

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

Question: If I could just have you give me your name and the spelling of it so I just have that.

Answer: ok. My name is Rachel B. Beck. My name is spelled R-a-c-h-e-l for Rachel, B as in Bosebury, which was my maiden name, and B-e-c-k Beck is my last name.

Question: Where were you born?

Answer: I was born in Shanghai, China, and when people ask me why, well, my Mom was there at the time, so that's where I was born. My mother worked at, long time ago when she was younger, she worked for the Shanghai Telephone Company, and my Dad met her out there and got discharged from the British Army out there so that he could be with her, and they got married, and he had a job there, and she quit working, of course, when she got married, and my Dad worked for the Shanghai Water Works, which was under British control, and we just lived there. Shanghai was a very modern international city, and lots of people lived there for many different reasons, and it was just where I lived.

Question: As a child, what are your memories of it, pre...

Answer: Pre-war?

Answer: Oh, I don't know. It was really just living. We lived in Avenue Hall, we lived in Henley House, and my Daddy worked at the Water Works, and it was just great. I mean, I had an amah and we were playing a lot. I remember playing a lot and then we took home leave. That means like every four years my Dad had his way paid to go back home to England, and we went back to England and things like that. And there was always something going on in China, you know, a war going on and all that, and Shanghai was a city divided into many different quarters, like French Quarter, British Quarter, and you know, you had various extra territorial governments, which was something kids maybe don't understand, but it's like having your nation in another place. They were given a 99-year-lease on the city of Shanghai, but not just the British, like in Hong Kong, it was just British. But in Shanghai I believe it was British, American, I know the German had a section, French, and I think the Dutch, but I'm not sure of any other nations, and like the police force in our section was British police, but the British ran the Shanghai Water Works completely, and French had their police in their section, you know, so it was like little bits of England imported into parts of China. And then in between the different areas there would be what they call international Chinese settlements, you know. The Chinese had their own governing laws and stuff in their areas. But most of Shanghai was basically run by the municipality of the different countries, you know, to keep order and law and things like that. It was just great living there, you know, just like any other kid growing up anywhere else. Except, except that as children we learned all kinds of different peoples, all kinds of different religions, all kinds of different.. I mean they were all there. Shanghai British schools where I went started school very early, about 4 years old you start kindergarten, and you had a lot of different kids in there, so you learned a lot of, you know you just learned to accept people. I would say that much. You learned to accept people for how they were and how they acted to you and not necessarily who they were, you know, or what nationality they were or anything like that.

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

Question: I've heard other people talk about living in an international community like that, and with the children it was always interesting because they kind of intermixed the languages. Is that how....

Answer: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I don't know about other languages like French or German, because mostly we stuck with British kids, you know, where we were living. But I learned Chinese, but what I learned was street Chinese, you know, just like the kids learn, and I guess I spoke it fluently. I used to go, sometimes we couldn't get hot water in well, this was, a lot of my memory is more clear after the Japanese came and they kicked us out. They wanted to take over this lovely building that we lived in called Avenue Hall, you know it was like an apartment/hotel type thing. And they took it over, and they took over the Water Works, and my Dad had to work there for nothing until they put us in camp. I mean, they gave him subsistence and they shoved us over to the Haroon Road apartments, and again, that was mostly British and American people there, but also some German, and it was a Japanese masseuse living up in another apartment. And this was, it was kind of funny because I never had a concept of war like that, you know. Like we were terrible until they started rounding up British and putting arm bands on them and then we weren't allowed out of the compound, and I was going to school at the time, and they stopped our school, the public girls school on Bubblingwell Road, or St. George's Square, I can't remember which one. But anyway, they took over the schools, and that was the neat thing we didn't have school for awhile till we got to camp, but I learned Shanghai Chinese from the Chinese and I could speak it very well, and when we didn't have hot water, you.. my Mom would send me into the Chinese settlement, and I knew who to ask, the they'd follow me home with water in wooden buckets to pour in our tub, you know, and um, it was just, I liked living there actually.

Question: How many kids were there in your family?

Answer: There were 3 of us girls. My older sister and I about a little a year apart and my younger sister was about 3 ½ years younger than me, and she was only, well, she was 3 when the war came along, and 4, actually she was born in '39, and the war started in '41, but we weren't interned till '43, so she was only 4 when she went to camp, but she went wouldn't know anything about what it was like before the Japanese took over, you know.

Question: And how old were you when you...

Answer: Well, I just turned 7 in '41, and in '43 in April, 'cause I was 7 at the end of the year, and in '43 April I was 8 when we were interned, was 11 when we got out, so I was in there from April 1943 till actually November of 1945 because although the war ended, at the end of the war they told us they would never surrender and, oh, it was terrible that last day. We were scared of being killed, you know, because they said we'd never surrender and we had to go back in our buildings and our rooms and we weren't to do anything, and that next morning we were waiting for roll call and they disappeared. But, um, everything was really a mess in China, in Shanghai especially, and all the things we possessed that were supposed to have been kept for us in safe keeping by the Japanese disappeared, but of course, there was no housing because other people had moved in and we, it wasn't until November of 1945 that we found some apartments that the Shanghai Water Works owned in Kiangse Road, so we got to leave the actual camp compound. 'Course we were free, more or less, at the end of the war, but lots of people had to stay in camp 'cause there was just no place for them.

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

Question: do you remember before the Japanese came. Can you remember your Mom and Dad having conversations or talking to you about what was going on?

Answer: Yes, I do. I really do. I remember them saying that the Japanese were bloodthirsty people. Now the Japanese committed a lot of atrocities, terrible atrocities, my own baby doctor was killed by them, Dr. Squires, and he ran a missionary kind of like a hospital for people out in the country. I don't know quite where in the country, and I know that I heard stories of babies being thrown up in the air and caught on Japanese bayonets. That was the terrible thing, and so, but you know, children back then, not like American kids now, you were seen and now heard. If you were told to go to your room, you went to your room. When they were talking, you know, they weren't supposed to be part of all that, but I remember hearing them, and so I had an imagination. You know, when little children hear the word bloodthirsty, you think they drink blood you know. So I used to be terribly afraid that they would see me and at night we'd cover ourselves up with our blankets and wouldn't even let a bit of hair show out because we didn't want them to be drinking our blood, you know, or whatever it was, but yeah, I'd heard stories, and a lot of things happened. I understood a lot more when we got out, because my Mom and Dad were really afraid for us, and didn't want us talking out of turn or saying things like, you know, calling the Japs names and things like that, call the Japanese people names, and uhm. Because you know until we went to camp we were really very unsafe, because anytime they wanted to put, you see, you used to be able to go anywhere in Shanghai, but then they would put up these street barricades. If you were caught in between there you could be caught in there for hours or days. You didn't dare complain, you didn't dare make, ah complain about anything 'cause you didn't know where you'd end up. And they did torture a few people. A friend of my Mom's was.. ran um, a building called the bund, you know, on the bund there was a kind of like a racetrack and a hotel, and this lady she knew ran it and because a lot of British dignitaries used to visit, they would at least take a room there when they were in town, they thought she knew all their secrets, and she didn't, of course, and they forced her daughter to watch her being beaten, trying to get stuff out of her, and I'd heard all this. You know, kids hear things, but when you're little, you think of it a lot differently, and you get pretty scared, and they were trying to keep us from knowing a lot, you know, too much, because we talked, you know.

Question: Oh, yeah. I never thought about that aspect of it.

Answer: Yeah. Children just say things, and we found out after camp that there was a radio in the third floor, in D block, third floor, men's bathroom. I always used to wonder why the men went to the bathroom so much, and see our building had like three floors, and each floor had 26 rooms and each room was filled with at least a family of 4 or 5 and some rooms had 6 or more people in them, and then you only had 3 bathrooms, 'cause these were intended for students that went to Lunghwa Academy where there's only one kid in a room, you know, and so anyway, it was, it was, you know, pretty smelly sometimes when they turned the water off and wouldn't let you have any water and all that. But anyway, they had a radio built in, or someone had built one, it was in the third floor bathroom, and so we had to be careful that the children. I never knew that till after the war, you know, but you could have been killed for having it.

Question: So it was kind of a phase thing, because they first came and did the arm bands, and then...

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

Answer: Yes, and then they lined up or garnered all the people from different places and then they had to decide, I guess, the Japanese... this you'd really have to ask an adult that, like who's going to what camp and with whom, and Lunghwa was out of that.. an academy that had been an academy for Chinese students prior to the '37 bombings and stuff, and then it was disused, and then they made it a camp for people, and that's why a lot of us were not in camp till '43, because they had to get it ready, and they had to get the ones I guess they were afraid of most in camp first,. And we went in in April of 1943, a big, old truck came for us. You know, just like a big, old army, um, you know, like what you'd call it a dump truck but with wooden sides and stuff, and some seats in there and we had to get in there and we were allowed to take one box of stuff for all of us, one or two boxes, you know, for all of us, and we weren't allowed to have any knives. You had to have tin plates and cups. We were told we could take that, and blankets, and of course, we didn't take a lot of things, I mean, you were only limited to very few things, but nobody knew how long you were going to be in for. If we'd of known, you'd of brought a lot of clothes, or had a lot of clothes made, you know, I know some women did, had that done, but we didn't know, and you were limited in everything else we had, every other possession that my Mom and Dad had except for those few things we were allowed to take into camp, were gone. I mean, they just took them. That was the end of that. And at the end of the war, we had just the old raggedy clothes that people borrowed and patched and sewed in camp for three years, so.

Question: Do you remember did you get to take anything special?

Answer: Nope. I don't remember taking anything special. They didn't want any British flags, though a lot of things were banned, you know. I wish we could have taken books and stuff, but you only had so much room, and my Mom did take something special to her that was a silver dressing table set that her Mother had given her on her wedding with her initials, you know, GB for Grace Bosebury on it, and she had that in camp, and she did put a full-length mirror. You know, just a regular length door mirror in between some of the quilts that we, bedding that we had. I guess she sort of smuggled it in, because I think we were the only ones with a full-length mirror, 'cause when people were dressing they always wanted to come in our room to see what they looked like 'cause she had a mirror.

Question: Do you remember, was it scary when they were ordering you on the truck, or did you parents protect you from...

Answer: I don't really remember that much about the truck. You know, when you're a kid, anything like that's a bit exciting. I always wondered where we were going and what they were going to do to us, you know. Um, but because there were so many other British kids and all the kids, a lot of kids I knew and I lot of kids I didn't know, all of us being in camp together, you know, you just, you sat on, I remember the first day after the truck took us there, we were sitting on the boxes with our names on it till they, till somebody who was organizing everything in camp, and the British are great at organizing, told us what room and building we were going to, and we were in Building D, D Block, Room 317, and my Aunt Kitty who was also there. That's my mother's sister and her family, they were in G Block, but then she was expecting. Now remember kids then didn't know how you got to be expecting and all, and after she was in camp and all they moved her out because they had to have her close enough to a hospital to deliver, 'cause we were way out in the country. And I don't know if I was really that scared. Nervous, you know,

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

everybody, and we did learn right away to behave, not to say a word if the Japanese were talking, you shut up. You had to learn to stand up at roll call every morning and not make a sound until they went through the buildings and told them you are all clear to go back in your rooms. If you moved or went in your room or had to go to the bathroom or anything, it didn't matter if you were a little baby or a grown-up, you know, you didn't dare do that because you could get slapped around or beaten for moving. You learned very much to be afraid of the Japanese guards and not to dare to a thing you weren't supposed to do.

Question: Were they armed?

Answer: Oh, absolutely! Yeah, they carried guns. They, they were different, you know, they're people. Some of them would be just, you know, going through checking your names and some were pretty malicious. There were a couple who were vary malicious, and there was a couple that liked to, like one would go through and do the roll call and you'd think they were down and out the building, another would come up the other stairway and try to catch anybody who moved before the all clear for our building was sounded. And we called them "Snake eyes" and "Never Smile Again", that was just the names of them. We didn't know their Japanese names, but that was the camp name for them, because they could be very cruel. They caught one woman; she was the Belgian Consulate's wife. She was on our floor, only I was down on the bottom floor, because I, one room had one child too little, and they didn't want to have to move, so at nights would pretend to be there so they could stay in that room, but we heard her getting slapped from the ground floor because she was ill and turned to go back to her bed before the all-clear sounded, and the other guard came up around and remember everybody had to stand and watch and listen, and they just beat her because she went to lay down' cause she was sick. I could hear it on the ground floor, so. If you want to know what it was like, it was pretty awful, but I know that we never suffered like our prisoners of war. You know, I belong to the POW's, and I know the guys that were in the Japanese prisons for Mitsubishi and other companies in Japan, they were treated a whole lot worse than we were. We were lucky enough, if you can call it lucky being in a concentration camp, we were lucky enough to be close enough to Shanghai, which was still an international city, and still there was some, not really adherence to the Geneva Convention, but the Japanese didn't dare go too far overboard there because there was a Red Cross presence, there were other things, you know, other nations observing all this, so they didn't go too far overboard in their cruelty with us people in there. But, you learned very fast not to make waves and not to cause any trouble, and behave yourself.

Question: It sounds like they were, for lack of a better choice of words, equal in that they weren't discriminatory in who they were not nice to, men, women, children.

Answer: Right.

Question: Or did they pick people out?

Answer: Well, um, now remember I was a kid. I had to go to bed early. I don't know what happened in the evenings, you know, and things like that. I do remember that my mother had a very good friend named Lilly Pait. She was American, and she has a son, Daryl. They're dead now, but Daryl's still alive. My Uncle Kay Pait died, too. They weren't truly uncles, but when you were that close,

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

you called them uncle. And my Aunt Lilly and her son got an exchange. There was some kind of exchange of prisoners, which I don't understand, but it had to do with Americans and Japanese, and they got to get out of camp and back to the States, or something, or back some place, so they weren't in camp anymore, and as soon as they were safe, my Uncle Kay Pait tried to escape, and he did escape. He got to Chunking? Well, this was '44, maybe, '44 it was the second year we were in camp or the beginning of, whatever date. I'd have to go look that up, you know. Well, whenever anybody did anything wrong, they shut the whole camp down. They, I mean, at first we were allowed to eat in dining halls, and then they made us take this horrible food into our houses and it stunk to high heaven, you know, into this big building. They'd bring this slop in, you know, and anyway, when he escaped they tried to question people that were in the same block with him, and there was a young man and he didn't know anything about the escape plan. Four men got out, and got across, and I know he lived because I've seen him. I saw him after the war, but anyway, um, they started beating this man, terribly, and he ran out to this football field. Now, our D Block was, there was sort of like a big football field between us and H Block and G Block and other blocks there, and he, they tried to catch him in the field, and all of us had been punished. That meant you could not leave the building or your room, unless you had to go to the bathroom. You weren't allowed out, and the rations were cut. In fact, you couldn't even get your water. Our water was rationed, too, and so and it was so terrible the way they held onto and tried to beat him with bamboo that people poured out of this building. Our building, there was a Russian woman downstairs and she and her family were watching it and then everybody got so mad they poured out and they stopped the beating and dragged him inside for protection. And anyway, the whole camp came out then to try, and then the Japanese got scared of so many people pouring out, and they called it the Lunghwa Rebellion. Well, it didn't last very long because very soon after that truckloads of armed soldiers came in, and they were on all the roofs of the building with guns and, I mean, we behaved or else. They took that man into a hospital supposedly to, to.. in Shanghai, they took him out of camp. I never heard anymore what happened to him, but, so if you did anything that you weren't supposed to, like people escape, then every day every few weeks or something, the camp got tighter and tighter. They start setting up barricades in between, where after 6 o'clock you couldn't see anybody in G Block or they couldn't see anybody, you know, they divided the camp up and if you got anywhere close to the barbed wire, you could be hit, beaten, or killed, whichever, take your pick. And the put more and more restrictions. Like I said, we didn't eat anymore in the dining room buildings. You had to eat in your own room, and, well, you know, just every kind of restriction they could think of, so if you broke a rule, see they were allowed to beat you, but they just made it so it was so much easier to accidentally break a rule. But being a kid, you know, I had to listen to my Mom and Dad, so I did what they told me to do, and they made sure we stayed out of trouble.

Question: Do you remember, and again, a child's perspective of it, but was it demoralizing for your Dad and your Mom?

Answer: Absolutely, but not that they would let us know. Now my Dad, when he was arm-banded, that meant like before we were in camp, because he was British he had to wear an arm-band, but he still had to work for them at the Water Works to run it, you know, and one night he went to his favorite pub on the way home instead of coming straight home, and he was a little high, or drunk, or whatever, and he went down Bubblingwell Road, which was one of the main roads there singing God Save the King, so well, you know, the put him in jail, but we were lucky that he just

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

got put in jail. They used to have a police force called the Kempetai, or Kempetai Police and they were sort of like a Gestapo would have been in Germany, but he got caught by regular police and just put in jail overnight, so he was lucky. But, yeah, it was. When you have everything taken away from you and, I mean, your whole family is there and there's nothing you can do. There isn't anything you can do. Everybody in camp was forced to work and something or other. All the adults. My mother had to take turns in the kitchen, my dad had to work in the kitchen. Other people worked in the, we had like a farm, you know, so that little children could get milk. They had goats, and people had duties and, like I said, the British are really good at organizing.

And in spite of Empire of the Sun, Lughwa Camp was not like that. The British, it was mostly British. We did have Americans and Dutch and a few other nationalities, but it was mostly a British camp, and they organized, and they had different people doing various duties, so you know, everybody took their turn at the kitchen, or their turn at certain jobs so that they could, then they had a spokesman who would deal with the Japanese Commandant, and they even tried to put on shows and parties, and you know, whatever you like. You weren't allowed to sing the national anthem or anything, but, you know, that was at first, then we could have assemblies. And then they cut all that out, you know, when they changed Commandants, but they were organized into doing certain things so that everybody could be taken care of. And we even had schools. At first they allowed us to have it in the buildings that we used for kitchens and stuff, and then they moved us to another building, but we didn't have books or paper or pencils. I mean, people scrounged what they could. We used to use, you know like a cigarette package. When you had, like a Camel cigarette. I remember them, because you could undo the package and the back was blank, and you'd rule that and that would be your notebook, you know. You'd take that off, but the thing was, British people always believe in schools and children being minded and learn to read and all that sort of stuff, so we did. We had schools and even though we didn't have notebooks and textbooks and books were very scarce. People loaned whatever they had so that you could borrow books to read. But they weren't like kids going to school have all these wonderful gizmos and now they've got computers and all. We didn't have anything. You had to just listen to a teacher teaching you, you know. But you could write it down, but at the same time, we had some of the greatest teachers in the world there because like there were a couple of fathers from the St. Xavier University there. There were many universities in China, so you had a combination of great teachers there, too, so I mean, I learned astronomy, but remember, I was a kid, so I can't remember everything, but the astronomy was taught to us, and it didn't matter how old you were, you learned, you know, whatever you were taught. And I think we had a professor who was one of the learned professors of astronomy at St. Francis Xavier, he was our teachers, so you see you had good and bad things from camp, and I really remember learning quite a lot, because when I went to England after the war, when we were repatriated back,, we learned enough that I could pass the 11-year-old, you know in England you had this new school system where, you know, rich people used to go to what they call public schools but they were really private. A public school is really not a public school, private school. But the government sponsored so many children, the ones that passed these exams, and I passed everything just fine, because I had learned to read at, like I said, 4 and 5, we were reading, and that was in the British public school, it was called the Public Girls School in China. And so I had the education, but not, you know, the textbook stuff. The only thing I was lacking was math, but they excused me because I'd been in camp. That was really nice of them, so I went to a British public school then, you know, paid for by the government. There, in England, you really learn a lot of class differences there. The kids who paid

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

were a lot better off than the kids who went because the government paid, you know.

Question: So it sounds like in some regards there was a some form of normal, normalcy in the, in your daily life. I mean, here they found a way to have school.

Answer: Yes, well, it wasn't interrupted. Now remember, everything they did, if anybody did anything wrong, the Japanese just stopped all of it, you know, and then you were allowed to continue, and then they stopped it. Yeah, they did. I think it was not due to the Japanese that we had some kind of normalcy. It was due to the way they ran the camp. The British people and, of course, your parents and other parents and they way they tried to run the camp. One of the worst things was we never had enough water to wash... The camp had been previously a Chinese dormitory, and you know, different parts of were dormitories, and after being disused for so many years after the bombing, there was nothing but lice and bed bugs, and filth and things like that you had to learn to live with or fight. And I can remember my mother staying up most of the evenings with a match trying to go around the seams of our mattresses to make sure there weren't any bed bugs there that night. Things like that happened a lot, you know, and they were very discomforting. But as far as normalcy for kids, yeah, I think the camp people, the people like my Dad and Mom, and other people tried to make it livable. The food was awful. I knew a Mrs. Grimes, and I'm sure she's dead now, but she went crazy trying to pick maggots out of her food. When you got, your breakfast in the morning to begin with was cereal. That was it, it was cereal. That was when we first started. Toward the end of the war when the Japanese were suffering their losses and there was less and less money, we got really practically nothing to eat. In the end, it ended up with weeks and weeks of red beans and ginger. The ginger was put in the red beans to hide the horrible, rotten taste of them, 'cause they were half rotten, and mostly rotten. I couldn't eat it. And this woman, when we first started there, I felt sorry for her and her husband and the little boy because she spent all morning and then you only had so much time to eat, and she was trying to take the maggots out. Well, I just plain wouldn't eat it, and other people would eat it and say Well, at least we're getting some meat, you know. I mean, it's really ghastly awful, and really awful stuff, and they're all saying when you're really starving you'll eat anything it's not necessarily true, because I just about starved. I could not eat the food. I didn't grow. I, because of the malnutrition and because of the situation and all that, when I came to the United States, 'cause after we went to England, England was in a mess, you know right after the war, so my mother had a brother that helped us get over here to repatriate, you know, to emigrate rather to the U.S. When I started high school, they thought I was 8 'cause I hadn't grown. I suffered from a lot of whatever malnutrition does to you, and I didn't grow. When I started high school, I think I was 4, 4 or something like that, and they, well maybe a little bit taller, but I know that all the people in high school thought I was 8 years old. That's you know. But after getting proper food and, I grew, and you know, you can tell.

Question: Is there, when you talk about the food and memories, and I agree. You starve, there's food I won't eat. I'm sorry.

Answer: Yeah. It's awful. If I could bottle the smell, the gosh awful, rotten smell that permeated our building when they brought that stuff in two or three times a day, I probably could lose weight just sniffing that, you know, I couldn't eat for a week if I did that, but it was really awful.

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

Question: Are there things today, like I talked to some veterans, and the smell of canvas, of tent canvas takes them back. Are there things today that trigger a century...I mean..

Answer: I don't think anybody could make anything smell that awful here. I think the closest thing would be an open sewer, or something, but if you ever smelt rotten vegetables in a soup or anything like that, I mean, REALLY rotten. My Mom, my mother, was you know, like I told you, everybody had an assigned duty. Not every day, but people took their turns in the kitchen, and she went in in the very first time that she had kitchen duty, she reached in to clean vegetables, and she started to knock the slime off her hands, and they said that WAS the vegetables, not to throw it away, so I mean you get an idea of what that smelt like, and yet again, we did have food, even if it was so terribly bad that the rations were very short. Toward the end of the war and like I told you, there were just really awful red beans. You know, it took me years to ever eat kidney beans. I mean, they were all red beans. I don't know what kind of beans those were, but it was just that, and to hide the taste they put a lot of ginger, you know, the Chinese spice of ginger in it, to hide the taste and I couldn't eat them. I mostly lived off weak tea and dry crusts of bread when they dished it out, and I really couldn't, I mean, it was just so awful you just couldn't eat it. But at least, you know, we didn't completely starve to death. My, a doctor told my mother when she was so worried, and camp doctors, you know, we had doctors, 'cause they were doctors in China, but they were in camp, and they told my mother not to worry. I'd always be thin and skinny and wiry, but I wasn't going to die. She was worried I was dying, and I wasn't going to die. You can tell now, you know, I made up for it, but it was, it was an ordeal, but I think children accept a lot. As kids, you know, you don't do a lot of philosophizing of why am I hear. You're there, and you live, you know. We had some wonderful people in camp that tried to make things better for kids. We had a man named Mr. Riddler. I'm sure he's passed away, because in '42 he had gray hair, I remember that, so he must be dead, but Mr. Riddler had some books, and because he didn't want to loan them out to thousands of, well, there were I'd say 4-500 kids in our camp, he would sit and as long as the light held in the evening, like summer evenings, we'd sit out on the lawn and he'd read us from some of the great books, and he would read in such a way that everybody, we were just sitting around, it was like storytelling time, but that was our only entertainment. Now remember, there never was a bit of gum, candy, an orange, apple, anything, I mean for years we never had anything that children look forward to, and, in fact, after the war when the Americans and British came into our camp, we had to be very careful because if they gave you a pack of gum or they gave you a candy bar, you'd get sick on it. Because you hadn't eaten anything for so long, they had to take it, well, we thought the grown-ups were being really mean, but it wasn't. It was just that our bodies couldn't take that kind of nourishment when you haven't had any for so long. And then kids got to, like American sailors and soldiers, you know, people would come to see our camp after the war, and a lot at first, like I told you were still there because, you know, we had nowhere to go and gum, gum was something everybody wanted gum. And you were so afraid you weren't going to get another piece. Remember, 3 years of not having anything, and the kids were doing things. My Mom and Dad made us spit it out into their hands when we had the gum after we were chewing it, but there were kids who were putting it, like behind their ears so they could save it just in case. And you get into that mentality, if you've been starving for a long time, that if you don't hold onto it, someone will take it away. And kids were doing that. It was getting to be a danger, so they had to try and ask the guys not to, you know, they were killing us with

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

kindness. DO you know what I mean? It was really neat, a lot of kids got adopted by different, our camp, like the British fleet came in. There were many camps, not just Lunghwa, and our camp was adopted by the HMS Blackswan, and we were all taken in trucks, you know, to have a great big feast on, and all the sailors you know. The trouble was, we weren't used to food like that, and you couldn't really eat it that much, because you'd be stuffed right away, and it was so rich and so good and yet, you know, you couldn't do that. And just about the end of the war, I mean, after the war, after the Japanese disappeared and they knew that our camp was out there, but no one had been able to get to Lunghwa To help us at that time, 'cause we were way out in the country. Well, actually, three miles as the crow flies from Lunghwa Airport, but it was a long way around from Shanghai, and they dropped parachutes, beautiful colored parachutes of rations, you know, army rations, and food and stuff, and then, of course, they organized a group to go out there and divide them up, and all that. That was the first time we had eaten really good food. They were the K-rations or C-rations or whatever the troops got, and I remember that we just loved these cans of ham and eggs, they called them deviled eggs, or deviled ham and eggs or something, and little cans of fruit cocktail. Boy, that was a novelty, and they divided them out so people had food, you know, they divided them by families and all. And that was really, oh, that was something wonderful. All these parachutes coming down with big boxes of food. Unfortunately, a lot of them missed the camp and fell in Chinese fields, you know, rice fields near us, which was kind of exciting, because then of course the Chinese were upset because they felt their rice was being hurt and they ought to have it and then we had to bargain and get our things back. You know, people would be out there in droves trying to get the food that was dropped to us. And also I remember a lot of our clothing that didn't fit or even were raggedy or whatever, we used to take that out and trade with the Chinese villages nearby because for a few days there, you see, there was no water coming in. Our water was rationed and brought in by trucks, and there was no fresh water. They just left us, and there we were with nothing, so they organized groups again to make sure the water was safe to drink and all that stuff, you know, until the official troops and people came in from the British army, American army, or whatever it was that came there. Those are the ones that took the pictures I showed you that, after the war.

Question: Do you remember any holidays like Christmas?

Answer: Well, you sang the songs, but there was no Christmas. You learned, the littlest ones, I guess, they tried to keep Santa Claus alive by people making and swapping toys, but when you were over 7 or 8, you just had to learn that Santa Claus didn't come in where the Japanese don't let him, you know. That's how they put it. You didn't have that, you didn't have that at all. But then, you know, in England, as I said, I grew up British, you don't have your presents so much. You have your stockings of Christmas morning, if you, I mean, this is pre-war. They would be filled with like nuts and fruit and stuff and candy, and you have your mean. And Boxing Day is the next day, the 26th, is when you got your packages and boxes, but nothing, even before, nothing was like kids expect now. They expect the whole world now. They expect, you know, like give your kids a Sears catalog and they could tell you right away, you know, I want this, this and this, but I don't think back in the '40s and all, even children here got as much as children do today, but you know, you just have to adapt, you know.

Question: I just wondered if they found a way to keep the spirit alive. I mean,

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

Answer: Oh, right. Right. Like I said, they tried very hard, by having schools, and having assemblies, and having plays, but that was all at the beginning. When people tried to escape, like I told you a friend of my Mom's did, or my Mom and Dad rather, Kay Pait and others, there were more. There were more people than that bunch that went out. When things got more and more disagreeable, there was less of that. Everybody kept hoping for the war to end, but what I didn't know. Remember I didn't know this till after the war, I didn't know a lot of people knew about the war going and knew that it was going to end, and they never told us children, and I know the reason for it. They kept everything quiet as adults if anybody had mentioned that radio, a lot of people would have been killed. Just summarily shot, and I guess that was pretty good that us kids didn't know about it, so you know, you just adapt and live.

Question: You told me earlier a little bit, I mean, you'd lived in this international community, but you'd never seen an African-American before.

Answer: That's right. Well, not that I can recall. Now, in the British part and most of the places I lived, they had Gurkha soldiers and Indian Seeks? that were, like in the British police force directing traffic and things like that. You got to see a lot of people, but in our camp, not at the beginning, but after '44, we got some sailors from the USS Harrison. They were, I don't know what the, I'm sure there were some white ones, too, but of course, I would remember the American black sailors, but they had been very badly tortured. We felt very sorry for them. A few of them were put in our camp and, they were put in the, they were like H Building was single people, you know, like a great big assembly hall that was divided by sheets. You know, people had a little cubicle divided by sheets for privacy, you know, and they took them in there and everybody tried to be good to them, but, I'm sorry...

Question: That's ok.

Answer: A few of them were a little mad, you know, not where they were mad at people, but they had been tortured till they were partly crazy, you know. And everybody took care of them, though, and I felt so sorry and, yeah, the first American, 'cause back then you didn't use the term black, you used American Negro, is what they called them. And it was really sad. The Japanese tortured, murdered, raped and killed so many people, so many people, and nobody knows about it. Nobody cares. Nobody seems to care about a lot of our POWs who, a lot of the military guys had never been compensated for anything. And what really gets me is like (inaudible) was terrible, but people are demanding more than 4 or 5 million dollars for their, and these guys who gave their lives, others who were brutalized for years and years and the Bataan and other places are not even recognized, they're not even, nobody thinks of paying them compensation, and we can't even sue the Japanese for what we lost. We're not allowed to. They made treaties or something. And none of us, I mean, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter to a lot of people. I'm sorry, but....

Question: I understand. 'Cause you had a real interesting lesson in humanity growing up. I mean, 1, you grew up in this international, but then to see and hear about the atrocities that happened, as you saw this happen, did you see it as a country doing this or specific people.

Answer: Well, actually we just saw the Japanese, see. They were doing it, and um, I'd heard about the war, but you know, at 7 and 8, and we weren't privy to, we

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

didn't know so much about the war in Europe. We heard a little, but we didn't hear a lot about the war in Europe, but our world was right there in China.

Our camp became our world. Our concentration camp became the world, and the Japanese actually had a lot of disrespect for white people, or what they called whites, and I remember, you know, I'm dark, I'm olive completed, and when I get out in the sun I get dark, and my younger sister's like that, too, and we'd hear the broadcast about how the Japanese were rounding up all the white people, you know. And my little sister said, Well, Mummy, aren't you glad we're brown, you know, because we'd tan, but that's, you know, how much we paid attention to race, you know, but I no. My world was that concentration camp, and the Japanese guards. They were people to be feared, because they had the guns, and they were cruel, and they were cruel. At first, we had a very nice Commandant, if you can say being in prison and your prison head was nice, but he treated people decently, and they thought he was too nice, so they got rid of him and a real terrible person to be our Commandant. You didn't dare go near the guardhouses, you didn't dare. I mean, there were just things you didn't dare do. You couldn't, you didn't, you just knew not to do it, and you had this constant fear that you might have been shot, picked up, tortured, anytime. That was a fear. And it's terrible. People don't know what it's like to be a prisoner. I admire John McCain, the senator. He took five years of that, and there's nothing as awful, and I'm not trying to be racist or anything, but the Vietnamese or Japanese or a lot of nations who felt that the white people had put them down for so many years, love to rub your nose in their dirt, so to speak, and they love to humiliate people that they were in charge of, you know. And especially if you were American or British. I guess all the hundreds of years of imperialism, you know, made them hate the British and Americans, or whatever, but they liked to humiliate you. They really did. They would like to really humiliate you, and it's terrible to know that you can't do anything about a situation. And that's what prison was like, being in a concentration camp. You couldn't do anything. I mean, you can say, Well, I'm not having anymore of this, because you were! You're gonna take it, as long as they can dish it out.

Question: So you talk about not going near the guard shacks,

Answer: Oh, you didn't dare.

Question: So you never, ever got to know any of the

Answer: Oh, absolutely not. Absolutely not. I never got to know them. They didn't speak English anyway. They roamed camp and they could walk in on you or anything anytime they wanted to. They did periodic searches if they thought you might have a knife or anything. They searched, they could come in in the middle of night, wake us all up and go through our rooms. They did that. The thing that was contraband, you see Shanghai can get very cold in the winter. We had no heat, no air conditioning, no fans, nothing when it got very hot. Very little water in the summer, and very little warmth in the wintertime, and so one of the contraband items was to find a can and you'd line that can with a kind of a clay, and you make what they call, I'm speaking in Shanghai Pidgin English, but a Chatty, which is like a little warming thing. You cut a little, you know, I could make one. When we were little kids we used to make them. You cut a little hole in the can at the bottom and you stuck these pieces, any kind of metal you could get, in between, and then you go try to steal coke or something from the kitchens, and have a fire. Well, a lot of people had to have Chattys, it was that cold, but if you were caught with them, you were in a lot of trouble, you know. So people would hide them, hide Chattys around

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

and that's the only way you could keep warm in the wintertime, because it would be really freezing. Shanghai got quite cold, and especially out in the country in the wintertime. And people learned how to be very creative with things. Make due with stuff.

Question: That's the amazing thing that you hear about. The ingenuity, the way that they made the best of a terrible situation.

Answer: They say necessity is the mother of invention, and when you had a need you found a way to fill it, you know, somehow or another.

Question: It's interesting, because it sounds like you didn't see a lot of good humanity from the Japanese. I mean, even to look at little child and give that little smile. I kind of want to scare you. It's not like there wasn't.....

Answer: No, I don't recall anything like that at all. I don't recall anything but total fear of the Japanese guards. Maybe in some places they were nicer, but we kept away from as much as possible, any guards. You didn't go anywhere near the guardhouse, you knew not to even walk anywhere close to the no-no land, which was this side of the barbed wire, you know, there was, like there was barbed wire, lots and lots of it. Then a space, then another set of barbed wire, you know, and you knew to stay quite far away from all that, and just did.

Question: How did this affect your Mom?

Answer: My mother was quite ill with something glandular, and there was a doctor in Shanghai that could have operated on her. He wasn't part of the nations that were interned, but they wouldn't let her get that operation. My mother always had troubles with her stomach, and other things, but she lived quite a long time in spite of it all, and I'm sure my parents were a lot more angry, a lot more unforgiving, a lot more, let's say, hating the Japanese, even long after the war. Long after the war. I don't like the Japanese of the period of the war, but I have, you know, I've lived in America for 40 years, 50 years, and going to school and going in work, in many places, I have American-Japanese friends, but I don't hold them responsible for what the country did. But I do hold the American government at the time responsible for not going after Tojo and a whole lot of other really criminal people for the atrocities they committed to internees, both civilian and especially military internees and the atrocities that were committed in the Philippines, and other parts of China and Burma, and they were just let off scot-free for all that.

Question: So you can separate Japan of today

Answer: Yes, from Japan of then. However, I won't buy a Japanese car. I won't buy a few other things, 'cause until they tell the American, especially a lot of the American military that were interned and made prisoners, made slave laborers, subsisting on practically nothing to eat, beaten and all the rest of that, until they say they're sorry, I can't forgive that part of their government. And they won't. They would like people to believe that the war was a figment of our imagination and if there was a war, it was our fault anyway, and they are not teaching Japanese children in Japan. I'm not talking about American-Japanese, I'm talking about in their own country. They're not teaching them of their atrocities. They're not teaching them anything. They're trying to whitewash the whole thing as something

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

we dreamed up, or at worst, something we started. And that has got to be reconciled, and I don't know that it ever will.

Question: I think that is a big difference between the U.S. and other countries, is that we are willing to teach both sides, because we had our own atrocities that happened with the Japanese citizens and actually some of the Germans and Italians. They got put away in camps like that. Nothing like happened over there, I mean...

Answer: They weren't beaten and tortured...

Question: I say, we treated them fairly. We took away their livelihoods and things,

Answer: Right.

Question: But again, treated them nicely, but we'll put that in the history books. We say, We did this...

Answer: Yes, it was wrong in that they weren't Japanese, they were Americans and then they shouldn't have been put in. And I know I heard a lot of comments about yeah, they said it was for our own good, but in a way, I could see where in some parts of this country, especially in say Hawaii, that it might have been to protect them, too, but not necessarily everywhere. And I don't think they put Germans in camp. American-Germans and American-Italians were not in camps. They weren't in forced camps. Maybe there were German prisoners here, but they were from, like prisoners that were taken in war and brought here.

Question: Actually it did, it's a little known history. They did take a smaller amount of Germans. Not a large quantity. In fact, there was a gentleman from Gig Harbor that was taken away and put in, because the original order was, did not just say Japanese, but Stillwater I think it was, changed the wording to Japanese.

Answer: Japanese, yeah.

Question: But there were very few. I mean, there were very few...

Answer: And there were a lot of what they call, what you say, 'cause I was a kid then, but wasn't it called the 5th Column, or what was that terminology for people who were here spying against the U.S. They were looking for those people. And technically speaking, the American-Japanese were American-Japanese, they weren't Japanese, and that was a matter of law. That was not right. And I know people I've worked with a lady and her husband, and both of them were interned, and very bitter about it, and I don't blame them, because they weren't Japanese, they were Americans, but they were treated like the enemy, and I can understand how they feel.

Question: It's tough, and one of the questions I always ask was, prior to 9/11 I asked a lot of people, do you think it could happen again, and it was always interesting, their response. Since 9/11, the response is, Yes, it could happen again.

Answer: What, people going to prison camps here?

Question: Yeah. Well, I just because of....

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

Answer: Well, I mean that's a whole different story, and I don't think certain things are right, but I don't think that we need to be, go so far overboard as to let ourselves get stabbed again. You know, you have to be careful as to when are you walking on someone's rights and when are you being protective of your own safety, and it's a tough call. And you're getting into a whole other arena of thought. That's an arena of completely different magnitude. And I'm not really commenting on that.

Question: How did you know the war had ended?

Answer: Oh, well, you know when World War II in Germany ended, the only way we knew, now remember I didn't know about this radio, but the way we knew was American planes came over and did a wiggle, you know, over our camp, and it was really funny, because the Japanese, they kept us inside our building and we weren't supposed to look out but we did, 'cause we were right there where we could see it, and they sign painted. You know how they do, I never knew how they do it, but they'd their exhaust to write in the sky. They put VE, Victory Europe, May 8, you know. They did that up in the sky, above our camp. But it was so high, and the Japanese had us stay inside that day, and I remember that because they tried to shoot at them with their rifles and things, but of course, the planes that did that were way high up there, and then we saw some dogfights. There was some fighting that we watched over the Lunghwa Airport. We were told we weren't allowed to look out the windows, but there was no way for them to stop us, and we'd see some, what you call, dogfights in the sky. We saw a lot of that. That was toward the last few days of the war.

And the end was when people thought it was the end and the Japanese called us all out and told us that they would never surrender, and then we were kept in our rooms. We were told that we couldn't get out of our buildings, you couldn't get out of the rooms, only to use the bathroom, and that was the 15th. Now, in China, see war ended the 14th here. It was August 14th, but it was August 15th there, and the next morning, we go up for roll call again, you know, 'cause we just had all these guards out there with their guns and bayonets and everything, and we were never going to surrender. They were never going to surrender. Japan was, you know, we'd all die first. In fact, actually, just down where we could see it, there was a brick factory on this road where the Lunghwa Camp was, and it's really out in the country, so it was way, you could see things, you know, and they had gotten prepared to kill us all. They couldn't take care of that many people anymore. And they were ready to get rid of us in the ovens or whatever they did. And we'd heard all that, and they told us they weren't going to surrender, we better stay in our rooms, we couldn't do this and that and the other, and the next morning everybody's waiting for roll call. Now I told you what happened to that lady earlier in the count when she went to lay down 'cause she was so sick, and the beat, you know slapped her around, and so nobody dared move, and then we waited, you know kids had to go to the bathroom, people were getting really edgy, and it's early morning roll call, you know. It's 7 in the morning and nobody came, and then time went by and nobody came and nobody came, and pretty soon people got bold and they figured if everybody left the buildings at once they couldn't kill us all at the same time, and there was no guards out there, and then they went and they formed like a bunch of men decided to go check the guardhouse. Not a sole. They left in the night. They just disappeared in the night. There wasn't a guard, there wasn't a commandant. The guard, in fact people were scared to death to go to the guardhouses for fear they would be waiting there to kill you, you know, and two guardhouses, and all over there were guardhouses, but the two main ones where a lot of the men lived and

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

slept, you know, they were totally empty. I remember going in their afterwards because, you know, that was the thing. Did you dare go into the guardhouse, and all that was left was the tatami mats on the floor. That's all there was. That's how you knew.

Question: Since I've heard other POWs in Japanese camps say the same thing. They said they got up and the guards were gone because they knew we'd kill them if they were still there when the war was over. And that was it.

Answer: Yeah. But that must have been other places other than Japan. In other countries, right.

Question: Right. This is where they had abused them severely.

Answer: Yes, right. Right. Well, not only that because the ones in Japan, there were still Japanese people around, but in China they just disappeared. Then the problem was, where are we getting our water, and where are we gonna get food, and then, you know, like I told you, they dropped airplane loads of parachutes down and our food came from there and it was really different, 'cause they just disappeared. They, but you know, everybody was still a little afraid. You didn't know if they weren't setting a trap for you to come out of the buildings and then shoot you because you came out. So, yeah, that's a very memorable day. I remember that day, because we kept waiting and waiting and waiting for the guards to come. And then they never came, and that was it.

Question: Have you ever gone back?

Answer: No, I've never gone back. After the war, like I said, it took awhile for us to get quarters, and we got quarters at Kiangse Road, and I know it was before Christmas of 1945, because they put American, lots of American soldiers in the embankment buildings near where we were. Now it wasn't the same part of Shanghai where we used to live, but it was wherever you could find quarters, you know, and they were, Oh, they couldn't do enough for you, you know, especially kids who had been in camp, and they lived across the Suchow Creek in the Embankment buildings and all that, and then about that time. Oh, I don't know if this is, helps the history students learn, but there is a thing called extraterritoriality, and when we lived there before the war, the British had theirs, the Dutch had theirs, you know, the different countries had, in other words, I grew up and lived under British law, British police, British protection and the whole bit. At the end of the war, as a measure of friendship or whatever to Chang Kai-Shek, they turned all that over and Shanghai back to the Chinese. So already you had a different government system. And then they were at war with the Communists, and the war was going on between the Communists and Chang Kai-Shek and they were moving down, and they were taking back over everything, and so we had an opportunity to repatriate back to England, and we went on a troop ship, and it was called the Highland Chieftain, and it was a regular troop ship that was changed into, you know, for women and children and all to be repatriated back to England, so we went back in '46, and I've never been back, because I don't want to go into any other country again, that is totally ruled by people and you have no rights. Americans have got to remember how, I'm an American now. It is wonderful to belong to a country where you have a right to speak and think for yourself and do things for yourself and the law can't tell you, you have to be a servant, and you're going to be a farmer, and whatever, like they have in controlled countries, and the thing I'd like to tell kids, if anybody's watching any of

Rachel Bosebury Beck

Tape 1 of 2

this that I'm saying, is that you better learn your American citizenship, you better learn your freedoms and your rights, and then you better be a good citizen and take advantage of them, and vote, and pay attention to who is running your country. Pay attention to who's running schools, who's running your cities, your towns, and it all, it's responsibility, and I think I might be paraphrasing a great American that says, you know, voting and all is a privilege and a right, but you have