He could not get work at first, because they'd say, "So you ran a transportation company in the Philippines, how do we know that you can run one here. This is a time of full employment." I think it was hard for him to get some kind of work to make that transition. Healthwise I think my dad's health was affected at least for a period of time...quite a bit.

R. Ream: In what way?

N. Kuttner: He was quite rundown for awhile. It took him a while to be able to get to work as I understand it.

I don't know if it had any effects like that on my mother. My mother was a nurse and she went back to work after umpteen--let's say 24 years of being out of circulation, she didn't even know about penicillin, because we were in camp. She managed to pass the State Boards and work as a nurse in East Oakland and kept the family going while my dad was getting on his feet. And she worked for a number of years until John got out of school.

R. Ream: You weren't with your family a lot during the war years. Being a teenager you managed to do very well. I know you saw them at mealtimes occasionally. Do you think that you could comment on Ruth and Fabian Ream as parents during those years of internment?

N. Kuttner: Well, I think that the kind of parenting they gave was to let you have a lot of rope...and let you develop your own individuality, however, one comment I would have, is lots of times when I've done some really stupid things and I wished they'd have saved me from it. However, I may not have paid attention to them either at the time. I sometimes wished that...if they had only saved me from Robbie it would have been a big favor (laughter).

R. Ream: I should add in here that Robbie was Nora's first husband, who she married some years after the end of World War II.

Do you think that the internment had any long-term effects on your decision making ability, your health, your choices that you made in life?

N. Kuttner: It was kind of interesting to come over here and think that all Americans were the greatest and you come over here and you find out that you have your criminals and your jerks and...people that were not the caliber a lot of us were in camp. I think we had a pretty nice quality group of people in camp. I think it was easy to be too trusting.

Well, when we first came back the Health Department x-rayed all the kids' joints to see how they had grown. They found that out of three years we only developed one year in growth. And I know that I had to have gained three or four inches in height, I must have. When I compare how tall I am with my friends that I had in camp, and I see them a few years later and I'm towering over them. I'm 5'6", that's not too bad, but these little Filipino girls that were my friends that were like 4'11"--I used to link arms and walk with them and now I find that they're still 4'11" but I'm lots taller than I used to be.

R. Ream: Well, you had done a lot of your developing before the war. When you think about it, you had already gone through puberty.

N. Kuttner: I shot up in height, because I should have still been growing some in camp, but I didn't finish it. Course I grew wider too.

R. Ream: Any other effects on you--your choices in life, your decision making ability?

N. Kuttner: No, I sure made some dumb decisions. I think one thing, I was so glad to get out that I ran back to the States and if I had really been with it, an opportunist and everything, I would have said why don't I stay around here for the reconstruction, I'm eighteen years, I might be able to get something here and get in on the ground floor. But I was very naive and had no concept of the big picture.

R. Ream: It never occurred to you to approach the Diehls and see if you could stay with the Diehls?

N. Kuttner: No, it never did. Well, I could have done it on my own. It never even occurred to me until it was too late.

R. Ream: Is there anything else that you would like to share?

N. Kuttner: There are all kinds of stories, but I can't think of anything off the top of my head.

R. Ream: Thank you, Nora.