

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Ms. Yvonne Goodier Charles

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Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 10th of November, 2015. I'm in Fredericksburg, Texas at the National Museum of the ... of the Pacific War, and I am interviewing Ms. Yvonne Charles. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

So, I'd like to start, Yvonne, by thanking you for spending the time this morning to share some of your experiences during World War II with us. Let's get started by having you introduce yourself, and give us your ... your name, when and where you were born and we'll take it from there.

Ms. Charles: I'm Yvonne Charles. I was born in Silver City, New Mexico.

Ed Metzler: When were you born?

Ms. Charles: Oh, when? Okay (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: We need birthdates (chuckles).

Ms. Charles: September 10, 1926.

Ed Metzler: Okay, September 10th, 1926. And so, did you have brothers and sisters?

Ms. Charles: I have an older brother.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Two and a half years older, and ... and I have a sister about seven years younger.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so you were the middle kid, huh?

Ms. Charles: I'm the middle child.

Ed Metzler: I heard they're spoiled, the middle ones, no, it's the younger ones that are spoiled.

Ms. Charles: Uh, yeah, I don't think the middle child; I think (laughter).

Ed Metzler: In fact, the middle one's supposed to be the one that kind of has a hard time adjusting is what I ...

Ms. Charles: High expectations, I think, from the parents (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Ms. Charles: And disappointments and (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, all of that rolled in, huh? Now, what did your parents do for a living in Silver City?

Ms. Charles: My father was a ... he was a mining engineer.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: A graduate from Colorado School of Mines.

Ed Metzler: Ah, good school!

Ms. Charles: And because of the type of work he did, we found ... we ... people do move quite often depending on where the work is.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: So, we were in Silver City for, oh, I was about three, two and a half, three. When I ... when we left ... he was ... he'd found a ... have ... someone offered a job, I guess, down the Cerro de Pasco mines in South America – Peru.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And ...

Ed Metzler: Now, what was the name of the mines?

Ms. Charles: Cerro de Pasco ...

Ed Metzler: Sierra de Pasco.

Ms. Charles: ... *del* Pasco [s/b “de”].

Ed Metzler: del Pasco.

Ms. Charles: Which is a large corporation.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Mining is still in existence, I’m sure. And so, we left ... we went down to a place called Morococha, Peru, fourteen thousand feet elevation.

Ed Metzler: Air is thin up there!

Ms. Charles: And I ... evidently, was different enough in my ... what would ... from what was going on in my life that I do have memories of it. I was fairly young.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Going on three, I think.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And went up the railroad; that was the only way to get up to the mine – Switchback Railroad. And of course, the mining camps are not luxurious places to live.

Ed Metzler: No, they're not.

Ms. Charles: But it was ... interesting experience.

Ed Metzler: What was ... what were they mining?

Ms. Charles: Copper mostly, I think,

Ed Metzler: Copper.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum, copper was the main, yeah. And it was ... we ... what was memorable about it was there was a mine strike. We had been there probably a year, a year and a half.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And it was not safe for us to stay up there because the minors were very aggravated. I think probably wages were not high enough; I don't know the reasons exactly. Anyway, we were ... we decided we'd better leave just for safety reasons.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: So, we waited out on a platform. I remember this sitting out at night being very tired waiting for the train to come and pick us up. And when it came, it was loaded, you know? We didn't ... looked ... didn't look like there was any more space to anybody else in, and ... but we got in and it was ...

Ed Metzler: They crammed you on, huh?

Ms. Charles: ... standing room only (chuckles), being two and a half, or it's about three at that time, three or three and a half.

Ed Metzler: Now, did your whole family leave or did your father stay?

Ms. Charles: No, we all left.

Ed Metzler: You all left, okay.

Ms. Charles: I think it was not safe to stay.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: It was ... he said it was really considered quite dangerous. And we went down to a lower level, so we stayed until things were settled.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And while we were there, we ... my brother and I both got malaria.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Ms. Charles: It's a lower level, and my brother was quite ill, so it was told that he wouldn't ... he probably could not go back to the higher elevation because the malaria ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... he just wouldn't be able to tolerate it ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... and live at that elevation. So, we came back to the States, so stayed in Long Beach, California until my father was ... finished up his three-year contract, then went back to Colorado which was where he was born.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And where he decided to get ... pursue some more mining.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, now this must be the early '30s then ...

Ms. Charles: This was ...

Ed Metzler: ... yeah, because you were born in '26, is that what you said?

Ms. Charles: ... right, that's right. Right, right. It was, yeah, '30, '31 ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... '32.

Ed Metzler: Those are tough times anyhow.

Ms. Charles: Well, Depression years.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Ms. Charles: And so, we went to a mining town, Central City, place out of Denver.

Ed Metzler: I know where that is, yeah.

Ms. Charles: And his father had mining interests and he was trying to get the mines going which were not ... it ... it was a struggle. It was like twelve-hour days, I think, quite often. And ... but it was, as far as I was concerned, it was a great place to live. We had raspberries I could collect on the hills and there was, oh, the

opera, Central City Opera well known for its ... in its days opened up again. It had been closed, and Lillian Gish, I believe, was there for the first opening.

Other Person: (Unintelligible), (laughter).

Ms. Charles: My mother said, "You know, if you picked some sweet peas and I think we had pyrite samples or ... pyrite we could collect.

Ed Metzler: Fools Gold, isn't that what they call it?

Ms. Charles: Yeah, that ... that's right.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Ms. Charles: We could ... I could probably go out and make a little money (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Ms. Charles: So, that was my first opportunity to earn something. So, I went out and had my sweet peas and pyrite and I guess some of the tourists or people going to the Opera were pleased and bought, you know, gave me ... so, I made most probably what, a dollar maybe (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's big ... that was big money back then, yeah.

Ms. Charles: (Laughter). But it was an experience. But anyway ... and ... but the living was hard, difficult. I, as far as I was concerned, I was happy, went to first grade.

Ed Metzler: You didn't know any better.

Ms. Charles: No, I ... it was fine with me.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Ms. Charles: But my father was offered a contract in the Philippines.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: So, we left for the Philippines in 1933.

Ed Metzler: In 1933?

Ms. Charles: November, so it was late '33.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And went out to Manila, and we were there just for a few months until he was ... he went down to mining camp in Camarines Norte which was south of ... of Manila. And because there were no schools where the mine was where he was going to be operating, my brother and I stayed with a woman who took in children whose parents had similar ... or ... or away from Manila, and where

they could go to school. So, we stayed with a German woman and who boarded and took care of us. But that was ...

Ed Metzler: And you went to school ...

Ms. Charles: Went to school, Boardner's (sp?) School.

Ed Metzler: There in Manila?

Ms. Charles: In Manila.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And it ... we were well cared for.

Ed Metzler: What was Manila like back then?

Ms. Charles: It was a beautiful ... it was called the Pearl of the Orient, a beautiful city. Uh, I thought it was great. I didn't like the mosquitos; we had ... we had quite a time (laughter) time adjusting to all the mosquito bites that I ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Ms. Charles: ... they seemed to ... I seemed to attract them.

Ed Metzler: But you'd had malaria, so (laughter) you knew about mosquitos (laughter).

Ms. Charles: Right, right. So, except for being homesick, I was terribly home sick. Seven years old and I was the youngest, and I just ...

Ed Metzler: What did you miss the most?

Ms. Charles: Just being with my parents. And keep, I mean, I got good care. The bootie (sp?) we had to be called (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Now, your mother was with your father then, huh?

Ms. Charles: She was with my father, and I had a younger sister who was just a baby ...

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Ms. Charles: ... when we went out.

Ed Metzler: And how far were they away from Manila?

Ms. Charles: Well, I would say, can't remember, it seemed like about a six or seven hour ...

Ed Metzler: So, it's a long haul?

Ms. Charles: ... quite a ways.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Ms. Charles: So, we didn't see our parents, very seldom. There were some friends that looked in, parents of my friends, that were in Manila and looked in on me.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And my brother. But ... but the next year, my parents arranged for a woman tutor to come and she lived with us in Paracale, and ... which worked out beautifully. She became a family friend. And we got great ... an education. She, I mean, she knew if we didn't do our homework, she was right there, but she ...

Ed Metzler: What was her nationality?

Ms. Charles: She was American.

Ed Metzler: She was American, uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Uh huh. And so, we made up an extra year because we'd lost a year coming in ... coming to Manila. The school ... school year is different. And I think they ... what she taught us, she ... it was ... she was not only a great teacher, but a great friend, and we stayed, and she stayed friend of the families ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... afterwards, till they, you know, till she died.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: So, then we moved back to Manila for about, I think that was just a ... year or a year and a half in Paracale, and we moved back to Manila. And my father had mining interests; he was working, I think, with someone else at that time, but gradually developed his own consulting business which became very ... worked out very well for him. So, before the war, we ... we had ... he'd got to the point where we were able to have a very comfortable house, and you know, they had a ... my parents were short ... for a few years had a very nice, comfortable life.

Ed Metzler: It was nice for a few years, yeah.

Ms. Charles: It was, right, till the war ... till the war broke out, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Uhm. So, what's the first thing you remember about when the war started and how it impacted you?

Ms. Charles: Well, of course, it ... I think it was snowing when Pearl Harbor was struck. Clark Field was bombed almost simultaneously, I think.

Ed Metzler: Right. Same day, yeah.

Ms. Charles: I think it was. But you didn't hear about that as ... it wasn't in the news because Pearl Harbor was so dev ...

Ed Metzler: Pearl Harbor was such a big deal, yeah.

Ms. Charles: ... so devastating.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And we had blackouts. We stayed at home. My father, oh, I should mention, he was called back. He was in the ... in the First World War.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And went in, volunteered, was a sailor, and once, if you're in the Navy, you're always in the reserve, I guess. That's just ...

Ed Metzler: At least for a long period of time.

Ms. Charles: ... probably ... that's ... that's the policy. He was called back into active duty about a year and a half years before the war broke out. And so, he was stationed at Cavite, the naval base across the bay and had ... went out daily but kept his consulting business going. So, I guess was working pretty long hours.

Ed Metzler: Was he assigned to a ... a ship or was he ...

Ms. Charles: No, no, he was ...

Ed Metzler: ... shore duty?

Ms. Charles: ... he was on the base.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: And I'm not just exactly sure just what he did.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But, and so, he was continued doing that, you know. Of course, the Japanese bombed Clark Field, and ... and then they came and devast ... uh, Cavite was also just bombed out. He was there at one time when they were coming in and very fortunate, my brother had gone out with him, and they were just very fortunate to get out without being, you know, in the ...

Ed Metzler: Without being killed literally!

Ms. Charles: ... but ... but in the areas where the bombs would strike.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Ms. Charles: They were hiding under a ... a bathroom someplace where they were protected (chuckles) ...

Ed Metzler: That's good, yeah.

Ms. Charles: ... with toilets. But ... so, and ... and then at that point, of course, it was ... he came ... we ... we ... he didn't try to get back, and there was no way he could get out again. They stayed ...

Ed Metzler: He couldn't get out at that point, huh?

Ms. Charles: ... no, they called it ... when they declared the op ... the city an open city, we just stayed at home and waited to see what was going to go on, I guess.

Ed Metzler: Okay. No idea what was going to happen, I guess.

Ms. Charles: But, you know, we felt ... we had Corregidor. We'd always thought because of Corregidor, no country could ever invade Manila. But, you know, it didn't make a bit of difference. They just (chuckles) ...

Ed Metzler: The Japanese just rolled on.

Ms. Charles: ... came in. No, they came in with their planes and so it was ... we had, you know, blackouts continuous ... continuously. The Japanese, we'd see them driving up past our house, and they had evidently a place where they had soldiers staying, but back and forth. But ... so, this went on, well, until February or early January, I guess, I'm (unintelligible) early January.

Ed Metzler: Of '42?

Ms. Charles: Of '42.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And so, they ...

Ed Metzler: So, your father, even though he was stationed in Cavite, he was coming home at night or was he over there and ...

Ms. Charles: No, no.

Ed Metzler: ... separated from you?

Ms. Charles: No, no. He ... he went to Cavite daily.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, okay, so ...

Ms. Charles: And then it was, no, and then he was back home then.

Ed Metzler: He was back home at nights, so the family was together in the evenings.

Ms. Charles: He still ... and he ... he tried to keep his consulting business going.

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Ms. Charles: Of course, that wasn't doing, but he didn't have much time for that. But no, but once the city was declared an open city, we had blackouts and we stayed in our homes. And we just waited it out. We didn't ...

Ed Metzler: What about food? Was food readily available?

Ms. Charles: Well, we'd stocked some food. We had a ... idea that, you know, we'd have to have some food ahead. And so, we were alright. We ... we did fine. I'm not sure everybody, you know, was as well off as we were at that time because we had sort of planned. We knew that, you know, it was going to be a long ... it ... it's going to be a longer period of time than what we thought.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: We didn't ... I guess we thought the Japanese wouldn't ... wouldn't be able to penetrate and come in and take over, but there was no question. They were using First World War planes and equipment; they ... they weren't mobilized at all, they weren't prepared. And Corregidor ...

Ed Metzler: Was there a feeling that, oh, this won't last long; they Americans will come back and push (unintelligible).

Ms. Charles: Oh, oh, definitely. We were always optimistic. No, we ... we thought this would be just a short matter of time, short time period before they'd come back.

Ed Metzler: So, there's no way for your ... for you and your other members of your family to get out?

Ms. Charles: No, we were asked to leave by ... oh, probably at least a year before the war broke out. Everyone out there, well, almost anybody that was associated with the service, now see, my father had been going to Cavite, had an idea that he, well, I remember him making a remark because they ... there was, I don't know whether it was shipped to Japan regularly from Manila, from the Philippines, and ... and my father would say, "We're going to get it back in bullets." I mean, they knew the situation ... the situation was getting worse and eventually we would probably be at war. And ...

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Ms. Charles: ... before, as I say, you know, as I say at least a year before it broke out.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, you're enduring blackouts and you've got a larder of food that you've set aside as a family.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: And you just kind of waiting for something to happen?

Ms. Charles: Not knowing just what to do. And ... but as I say, the Japanese were going back and forth up the road in front of our house, and they did stop at one point in January. I have the date, I have ... I've kept a diary, early January, and said that all we had to do was ... they gave us, oh, just a matter of an hour, an hour and a half if that long to get prepared. They said, "We want you to get prepared to take ... spend three days for registration, so take food and clothing for three days." And that was all the, and some sort of bedding, I guess. And that was all the instruction we had. So, we, of course, took what we could, and they'd go in and it was just bedlam, you know? No ... no organization at all in the camp where ... Santo Tomás ... we didn't know where we were going. And (unintelligible) I don't know if they assigned us to a room; we were on the floor and no, no, nothing but the bedding we'd taken.

Ed Metzler: How were you transported there?

Ms. Charles: I think it was a truck, an open truck.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum. And ... sort of a blur ... and like ...

Ed Metzler: Did the Japanese speak good English? Were you able to understand them?

Ms. Charles: Uh, I think it was broken, but we knew what they wanted. It was, I mean, it was pretty clear. There was not much conversation.

Ed Metzler: How old were you at this point?

Ms. Charles: Uh, I was fifteen.

Ed Metzler: Fifteen?

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: So, you're a young adult at that point.

Ms. Charles: Right.

Ed Metzler: What are you thinking at this point? Are you frightened, are you defiant?

Ms. Charles: No, I don't think frightened, just uh, yes, I mean, well unsure of what the future was, but not, I mean, I felt secure because my ... I was with my parents. I think, you know, things would be okay; I was with my parents.

Ed Metzler: How were your parents taking all this? Could you tell?

Ms. Charles: They ... they were pretty calm about it. We, before, uh, when the ... when Manila was bombed and the war started out there, we had friends, a family that came out and stayed with us because their ... they were in an area that was not safe. And one of the members of the ... mother of the ... the ... the friend that ... had come out, she ... when they started bombing at one time, it wasn't ... we never had any bombs right at the house, but there was a lot of action, plane action.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And you could ... and a lot of noise. But she (unintelligible) really sort of lost it all (chuckles), and went into a closet and just, you know, got on the floor, and that was a little disturbing.

Ed Metzler: Kind of broken down, huh?

Ms. Charles: She, yeah, it just, I think it had gotten to her.

Ed Metzler: And how old was she?

Ms. Charles: Well, about my mother's age.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: Probably about ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... thirty-five, I don't know, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, okay, somewhere, but she was a ... a full adult, yeah.

Ms. Charles: Yeah, it just ... it didn't go on and on, but she was ... it was very traumatic for her. And it did bother me; it bothered all of us, I think, to ...

Ed Metzler: Now, your older brother is with you at the time?

Ms. Charles: He, yeah, right.

Ed Metzler: And how old was he?

Ms. Charles: Was about two and a half years older.

Ed Metzler: So, he was ...

Ms. Charles: and ...

Ed Metzler: ... seventeen, eighteen then.

Ms. Charles: ... right, and he went out to Cavite with my father, in fact, was there during one of the bombings (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: That's right, you mentioned that.

Ms. Charles: Yeah, so uh hum. Yeah, so ... otherwise we, you know, we just took it in our stride. We just thought well, we didn't ...

Ed Metzler: So, here you are at Santo Tomás; it's bedlam. Tell me what happened.

Ms. Charles: Well, somehow we found a place to bed down, and I ... they separated the men and the women. And uh, you know, I ... as far as remembering just when we finally ... well, we realized it was going to be more than three days.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Ms. Charles: And ... (chuckle).

Ed Metzler: That became obvious, didn't it?

Ms. Charles: And the food was, you know, it was ... nothing was organized. And the Japanese did not organize. They sort of were there, and internees not busy, maybe they had a group that decided that they could ... maybe we'd get started and try to org ... that ... became the committee that organized and assigned different jobs. I mean, we had to have something going with ... people kept coming in, I mean, daily, it was just a constant ...

Ed Metzler: Now, these ... these are internees like ...

Ms. Charles: Internees, right, right.

Ed Metzler: ... that were trying to get things organized?

Ms. Charles: If they were around, they were rounding up everybody in that ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... bringing them up from some of the islands, and mostly in the Manila ... Manila area, Luzon, I think.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And I ... without that, it would have, I mean, something I suppose, the Japanese would have had some sort of an organization, but it was a little overwhelming. I mean, they ... I was ... I wasn't in on the organization, but of course ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Ms. Charles: ... but I just remembered being in a room with young children. We were assigned ... well, the place we were because my sister being younger, she was ... we were assigned to this place called the annex. And I just remember ... it being in a room with babies and young children, and it was a little disturbing to try to sleep with (chuckle), and children were, of course, uncomfortable; it wasn't their home, the babies especially and not having ...

Ed Metzler: Now, were the mothers with the children?

Ms. Charles: If ... mothers were with the children.

Ed Metzler: So, your mother was with you at this point?

Ms. Charles: Right, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: And your younger sister?

Ms. Charles: Right. And eventually my father ... when they became organized, became a monitor ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... for the building. So, this way he could see, be with the family. My brother was separated and in another area. And ... but we would get together, no, we ... we formed ... we had committees that would ... gradually formed and amazingly with as many people as they uh, we ... got some sort of a, you know, organization going ... organizations going where we had food lines. And Japanese provided a ... a certain amount, and I think there were individuals that were able to get food in. But ... but we did finally get things set up so we had regular mealtimes.

Ed Metzler: What were you sleeping on?

Ms. Charles: Well, we were on the floor for, I forget just how long. But eventually they got wooden beds made; group got together and we got the lumber and just made wooden beds. And the rooms were packed. The ... they had to get as many people as possible into the rooms, so that two beds would be put together, you know, very narrow beds, and then very narrow space for the aisles for people to get back and forth. So, in a room, school room, that, you know, average size

school room, probably thirty-five, forty people depending on the size of the room.

Ed Metzler: Now, were you sleeping on what – blankets or ...?

Ms. Charles: You know, in the Philippines you didn't need much in the way of cover. Sheets, I think.

Ed Metzler: So, what ... what ...

Ms. Charles: And ...

Ed Metzler: ... did you have a mattress?

Ms. Charles: Oh no.

Ed Metzler: Get (unintelligible)?

Ms. Charles: Well, well, we had some ... yes, it wasn't just the slats, it was ...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: ... somehow, there was some kind of padding.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And we had mosquito nets, and that's ... that's something you need in the Philippines because of the mosquitos.

Ed Metzler: And who provided all of that? The Japanese?

Ms. Charles: (Chuckle), you know, the committees arranged somehow. I suppose it ... as ... as far as the organ ... organizing of this, I'm not just sure how it was arranged.

Ed Metzler: Well, you were just fifteen years old (unintelligible).

Ms. Charles: But ... but I think it was ... they did work with the Japanese and ... but I think, and the Red Cross probably would have done more, but I don't think the Japanese cooperated with them; we did have a Red Cross out there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: You know, this is where an adult, even my mother, I'm not ... well, she would have known more about this, but somehow ... and how long it took ... probably I'd day a month to, I mean it had ... they had to, you know, they couldn't postpone any of this sort of thing because it would be bedlam otherwise. It was bad enough as ... even when it was organized because of the crowding conditions.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And people were prac, you know, everybody that'd come in were used to a very comfortable life. It wasn't, you know, it was just such a change from their former lives.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But I think the main thing was to get food. I mean, people were giving ... coming in and ... and we had some ties, we had one of our, well, he'd been the chauffeur before the war. He stayed at the house, and he prepared some food and brought it in. They were allowed to do that, bring it to the gate once a week, I think, and it was, you know, it was no exchange, the couldn't come in, but that did help.

Ed Metzler: Did it get to you or was it just (unintelligible)?

Ms. Charles: No, we ... no, we were able to have it, but this didn't last, several months. I mean ...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: ... the food, I mean, food was running out, and they ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... and they were having trouble ...

Ed Metzler: (Coughs).

Ms. Charles: ... on the outside, too, I mean, it became, at one point. In the early years we had ... we had enough food to begin with, it wasn't the food we were used to, but it was edible.

Ed Metzler: What about sanitation?

Ms. Charles: Well, we had to practice ... it was difficult, but the ... we had to have some pretty strict rules. I think people were assigned to the bathrooms. You'd go down to a bathroom, it was, you know, this was a ... this was a classroom that we were in at school, so there were limited bathrooms. So, you'd walk down a hall and you'd usually have to stand in line to get in. And toilet paper, just necessities was rationed out. It was ... soap (chuckles) all the things that we take for granted ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Ms. Charles: ... in regular living. It was just an ... a case of adjustment. And I think ... I think children probably adjusted better to this sort of thing. I think adults that had had some, you know, used to all the comforts of living ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... and ... but I think the main thing was we were in a ... thought was a fairly safe place. And you'd have families together, and ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, at least the family was still together, yeah.

Ms. Charles: So ... so the basic things required for living were ... we sort of had, and ...

Ed Metzler: So, you're sleeping accommodations were separated according to sex?

Ms. Charles: Right.

Ed Metzler: But during the day, were you allowed to ...

Ms. Charles: Well, yes. Uh ...

Ed Metzler: ... integrate as a family?

Ms. Charles: Oh, right, no they didn't object to that. And ... but they had curfew hours.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: Eight o'clock I think you had to be in.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: And which bothered me because I was in this area called the annex with young children. Well, if I had been ... if we'd been assigned to the main building, then inside of course, I could have seen my friends during the evening hours, you know, till I went to bed.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But we eventually did move to ... out of the annex, and ...

Ed Metzler: So, what was the annex? Was it a substantial building (unintelligible)?

Ms. Charles: No, it was a much smaller, I don't know what it was used to before ...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: ... what the school used it for, and it was a much smaller building.

Ed Metzler: Well, I've seen the aerial photos of the Santo Tomás building.

Ms. Charles: Right.

Ed Metzler: I mean, it's five, six ...

Ms. Charles: It's, yeah ...

Ed Metzler: ... seven stories, and ...

Ms. Charles: ... it's ... it's a large ... large building.

Ed Metzler: ... and big wings.

Ms. Charles: And, yeah, it's a ... and it's, you know, it's still a very ... it's usable, and it's been there since the sixteen hundreds, so ...

Ed Metzler: Isn't that something?

Ms. Charles: ... well built.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, solid walls!

Ms. Charles: And ... oh yeah!

Ed Metzler: My goodness! Now, how were the Japanese treating you folks at this time?

Ms. Charles: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: I mean ...

Ms. Charles: That's always a question. Uh, they pretty much left us alone. We had, if we were out and a Japanese soldier happened to be walking by, they wanted us to stop, put our hands to our side, to the sides of our body and bow. If we were holding anything, you'd put it on the ground. You had to be ... and if it wasn't done right, you had to do it again. But we, it wasn't this ... they weren't out circulating that much; they were mostly in posts guarding the place.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And, oh, it was later, it was towards, in one of the last ... last years of camp, I was ... we all had assigned duties; if you were over fifteen, you had to have a ... some sort of a duty that you performed which was necessary for the organization to camp.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Ms. Charles: And I was doing gardening at that time. I did several things, but I had come in from the gardening, weeding Talinum which I don't know if you're familiar with this (laughter), basic plant that was one of the ... well, it was one of the main ingredients of our diet which we could grow and grew like a weed.

Ed Metzler: And what plant?

Ms. Charles: Talinum.

Ed Metzler: I don't know it.

Ms. Charles: And it was, I'd say related to spinach.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But a very thick leaf.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And we hated it. I mean, it wasn't ... you just ... I don't know, because we got so much, but I think we learned to love it because it was (laughter) edible.

Ed Metzler: You got to where you weren't choosy, I guess.

Ms. Charles: Yeah, (chuckles) and we made a lot of fun of it, but anyway, that was ... but I was coming back from the garden, my duties, and I think I had gotten a banana leaf, you just couldn't ... there were a few banana trees, you just couldn't go and pick banana leaves. Somebody said, "Oh, you can have this." We used ... I took it because we could use the leaf for cooking something in a skillet for grease, you know, so it wouldn't stick.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: This was later in the camp when we were not getting ... we were getting three, were we getting three meals? I think we were originally, but they cut it back to two meals a day.

Ed Metzler: Were you getting any meat early on?

Ms. Charles: Uh, we got some.

Ed Metzler: And I guess you, for a while there, you were getting the cooking from your home from the ...

Ms. Charles: Yeah, but that was just a second ...

Ed Metzler: That didn't last long.

Ms. Charles: ... that was a supplement. No, we pretty much had to rely ... it wasn't enough, you know? It was enough for a couple of meals maybe or part. But we had a sort of a cereal, a mush, cornmeal or what in the mornings, and we got protein because there were a lot of weevils (laughter) in it. They picked ... we had a group of women that would pick out weevils, but you couldn't get them all (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Couldn't get them all (laughter).

Ms. Charles: And (laughter) so, you either ate it or (laughter) ...

Ed Metzler: Or you didn't; your choice! (laughter)

Ms. Charles: (Laughter), but ...

Ed Metzler: So, what did you do during the day, when you have a whole day and you couldn't garden all day?

Ms. Charles: We had schools.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: Schools, we were ... they organized schools very early.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And I think some of them, and I think that our classes were outside.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And then they, I think, we ... told us that we could use the upper level, fourth, the higher floor of the building, which was not used. It was set up for labs in the university, and so we had schools upstairs. And some of the teachers that we'd had pre-war were there, and got back and got involved. But other people, my father taught, an aunt who had been a school teacher, but not in the Philippines, she taught classes, so a lot of people did teach. And ... and some of the non-teachers that were not professional teachers were some of the best ones we had.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: We felt we really got a good education. We weren't aware of it, but ... but when we came back ...

Ed Metzler: Were there educational materials like books and stuff or ...?

Ms. Charles: Uh, we had, I remember, a history course, we had no books, but we could go to the library and get H.G. Wells and do research.

Ed Metzler: So, there was a library there?

Ms. Charles: Library, and with the books that were there.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Ms. Charles: And I don't know if people brought in or were able to get some, yeah, so that was ... that was a big help. But I think many of the courses were ... ended up being more like lecture courses.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But we ... we ... three of us would share a book if we had a book.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: No, I know I took physics, we had no way to do that work or biology, so we had books ... a book we could share and draw pictures, but we had no microscopes to work with. But as I say, I think the schooling we got ... well, I ... when I came back, had no problem going into ... I was ready for college.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), you were ready for college.

Ms. Charles: But I ...

Ed Metzler: Graduated from the University of Santo Tomás!

Ms. Charles: ... but I don't know, I didn't ... somehow, I lost my diploma and I didn't have to take any kind of an exam. I don't know whether they felt sorry for me or not but (laughter) ...

Ed Metzler: My goodness!

Ms. Charles: ... but I, you know, I was (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: How much interaction was there with, I'm going to use the term, "outside world" either Japanese or just the Filipino outside world ...

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: ... between you guys in the camp and the outside world?

Ms. Charles: Well, very limited because we, you know, they ... we were essentially just in the camp. And like the food that we got was handed through the gate.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But there was no speak ... no talking. They, you know, they were very strict, they didn't want communication.

Ms. Charles: But there was no speak ... no talking. They, you know, they were very strict, they didn't want communication.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: No, it was, I would say, very little. But we did have some under ... well, they did allow because they later found another camp about a year, or a year and a half, the Los Baños Camp, you may be familiar with.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, I know Los Baños, yeah.

Ms. Charles: Okay, well some of my friends went up there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And we ... they allowed us ... letters that were permitted but they were very, you could just say (unintelligible), one or ... you could just write one or two lines.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: And of course, you couldn't say much. Say, "I'm doing fine," and etcetera, etcetera.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Ms. Charles: But ... we had some underground mail going, and uh, I made a ... I sewed a little bear. We did a lot of hand-made things there because we couldn't get out, you know, we couldn't buy things, so all of our gifts were mostly made. And I made a little Panda bear and left the (unintelligible) the, without filling it was whatever we were using open, and then made an apron for him so it would cover up that spot and laced it up.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Ms. Charles: But ... so, we had notes going. And of course, we wrote on very, very small writing on a lot of these notes up ...

Ed Metzler: A little ... kind of ...

Ms. Charles: ... had going back and forth for, I don't know how many trips. And so, we had good communi ...

Ed Metzler: So, who were you communicating with?

Ms. Charles: Well, some good friends, and a boyfriend that I had up there.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Ms. Charles: And ... but had ended up in Los Baños, and of course, that release was ... they came in and they did not have time to ... hardly ... one of my friends, she said ... said that she had to brush her teeth. That was important, I mean, it was just this urgency, they brushed their teeth and because they were going to be taken out. You know, I ... you ...

Ed Metzler: This is when they took part of them to Los Baños?

Ms. Charles: Well, this was when Los Baños was released with the paratroopers. I don't know if you're ...

Ed Metzler: Oh, when they were freed! Yeah, yeah.

Ms. Charles: ... that ... that was ... that was, yeah, moving forward. But so ... well, they had to torch the buildings up there to get the people out. They were so excited to see the men come in, the paratroopers, and all they wanted to do was hug them and thank them, but they had to get out because they were surrounded by ... the Japanese weren't too far away. They didn't realize at that point what was going on.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, they were behind the enemy lines actually, yeah.

Ms. Charles: Oh yeah, it was very ... very dramatic.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And so, they lost ...

Ed Metzler: Now, you weren't ever at Los Baños, were you?

Ms. Charles: No, and I would like to ... I would like to have gone (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah.

Ms. Charles: To be with friends.

Ed Metzler: Well now, I've heard stories, I can't remember where I read it, with regard to Santo Tomás that they allowed chosen people to go out on foraging expeditions ...

Ms. Charles: Uh ...

Ed Metzler: ... to get supplies and stuff ...

Ms. Charles: Probably.

Ed Metzler: ... and come back.

Ms. Charles: Probably.

Ed Metzler: And they knew they'd come back 'cause the rest of their family was being held.

Ms. Charles: Yeah, probably. Yeah, I'm sure.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Because, you know, we ... I ... I would say after six months, I think the camp was pretty well organized thanks to the ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... executive committee and assignments and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... uh, not to the Japanese. But they worked with the Japanese, the exec ... they had an exec ... we had an executive committee that worked with the Japanese commandant ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... and his helpers, but ...

Ed Metzler: What was the morale like?

Ms. Charles: Well, always had the expectation that we will be released. I mean, this ... we had these rumors and it went on the whole three years, it's just ... at first, we thought it was a matter of days. Then we decided well it wasn't going to happen in days, and maybe we better think more in terms of months, but always expectation. Yes, Americans would come back. MacArthur had said, "I shall return." And ...

Ed Metzler: And you believed him!

Ms. Charles: Right, and ...

Ed Metzler: ... and he did! (laughter)

Ms. Charles: And I'm glad he got out by submarine. People, they make a little bit of fun at some of that because he took his dog with him. They thought, "Well, he got out and was able to take his dog." He couldn't have done any good had he stayed in the ... in the Manila area; he would have been taken prisoner.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And who knows what they might have done.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And, no, he couldn't do ... couldn't do a thing for us if he hadn't gone out.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I know there's some controversy around that.

Ms. Charles: It was a lot, and he was quite egotistical; he was brilliant. He was a very controversial figure actually, but I think without MacArthur's persuasion with, including Nimitz and the other people he was conferring with, we would not ... they would have ... they wanted to go to Japan. They wanted to release ... they wanted to take over Japan and then come back and take care of prisoners.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I know there was a debate about whether to skip the Philippines or to work your way up through the Philippines.

Ms. Charles: Yeah. No, they ... and he was the only one that thought they should come in and take the Philippines first.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, that's true!

Ms. Charles: But it would have been too late for prisoners, POWs.

Ed Metzler: You think so?

Ms. Charles: Oh, it was just a matter of ... people were dying of starvation ... later.

Ed Metzler: Well, I want to talk about the decline in the amount of food and the health of the people.

Ms. Charles: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Because you ... we've done a lot of describing about how things started out.

Ms. Charles: Right.

Ed Metzler: Now, can we talk ... talk about how things evolved over that three years?

Ms. Charles: Well, probably the last year was ... until the last year, I think we were getting by. Not, you know, not like we'd like to have had it, but ... but it ... during the last year, food was short; it was short for the Japanese; it was short for the people outside of the camp. I think the Filipinos were having problems, and because it was supplies coming in from out of the country. And they could only grow so much and what not. But it was ... people were ... they cut back rations gradually, and we were down to very meager rations by the time we were released, and nutrition wise, practically nothing.

Ed Metzler: And nothing to supplement either, huh?

Ms. Charles: No, I mean, we just ... no, we, uh well, if you could get hold of sugar or any ... sugar, of course, was just ... it wasn't going to do; I mean, we needed staples. But it wasn't available. And ... but things, if you could buy anything like that, if anybody had a store ... we got ... we were ... we got boxes from the Red Cross three times.

Ed Metzler: Three times?

Ms. Charles: Three times. Now, we were supposed to get them, they were sent monthly; the Japanese took them.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), yeah, they ate better than you guys did.

Ms. Charles: They ... they took them, but they did send ... we would have ... could have had a Red Cross package.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever actually receive one of the packages?

Ms. Charles: Oh yes! As I recall ...

Ed Metzler: For each individual or each family?

Ms. Charles: Uh, I think it was based on the family size.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And ...

Ed Metzler: What was in it, do you remember?

Ms. Charles: Oh, a lot of the same food that the GIs carried, the canned cheese, Spam, I think was (laughter) ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), famous Spam!

Ms. Charles: Oh, Spam was great! And we could, you know, we could stretch this stuff, but of course, you couldn't ... meat, anything perishable, we didn't have any way to keep it, so it was ... had to be consumed when it was opened. And cigarettes, I mean, people that were, you know, a lot of smoking being done in those days.

Ed Metzler: Yes, absolutely!

Ms. Charles: So ... and we had some chocolate, but some of ... things that ... I mean, people that ...

Ed Metzler: So, things got leaner and leaner so to speak ...

Ms. Charles: Right.

Ed Metzler: ... as time wore on. Did you lose weight yourself?

Ms. Charles: Oh, every ... yes, definitely, yeah.

Ed Metzler: How did your parents do under all this?

Ms. Charles: Well, my father was taken out first, he left the first year ... it's in there. I've got the date in my diary; I have not gone back to that.

Ed Metzler: Not a pleasant thought, I guess.

Ms. Charles: Well, yes, it's partly, you know, friends have written books and I have ... well, Liz is going to be interviewed after I am.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: She has a very fine book that came out because she had ... it's her input ... diary with her mother's and her gran ... and her grandmother's. And I should have done something earlier. I ... I have the books, of course, scribbled in pencil on different sized notebooks, whatever I could get and some pen. And I'm having a little trouble read ... I was trying to read some of it last night, and it's ... because I wrote so small, you know, in the same space.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, yeah, everything had to be small.

Ms. Charles: But ... but, you know, we ... when we compared our diaries, it was interesting because so many books have been written, and sometimes they are not factual. A lot of the books written are written by people that were babies when the war broke out. So, all the ... the only ... the only mess ... the only uh, information they got was from their parents, nothing that they remembered. But I mean, I have things written down. And when I've read something in a book that ... say, "Well, that's not the way it was." (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah.

Ms. Charles: But, anyway ...

Ed Metzler: So, tell me about them taking your father away.

Ms. Charles: Well ...

Ed Metzler: What was that all about?

Ms. Charles: ... that's because he had been called back into service. He got rid of his military, his Navy uniform. I mean, he was ... couldn't do any good for the Navy at that point, and they put out a notice one morning and it said, "We know that there are some mili ... we have names of military people that are in the camp," and they gave us about two or three hours to turn ourself ... for them to turn themselves in. And of course, he had to make the decision about whether his name was on the list.

Ed Metzler: Which you had no way of know if it was.

Ms. Charles: No. And ... uh, but if ... they said, "If you do not turn yourself in, you will be executed." And there was somebody probably in camp that gave these names, you know? I think they ... for favors, we had people that were squealing.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Ms. Charles: But you know, (unintelligible), but so, he did. And I just remember him pulling out in a truck and waving. You know, it was ... it was just almost overwhelming.

Ed Metzler: Absolutely!

Ms. Charles: But they were ... he ... he was taken to Cabanatuan, and which was one of the larger camps. That's, I think, where a lot of the men on the Death March ended up.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And ... he had new ... new people up there. In fact, it was a Doctor Waterous that we had not known well before the camp. Quite a few of the internees had known him because he had been a doctor and delivered some of the friends that I have out there ... from there. But I guess he drew up a will and asked Doctor Waterous to, you know, give it to the family if he didn't get back. And because Doctor Waterous was ... was a physician, he was in demand and he, yeah, I think he started on the Death March, but they took him out because they *needed* doctors.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, they found out he was a doctor, yeah.

Ms. Charles: And ... and, of course, he wasn't a young man at that point, and a lot of the young men, of course, didn't make that march. It was just, you know, such a ... demanding and depending on what condition they were in at the time.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, and what was the doctor's name again?

Ms. Charles: Waterous.

Ed Metzler: Waterous.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Can you spell that for me?

Ms. Charles: W-a-t-e-r-o-u-s.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: Who happens to be my son-in-law's grandfather.

Ed Metzler: My goodness!

Ms. Charles: It was just pure coincidence.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that something!

Ms. Charles: (Laughter), met my daughter in graduate school.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that a coincidence?!

Ms. Charles: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: My word!

Ms. Charles: No, we did not know him well out there.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Ms. Charles: And so, we had ...

Ed Metzler: So, at the time your father was taken away, you didn't know whether you'd see him again.

Ms. Charles: No, we didn't. Of course, we didn't look that far ahead; we assumed we would. I ... you *have* to.

Ed Metzler: You *have* to.

Ms. Charles: You have to feel optimistic, otherwise you just couldn't endure the process. And we had some notes, underground notes, that we got back and forth. I wrote letters to my father, and I had them in a container in a little cigarette container. But somehow, you know, we had little woven, uh, sort of a little package or box for cigarettes, to hold cigarettes because everybody smoked back then.

Ed Metzler: Sure, yeah.

Ms. Charles: And I had the notes that he'd written in that, and I took them out and I guess and put other notes that were from friends, and I don't know whether ... I think my mother had given them to me, but I have not seen them.

Ed Metzler: Can't put your hands on right now.

Ms. Charles: And I really feel badly about that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And I don't think they'll turn up.

Ed Metzler: Just looking ahead, your father was okay after the war?

Ms. Charles: He did not make it.

Ed Metzler: He did not make it?

Ms. Charles: He ... December 13th which happened to be his birthday and we got this information from an Ensign who was also in Cabanatuan. I had ... we had met him ... he'd just come out to the Philippines, a young Ensign, and assigned to ...

to Cavite. So, he was in Cabanatuan and knew my father, so they were pretty much together in Cabanatuan, and also was chosen to get on one of ... to come ... they needed men ... they needed people over in Japan to work the mines, and so, they picked up ... they had several ... I don't ... you may have heard of these ships that were sent?

Ed Metzler: The Hell Ships.

Ms. Charles: The Hell Ships.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And so, December 13th my father was taken out and they, oh, waited on the platform, I don't know how long in the sun, I mean, just be ... until ...

Ed Metzler: This is what year?

Ms. Charles: Well, 1944.

Ed Metzler: Four, okay, so it's ...

Ms. Charles: Shortly before our release.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: Very time[ly?], and I think it was a ... a week before they got on a ship ... and the Ōryoku Maru and we got this information from this Ensign Beall (sp?) who became very active in the POW military.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And, unfortunately, I don't think he's living, and I'm sorry I did not have more communication ...

Ed Metzler: That's alright.

Ms. Charles: ... with him ... at one time. I ... I never even really knew him. No, I think my mother was so devastated she was ...

Ed Metzler: Sure.

Ms. Charles: ... not ... she might have followed up later, but ... but anyway, they were sunk, you know, by these ships, American submarines.

Ed Metzler: Absolutely, yeah.

Ms. Charles: Because they had no idea they had American POWs.

Ed Metzler: No, that's ...

Ms. Charles: And he survived the sinking, was put on another ship, and he and this Ensign Beall because that's the information we received later from him. And survived that. And then on a third ship, evidently was not fairing too well. They were put in holds on these ships.

Ed Metzler: Absolutely.

Ms. Charles: Uh, given limited amounts of water, and I'm not got ... hardly any food. Why ... I mean, this ... here they wanted these men back at the mines working, but they did not take care of them on their way. And so, he didn't ... he evidently developed something and ...

Ed Metzler: Didn't make it.

Ms. Charles: ... did not make it.

Ed Metzler: Didn't ... never made it to Japan as far as ... , yeah.

Ms. Charles: And ... no, and Ensign Beall uh, had some sort of an injury and he ... so, he wasn't with my father, but he knew that he had died (throat clearing). And he knew the approximate time that ... pretty much the date. But we didn't hear this, of course, till after Japan ... after the (unintelligible) of Japan because we ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... thought maybe ...

Ed Metzler: Now, I've seen photographs and references to the shantys that were ...

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: ... built up, kind of extra housing, if you will.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: As I remember, actually it looked like in the ...

Ms. Charles: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: ... plaza or the compound or area between.

Ms. Charles: All the space available they allowed this because of the overflow.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: They didn't like ... want them, visually, to be out, they wanted them in rooms because it was more secure.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But no, they ... so, a lot of people had shantys. So, really provided a way for them to be a family again.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And it was really, wasn't much.

Ed Metzler: Did ... did your family have a shanty?

Ms. Charles: We didn't. Probably if my father had stayed in camp ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... and if there had been a space for us available, but four of us girls found a place, now, this was out in a place we called Foggy Bottoms; it was mostly damp, not ... not a very good space (chuckle), and these ... some ... some friends, boys a little bit older had built this platform in part of the shanty or just a ... some posts and a roof and they ...

Ed Metzler: This is away from the main building?

Ms. Charles: Oh, this was ... this was probably by the gate ... near the outside of the grounds, yes as I say it, not a desirable area, but it was ... nobody really wanted to live there fulltime. And (laughter) we bought it for practically nothing and got some nipa (sp?) somehow. Now, this was, I don't know how we obtained it, you know? This was what they built houses with in the Philippines? It's a palm plant.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: For the sides, and four of us, and we each had a corner. It was about eight by eight, not ... not too big. And we had got the ... had the roof ... the roof was on it, but we closed it in and it was our little clubhouse, and we called it "Leaky Keepy," our helter-skelter shelter (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah.

Ms. Charles: And so, we'd have a get-together, and it was just a nice little getaway and we had meetings out there. It was very informal, it was just ... just a fun thing to do and invited friends out occasionally.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And one time I was able to get some pineapple scrapings that they were throwing out. They were preparing pineapple. We did have some fresh fruits occasionally, you know? That was ... when we could get them in.

Ed Metzler: I'll bet a real treat!

Ms. Charles: So, I got these scrapings of ... of peels ...

Ed Metzler: Right!

Ms. Charles: ... and somehow got some sugar, and let it sit for about a week (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Ms. Charles: So, we had some Kickapoo joy juice (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's right, a little of a buzz off of that, huh?

Ms. Charles: (Chuckles), and it attracted a little ... all of our friends (laughter).

Ed Metzler: I'll bet it did (laughter)! Had quite a party, huh?

Ms. Charles: And I'm not sure my mother ever knew about it (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Ms. Charles: But ...

Ed Metzler: Now, what about illnesses, disease, uhm, death starting to take it's toll?

Ms. Charles: Yeah. Towards the end, it was just ... it was accelerating, people ... starvation. It was never accredit ... uh, it was never on their death certificate ... put down as starvation. It was pneumonia, uh, some of those ... some other thing. But the Japanese did not want this in record ... to be on the records.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I heard they fiddled the death certificates.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum. No, it was just a matter of time. And unfortunately, or uh, or sadly, it was sometimes some of these people that died, they found that they had a storage of food under their bed ... waiting for the time when they really needed it. But probably getting to the point where they'd forgotten about it or, you know just ...

Ed Metzler: Or just weren't thinking clearly anymore.

Ms. Charles: Right, right, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Which can happen when you're in the process of starving.

Ms. Charles: It, yeah, right. But no, it's ... and I just ... well, we terminated classes. People were just ... didn't have the energy. I mean, it was a case of just getting to where you had to be. And I remember just walking across a room and being tired, just ... it was an effort just to walk across a space.

Ed Metzler: Was there plenty of water or were you short on water as (unintelligible)?

Ms. Charles: I don't remember a shortage of water.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: Uh, we seemed to have plenty of (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Must have been good water. I mean, you ... you ...

Ms. Charles: Well ...

Ed Metzler: ... did you see any of the dysentery and that kind of stuff?

Ms. Charles: ... we had, yes, we had dysentery. In fact, I got ... I brought one of my last diaries, but ... and I was, I guess I had ... I think I had, maybe it was dysentery; either ... one of the dysenteries or it was a bacillary dysentery, but I was ... actually ended up in the hospital. And this was not too long before our release. I had forgotten that till I noticed this in the diary.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And ... but I, yeah, it was ... and you know, to have something like that in a ... place where you have to go to the bathroom and wait in line.

Ed Metzler: And standing in line!

Ms. Charles: Well ...

Ed Metzler: And not enough food and ...

Ms. Charles: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: ... and you get dehydrated.

Ms. Charles: But I did end up in the hospital and I just remembered write ... writing it; I'd written it at the ... it was so much easier ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... because the bathrooms (laughter) available.

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Ms. Charles: Yeah. No, it was ...

Ed Metzler: Now, I understand there was some controversy with regard to the committees that were set up to help, you know, govern, you know, by the internees ...

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: ... to govern and some of the people that were considered, you know, they were even looked at after the war as conspiring with the Japanese; was any of that around and being talked about while you were there?

Ms. Charles: We knew there were informers and they did this for favors, but I don't know personally, I mean, I didn't know who they were ... pro ... I'm sure other ... the adults had an idea.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: This did happen, yes.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: I mean, the fact that they called out that, you know, when my father had to report; somebody, I think, informed, the committee that ... the Japanese committee that ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... yes, there were military people in the camp.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: So ...

Ed Metzler: And I think there was one person there, and I can't remember the name, but he was fluent in Japanese, but he was an American.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: And he actually ended up being a Japanese citizen (laughter) after the war was over.

Ms. Charles: Oh, did he?!

Ed Metzler: I mean, I'm ... I'm going by what I read.

Ms. Charles: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: I mean, I ...

Ms. Charles: Well yeah. Well, what's interesting is MacArthur, you know, was assigned to go to Japan after the war.

Ed Metzler: Right, he was the ... he was the ...

Ms. Charles: And they ...

Ed Metzler: ... the head of the government.

Ms. Charles: ... and they loved him evidently.

Ed Metzler: They did, yeah.

Ms. Charles: They loved him. He (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: He did a very good job there, I think.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Getting Japan back on its feet and ...

Ms. Charles: Right.

Ed Metzler: ... and allied.

Ms. Charles: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Well, let's talk about how things ended at Santo Tomás. We haven't gotten to the ... the most exciting ...

Ms. Charles: The dramatic (chuckles) ...

Ed Metzler: ... dramatic, that's a good word. I didn't ... the most dramatic chapter in your story.

Ms. Charles: And, yeah, people ... sometimes these gatherings, "Oh, how did you feel when ... ," you know, you were going to be liberated and (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Uh, you were sad right? (laughter)

Ms. Charles: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: Wrong!

Ms. Charles: Well, you know, we had these rumors constantly going and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... but there was a ... an indication, it was at Christmas, I think. Well, a plane flew over and dropped some ... some leaflets and said that Santa Claus, was it Santa Claus will be here today or tomorrow, or tomorrow and the next day. Anyway, it was some notes say ... indicating that, yes, Santa Claus was going to be somebody that was going to come in and we were going to be released. And names were dropped by a plane that came over the ...

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Ms. Charles: Now, and ... and that's where I've heard discrepancies in ... when people report this. But I do have it in my diary but it was, I think, just few days before we were released. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, this is early '45.

Ms. Charles: Right, uh huh. In late January, I think.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Or no, well, now this must have been in December, I mean, they ... I think they said Santo ...

Ed Metzler: Well, I guess that's when you were first starting to hear the message, I mean.

Ms. Charles: Yeah, right. Now, I've got to get my own diary because I have to ... to get the accuracy of this. But anyway, we knew it was a matter of time. I mean, there was a lot of ...

Ed Metzler: Don't forget your coffee.

Ms. Charles: Oh, I ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Ms. Charles: ... yeah, we, you know, had ... there was a lot of action taking place. Several, well, I think it was about the time Leyte was invaded, and ...

Ed Metzler: That was October of '44.

Ms. Charles: Right, and we used to ... we had an expression, "Better Leyte than never!"

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Ms. Charles: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: I like that (laughter).

Ms. Charles: (Chuckles), I mean, you know, despite everything that happens, there's always humor.

Ed Metzler: Well, thank goodness! (Unintelligible), yeah!

Ms. Charles: And we ... and we had this paper that came out, (unintelligible) I guess, of ... and you know, we made fun of everything, but people needed this. And ... and a rumor gets started and it would get blown up, and it was ... this is what kept people going, I think.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But we were ... I ... safe. We were optimistic; I don't think anyone ever thought ... really thought we weren't going to make it. I mean, there was question ... it was getting questionable towards the end because we ...

Ed Metzler: Sure, you were, again, to worry I imagine. But this note, these notes, "Santa Claus is coming," that were dropped from an airplane, did you actually, physically see one of those?

Ms. Charles: No, no, I didn't.

Ed Metzler: You just heard about that?

Ms. Charles: Right, they were just, uh huh. But ... or did I, no. Now, I ... I would ... I would have to go back, I don't think I saw it physically during ...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: ... there weren't that many.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: But ... but the word gets around very fast.

Ed Metzler: You bet! I'll bet it does.

Ms. Charles: I mean, it just ...

Ed Metzler: Especially that word, yeah!

Ms. Charles: Oh yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, tell me what happened when this all came to a head.

Ms. Charles: Well, I was trying to read ... last night because I had ... kept ... I brought this diary that was written, you know, just before our release, and during the day, you know, it was just a regular day but we ... it was ominant (?) that, you know, things were really coming to a head. And we knew the troops ... there ... there was so much action, plane action, and we would ... I mean, they had dogfights going and (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: So, you could see the war had come to your neighborhood?

Ms. Charles: Yeah, right. And they wouldn't ... I mean, they would not let us outside; they didn't want us ... they didn't want any kind of signaling going on or, I guess, any. They thought there'd be communication which you can't really ... you can't communicate with a plane; it's (chuckles) ...

Ed Metzler: Not very well, I know.

Ms. Charles: ... it's ... several thousand feet. But ... but we'd get to the window and look at ... get to the windows and look up, and we'd, you know, watch what was going on. They couldn't ... they couldn't prevent that. But uh, but they did ... they ... it ... it was at night, it was about, oh, I thought around eight o'clock, nine, but we heard ... there was of rumbling and noise and what not, and I was upstairs, I think, on the third floor watching out. We knew, I mean, because of all the noise and action going on outside of the camp, uh, but all of a sudden this hor ... well, loud noise happened and this tank came barging in. We couldn't quite tell because of the night and the lights. But a tank came barging through the front gate, and this was the beginning of the release. I mean, these ... these were the 37th Infantry. And I think they were in a race with the First Cavalry that was sort of ... sort of a competition to see who would get to (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Who could get there first?

Ms. Charles: And I think the 37th ...

Ed Metzler: That's good!

Ms. Charles: ... 37th Infantry, I think. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, what happened?

Ms. Charles: Well, we stayed up for, I mean, they did not ... wasn't safe. I mean, there was a lot of action going on, there was ... Japanese had ... they had dug foxholes, they were getting prepared to hold their own. And uh, so there was a lot of action going on. And I think between the tanks and the Japanese, and I guess were they ... I don't know if they killed all the Japanese or if they didn't, they took ... took them, I mean, they (unintelligible) unarmed them or whatever, but they did come in. And (unintelligible) Japanese, I think the commandant, the ones that were in the camp took over the education building which was a men's dorm, took over the first floor and held the men hostage. So, that ... the men there were not released for several days. So, there was some action going on and it ... uh, and you know, I should have reread ... if I could have, some of this, but I just remember being so hungry in the morning. You know, those ... action going on all night, but we stayed upstairs, but some did go out, but they really didn't want the internees milling around because ...

Ed Metzler: I would guess not, yeah.

Ms. Charles: ... there was firing going on, it wasn't safe. But in the morning, things were rather calm in looking out and seeing this GI opening a K-ration or one of his cans, and watching him eating it casually and just thinking, "Oh my goodness!" You know, *FOOD!* We were looking at it, and we couldn't (laughter) do anything about it. But it wasn't too long before we ... they got stuff set up, and then we ... was ... we ... we were getting some GI, you know, the (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: So, what happened to the Japanese as far as you know? They were either killed or taken away?

Ms. Charles: They, well, they held out in the education building.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And it was about, seemed to me like it was a couple of days. Now, this ... the accuracy of this, I would have to go back (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Seemed like a long time, but I think it was only one or two days. And they finally did, I think, give up.

Ed Metzler: Well, according to what I read, there was a period of negotiations.

Ms. Charles: Maybe so.

Ed Metzler: With a go-between.

Ms. Charles: Yeah, probably, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Helping in the negotiation. One of those ... that man that I mentioned that was fluent in Japanese ...

Ms. Charles: Oh, right.

Ed Metzler: ... now this is ... I'm just going by what I've read.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum, yeah.

Ed Metzler: And so, it took a while to ...

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: ... kind of arrange. Now, during this period of time, you were still, no food, huh?

Ms. Charles: Well ...

Ed Metzler: Or a little or ...

Ms. Charles: ... close, it seemed like it was pretty close to the time they had come in.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: I mean, I think the people were still being held hostage at that education building.

Ed Metzler: Right, men, mostly men, huh?

Ms. Charles: And the Japanese were ... men, it was men, and half Japanese were inside ...

Ed Metzler: Where was your brother at this time?

Ms. Charles: He was in the education building.

Ed Metzler: So, he was part of the ...

Ms. Charles: Right, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum. And a ... a friend that we had known, close friend of my uh, the boy, of my ... of my brother came back; he had gone back ... when he was ... he'd gone back to college before the war, so he was not in ... in the Philippines when the war broke out, John Wilson, and he was looking for his father who had been transferred to Los Baños; he thought he was in Santo Tomás. And ... but anyway, he ... he prepared some food and I had ... we had ... there was, well, other people were using it but we had ... the ... the first meal with real meat, and I guess we just couldn't, you know, taste ... tasted so good. Well, it was too rich, we just could not handle it, and it was a problem. When you haven't had meat and ...

Ed Metzler: No,(unintelligible).

Ms. Charles: ... had nutritious food ...

Ed Metzler: And then all of a sudden ...

Ms. Charles: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... there it is.

Ms. Charles: No, we found it was ...

Ed Metzler: Now, was that still at Santo Tomás? Were you still ...

Ms. Charles: Well, that was in Santo Tomás, oh yes.

Ed Metzler: ... okay. So, how long did you stay in Santo Tomás after it was liberated?

Ms. Charles: Uh, we were some of the first to be sent back ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... transferred back to the States. It was 23rd of February.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: The day that Los Baños was liberated.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Which we didn't know.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And, fact, I didn't know till quite a few years later that the planes that ... that carried the paratroopers that dropped off at Los Baños swung around and came to ... back to Santo Tomás and landed out at an air ... a place where they could land. It wasn't an airfield because they didn't have any at that point. So, we were put on those C-47s and sent down to Leyte.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Ms. Charles: And ... and then got on a ship later, a few days later.

Ed Metzler: So, you, your mother, your younger sister, and your older brother?

Ms. Charles: Brother, right, and I (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: You were ... you were put on the C-47s.

Ms. Charles: Take ... and taken down to ...

Ed Metzler: To Leyte?

Ms. Charles: Uh hum. And they had a hospital, make ... makeshift hospital that they set up for the ... actually, the military.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But they wanted to check us out.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: They didn't want us coming back into the States with all these bugs and what not. They were, you know, checked us out because we did.

Ed Metzler: Well, yeah, also to determine whether you needed to be hospitalized or not.

Ms. Charles: Well, yeah, but ... so, we were there for about three days.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And then ...

Ed Metzler: You check out okay?

Ms. Charles: Fairly good yes, uh hum. Yeah, it was no ... I think they gave us deworming medicine, and all this stuff that you get when you (laughter) ...

Ed Metzler: Oh, yeah, it was standard.

Ms. Charles: ... which you take anyway when you're live in the trop ... tropics.

Ed Metzler: Well, right, right.

Ms. Charles: And ...

Ed Metzler: Well, during the period you were in the encampment, are there any individual Japanese that come to mind that you ... that people particularly befriended or hated, you know, either end of the spectrum.

Ms. Charles: Well, we had no love for the commandants, and Obiko (sp?), I think, was the commandant when the war ended.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And he was killed.

Ed Metzler: Okay, he was ...

Ms. Charles: And his body was laying in the ... one of the front areas ... walkways in the ... in Santo Tomás, and people walked by and sometimes kicked him.

Ed Metzler: Un hum.

Ms. Charles: I mean, it was, you know, there was no love for the Japanese.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But there was an incident, and this was very close to the time we were liberated 'cause I read ... did see that last night when I was reading through my diary where an aunt that was in camp, we had ... our family was there, my ... I mean, my mother our immediate family, and of course, my father was taken out.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But my uncle was there, his brother, and his wife and a cousin. And ... and they had ... well, there were two cousins actually. And so they had a little spot that they would get, you know, try to do a little bit of cooking, and we had a spot near them where we could do minor, you know, if we had anything to fix for an extra meal. And we were right next to what they ... sort of a badaga (sp?); it was ... we could sort of see in, but we couldn't see much.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But there were Japanese there occasionally because they had stor ... it was used for storage. And there was a Japanese soldier, we could look in and see him, he was a ways away, and he cooking up something in his skillet. And he ate what he wanted and then he didn't, I guess he was full, and he came to this ... to the wiring and put ... offered the skillet to us through the, well, the food in it which, and this was just a few ... just a short time before our liberation.

Ed Metzler: So, an act of kindness?

Ms. Charles: It was, really, yeah, I mean, there were ... I mean, this is true of people. It doesn't matter what's going on now, and he ... but it was very touching.

Ed Metzler: So, there's some of both ... both evil and good ...

Ms. Charles: Right.

Ed Metzler: ... within ...

Ms. Charles: ... and of course, we accepted it (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: I bet!

Ms. Charles: So, it was ... uh hum.

Ed Metzler: So, after all of these years, how do you feel about the Japanese?

Ms. Charles: Uh, I had trouble when I first came back because I had an instructor in school that, I think, was part Japanese, and I just had ... I had a lot of trouble with that especially after I got the word of what happened to my father. It was mostly because of my father's situation.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: I think with my own, I don't think I would have felt quite the same. But I just thought it ... it was ... he should have been able to come back. And so, I, no, I ... it, I mean, the Japanese I see, and there are quite a few, and they travel a lot. Their ... they know hardly anything about the war; they're third generation now, I think.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: So, which I ... I mean, you know, uh, I would accept those ... I don't know, and there's ... oh, I go to a YMCA and there's a man that's Japanese, and I have no

troub ... trouble with that (unintelligible); he's American but he's Japanese (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Japanese descent, yeah.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum, but I ... it's ... it's been ... it was difficult especially at first. But I can't say that ...

Ed Metzler: So, when you first came back to the States after this ordeal, what ... what did you? What did your family do?

Ms. Charles: Well, we didn't know the situation with my father till about June. When ... when ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... when was it that Japan ... when they dropped the bomb?

Ed Metzler: The war was still going on.

Ms. Charles: Yeah, right. And I was ready ... I had been out of high school almost a year, so I was ready for college, my brother and I. We stayed ... we had no place to come to except ... really, so we stayed at my grandmother's in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. And so, I matriculated about two or three months later, started summer school I believe. And my brother went back to Cambridge, Bos ... uh, MIT and my mother and sis ... my daughter, my sister, I mean, uh, stayed in Glenwood for a while. And my mother was not too well; she almost died in camp. She got a ... had a bowel obstruction and peritonitis and had about a two percent chance of making it. So, how she survived, I think she just knew she had to.

Ed Metzler: But she survived in camp or ...

Ms. Charles: In camp.

Ed Metzler: ... or did this hit her after she got ...

Ms. Charles: No, no, she was in camp; she was ...

Ed Metzler: Was she in the hospital in camp?

Ms. Charles: She was ... well, to begin with, and I just happened to be in the hospital at the same time.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And I remember them bringing her in, and the pain she was in, I mean, I could hardly stand it.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Ms. Charles: But they took her out that night knowing that something was serious. And we had the doctor there that we had had pre-war; he was interned.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And she was taken outside, and they did surgery, and it ruptured, so she had peritonitis. And, you know, medication was limited, but it had some sulfer, sulfer, sulfa medicine ...

Ed Metzler: Sulfa drugs, yeah.

Ms. Charles: ... which had come in, and ... but not ... they couldn't ... limited amounts.

Ed Metzler: How can you have an operation unless you had anesthesia?

Ms. Charles: Well, they ... this was outside; they probably had some. It ... this was a hospital out of camp.

Ed Metzler: Oh really?!

Ms. Charles: Yeah, one of the Philippine hospitals. They ...

Ed Metzler: The Japanese gave you ... gave you (unintelligible)?

Ms. Charles: Well, I don't know their circumstances, I mean, their supply situation, but they evidently did have anesthesia.

Ed Metzler: But the Japanese gave access to the outside hospital?

Ms. Charles: Right, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: That's interesting!

Ms. Charles: Now, we could only visit her with limit ... I only went out a few times, a couple of times, two or three times, and she was there about, oh, she was gone for a month or more.

Ed Metzler: While ... during the internment, she was gone for a month at an outside hospital?

Ms. Charles: Uh hum, right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: That's amazing!

Ms. Charles: And so, we ... when she came back, of course, she was in bed.

Ed Metzler: I'm just amazed the Japanese didn't just let her die.

Ms. Charles: Yeah, uh huh. Well, it was, yeah, I hadn't thought about that, but they ...

Ed Metzler: That is amazing!

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Now, this is going to sound like a silly question, but its ... I want to ask it. You went through that ordeal, very formative time of your life. How do you feel it changed you as a person in the way you look at people in life and ... ?

Ms. Charles: Well, if you'd asked me this probably twenty, thirty years ago or more, or even early after my release, might have felt different. I mean, I might have said something differently, but looking back I just ... the life I'd had prior to camp was pretty much one of ...

Ed Metzler: (Coughs).

Ms. Charles: ... because of my father's work, isolation, going to, you know, in the South America, there were hardly any children to play with, had my brother, and he was older and he had other interests. And I know when go ... and then coming ... going to the Philippines, being separated or ... well, in Manila when I lived in Manila, had I not been homesick, it would have been fine, but there were no ...

Ed Metzler: (Coughs).

Ms. Charles: ... I was the youngest in this place where I lived.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And I really had no, no particular friends right there that I ... they were good to me, but I didn't have anybody I could really identify with. But ... and then after ... and then the Paracale, the money camp, there was a family that came in that were Russian, there was a girl, and it was ... such a ... I was just in ecstasy because I went down and I joined them for tea. They couldn't speak English but these were some girls. I mean, I was (chuckle) had nev ... never really had any friends. Central City I had a really close friend.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Dolly Badic (sp?), and ... but ... and then when we get back in Manila, we lived out from the city. After school, we went to school until twelve, then we went home, and there really wasn't anybody there. I played with a cousin, my brother was older and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... wasn't out as much, he was little more serious about school and did a lot more reading and stayed in. And so, in camp it was really the first time in my life that I could seek friends other than at school. And, you know, to be fifteen, finally having a social life (chuckles), and I think ...

Ed Metzler: Even if it is in a prisoner of war camp (laughter).

Ms. Charles: Yeah, no, I mean, and I didn't think about this till later.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And I thought ... well, it really gave me a sense of belonging, I mean, and friends. And, you know, what we did for ... we ... I mean, we ... we were together constantly. I mean, I ... really what happened was the family unit ... well, we were a close family, but I saw my family, my mother and sister and brother just at a mealtime, maybe a lunch, otherwise we were going our own ways.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: And my sister being younger was, you know, she was with my mother more and so, it was ... I spent most of my time with friends, and of course, into the evenings. And ... and these friends, we ... any ... I remember I was in the hospital shortly before uh, we were released ... , I think of dysentery. And all these friends came to see me, and ... and we wrote notes back and forth constantly in the (unintelligible). When the people were out, you know, these friends out of the side of the camp, so it was a social situation. I had a social friendship going.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you had a social belonging really for the first time in your life.

Ms. Charles: That's right. And ... which I, I mean, you know, I had just thought it was great, but I didn't really think that much about it at the time, I mean, was happening. But after the war, I came back and we ... because of these close associations, I wrote three or ... about three or four letters a week, and did ... I kept this up for, I'd say, a good part of my college. Well, at least the first year. Maybe not as much (unintelligible) ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... because, you know, because of work, school work and what not. But I kept a lot of ... I've kept all these letters (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: That's wonderful!

Ms. Charles: And ... but ... and people that I ... well, aren't ... aren't around anymore or people that, you know, I didn't ... later I didn't keep up with as closely. So, it was the social life that I had, and ...

Ed Metzler: So, despite ... despite the physical hardships ...

Ms. Charles: Right.

Ed Metzler: ... there was a social aspect that ...

Ms. Charles: Uh hum, yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... kind of unexpected. I wouldn't ... I didn't expect to hear that from you, but that's a very interesting insight.

Ms. Charles: Well, I might not have said this, as I say earlier.

Ed Metzler: Well, I know, but we're looking back from now and ...

Ms. Charles: Well, I'm ...

Ed Metzler: ... and ...

Ms. Charles: ... yeah, I mean, that's ... here I am eighty-nine years old.

Ed Metzler: Well ...

Ms. Charles: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: ... it's very, very interesting. Well, we've covered a lot of territory, and I'm fascinated with your story. There must be some things you'd like to talk about that I haven't asked about. What can ... what would you like to say?

Ms. Charles: Oh, well, it ... was a mixed thing. It was a really ... it was an experience ... in some ways I wouldn't want to not have, the good, the positive things about it.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: But it also gives you a feeling of importance of family, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Right, right. I mean, it's right there in shocking black and white for you because (pause), okay, what else can we talk about?

Ms. Charles: Well, what's your life about (laughter)?

Ed Metzler: We're not interviewing me! (laughter)

Ms. Charles: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: I'll let you interview me later (laughter).

Ms. Charles: (Laughter), I'm always interested in what other people are doing.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). Well, I'll tell you, what I'm going to do is I'm going to end the interview now.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: And then we'll talk about what ... how we want to maybe try and do a joint interview here later today.

Ms. Charles: Oh yes, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: We'll wait and see how that works out.

Ms. Charles: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: But let me thank you for spending the time with me and sharing your experiences.

Ms. Charles: Well ...

Ed Metzler: I think you're one of the rare, few who survived that and went through it, and it's ... it's a ...

Ms. Charles: Well, these ...

Ed Metzler: ... an inspiring story.

Ms. Charles: ... it's interesting, these reunions didn't start that we have ... had until 1980 as I recall.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: Big one because we, you know, we're raising families, we didn't have the money to travel. And it was a huge one, I mean, and we didn't recognize people. We had to have name tags (laughter).

Ed Metzler: No, I understand! It's like high school reunions.

Ms. Charles: But ... yeah, right.

Ed Metzler: You don't recognize the people.

Ms. Charles: And so, but I think it's ... I'm ... there's hardly ... so many that aren't around anymore.

Ed Metzler: That's correct!

Ms. Charles: So, we arranged this mini reunion with Liz Irvine and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Ms. Charles: ... and her girls; I think she has three daughters. I have three daughters and ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Ms. Charles: ... they've gotten acquainted through these reunions.

Ed Metzler: I think that's great.

Ms. Charles: And the girls organized it, we didn't.

Ed Metzler: Nice!

Ms. Charles: Liz and I were out of it (laughter).

Ed Metzler: No, I understand. Well, that's good, that's what the next generation is for. Let them organize them.

Ms. Charles: But Liz ... but Liz has been very proactive in this ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's good.

Ms. Charles: ... and she's ...

Ed Metzler: Okay. Well, thank you so much.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy

CD – #OH04517 – Ms. Yvonne Goodier Charles

Transcribed by: K. Matras

Houston, TX

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