

Interview of Fred Malbouef

We had no jobs, so we had to do something about money. So, I decided to join the army. We got \$1.25 or something like that. I thought I was making money. When I got to Winnipeg, they asked for a bunch of volunteers. So, we volunteered. Then I had 4 days leave. When I got back to Winnipeg we were sent overseas. We went straight to Hong Kong. It was 21 days to go over. We got to Hong Kong November 27, 1941. The war broke out in Hong Kong on December 2, 1941 and it lasted until December 25, 1941.

There were a 1000 men from Winnipeg and about 50 from Dundurn. There were machine gunners. We had a little better than 2000 men. Then there were combat rifles, another 2000 men. So we had over 4000 men on that boat.

LOOKING BACK: HONG KONG PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

I'm trying to forget everything that happened. It's hard to forget. It's not only myself. If you meet some of the Hong Kong veterans, they'll tell you more. Why make up a story. You might as well tell people the truth. If people ask, I tell the whole story.

I ate a snake. Skinned it myself. I was that hungry. The boys asked me how it tasted and I told them it tasted like chicken. Simple. The way I killed this snake, the Japanese took off to get some wood, they were four foot lengths. There was a little creek running there. We always had a rest there. There was a little snake going in the water. Who was going to catch it first? There was more than one trying to catch it. So I caught the darn thing, killed it and put it in my pocket. When I got into camp, I started skinning the thing, from the head right through. I showed the Japanese and asked if it was alright for me to cook it. They said yes. When it was cooked, I gave my friend a taste. There were snakes in the camp. Not poisonous. The Englishmen used to tell me that they were good to eat. Great big ones.

I know how I suffered in the camp. One day I was sick in the camp. We had a certain place to rest, like a hospital, like a sick bay. When I was a prisoner of war I became sick. I tried to get off my bed and I fell backwards right on my bed. I didn't know nothing for 24 hours. I didn't know nothing. I

thought I was dead. There was no medicine. They didn't give us any. When we got sick, there were doctors, but not medicine. Well, there were some Japanese doctors there, but they didn't want to let the medicine go. They sent us a box of medicine but we didn't get that. They kept it for themselves. There were others that were sick too.

**LETTER TO FRED MALBOUEF FROM H.C. CHESTERTON, PATRON, HONG KONG
VETERANS ASSOCIATION: AUGUST 15TH, 1988**

I am delighted to inform you that I have been advised by our representatives in Geneva this week that the International Commission of Health Professionals has presented our declaration to the U.N. Subcommittee on human rights. The declaration deals with crimes against humanity and will pave the way for consideration of the claim of Canadian Veterans against Japan.

It is expected that this claim now has a very strong chance of being adopted by the general session of the Human Rights Commission scheduled February, 1989.

You will be interested to learn as well, two other developments. Right Honourable Sir Bernard Brain, one of the most prestigious members of British Parliament, has commenced debate in the House of Commons in London, using our submission as the basis. This means, as I see it, that the test whether these treaties signed with Japan excludes any further payments is attracting worldwide attention. At the same time, United States Senator Markwell Hatfield has written to me requesting full details of the United Nations claim so that he can raise the matter in the U.S. Senate.

Moreover, we are in receipt of opinions from eminent specialists international law which agree with a contention that the peace treaty signed between the United Kingdom and Japan, which is the same as the one signed between Canada and Japan, leaves open the door for further payments from Japan.

Our delegation in Geneva, this week, consisted of Brian Forbes, Associate Solicitor, and John Humfrey, former director of Human Rights at the United Nations. As you may be aware, if the Human Rights Commission finds that the peace treaty is in fact binding in Japan can not be forced to make additional payments for slave labour, we would then have a strong declaration from the Human

Rights Commission condemning the treatment of Canadian Prisoners of Wars in Japan.

This would then lead to an examination of the reasons why the Hong Kong force was sent to Japan in the first place and more importantly, would open the way for a claim against the Canadian Government in that it has signed away the rights of Canadian Far East Prisoners of War without consultation with them.

Japanese Canadians

I spoke with a National President - John Strogh at length on this subject on August 13, 1988. We must face the possibility that the Canadian Government will make some sort of repatriate payment to

Japanese Canadians despite the fact that some veterans associations have stated publicly they're objections to any such payment. As you know, the official policy of the Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada is to the effect that we would not officially oppose any payment to the Japanese Canadians. Neither would we endorse it.

I have had the opportunity to discuss this matter with a number of your national officers and will attempt to explain what is at stake. First I must say that the policy of the Hong Kong Veteran Association is not binding upon membership and any former member of the Hong Kong force is certainly entitled to express his opinion privately regarding Japanese Canadian claims.

It has been apparent to national officers and to myself that we might as well make the best of a bad situation. There are many Canadians, misguided as they might be, who do not fully understand the situation regarding the Japanese Canadians and even if they did, their preoccupation with the Human Rights issue will take prominence. That is to say, that if the Hong Kong Veteran Association of Canadian were to oppose a claim of the Japanese Canadians, the media would have a field day. Unfortunately, to those Canadians who seem to be obsessed with Human Rights, the Hong Kong Veteran Association would come into some rather severe criticisms if they voiced open criticism of the Japanese Canadian claims. The truth of the matter is that, although members of the Hong Kong force have every reason to

hold the Japanese in bitter hatred and contempt for their inhuman treatment of the Canadians during World War II, this does not provide a sound basis to challenge the Japanese Canadian claim.

Their claim, valid or not, would stand on its own merits and if the Canadian Government feels that it must not take a look at the action of the American Government and make some sort of payment to the Japanese Canadians, two things would happen. Firstly, if the Hong Kong Veteran Association were to oppose the Japanese Canadian claim, the media would have a first class controversy and I can not say that there would be any satisfaction for the Hong Kong Veterans. When the media hype died down, the Hong Kong Veterans would be out in left field. To the media the uproar would be over. However, to those Canadians who take the Human Rights issue seriously, the Hong Kong Veterans would lose a lot of support.

Secondly, if the Hong Kong Veterans remain silent on the Japanese Canadians claim, we would not be ruining our chances of bringing forward the Hong Kong claim to the Canadian Government after it has been through the Human Rights Commission and the United Nations mechanisms.

I think I can say without fear of contradiction, that if the Canadian Government does not make some payment to the Japanese Canadians and it is certainly beginning to look like this will be the case, it will open the door for a much stronger consideration of the Hong Kong claim.

On the other hand, if the Canadian Government does not come through with a settlement which will be acceptable to the Human Rights Activists, so long as the Hong Kong Veterans did not openly oppose the Japanese Canadian claim, the way would still be open for your claim to be put forward before the Canadian Government, assuming that it receives support at the Human Rights Commission and the United Nations.

In my opinion, the entire issue is now in the open. Although it may have looked a little dicey at the start, the claim of the Hong Kong Veterans has gone a very long way, including the British House of Commons and the United States Senate. It has, as well, almost the full support of what is known as the Human Rights Community including Amnesty International, The International Committee, Red Cross and the World Veterans Federation. It has always been a very great fear, however, that one way or another the Japanese Canadian claim was going to get

in the way. I think I can now say that if we play our cards right, as outlined in this memorandum, we stand a very good chance of success.

I believe you are aware that I have been personally involved in this claim since the early 1950's in one capacity or the other. Hopefully, we can see it jump to a successful conclusion early in 1989. Please feel free to write me or to John Stroght if you have any concerns. Should the media contact you asking you for an additional expression or opinion about the Hong Kong Veteran Association, I would ask you in all sincerity to refer them to Margaret Harvey-Melenhorst, Media Representative, National Headquarters, The War Amputations of Canada. Telephone # 613-731-2831. She would be able to provide them with all full details of the United Nations Claim and any other questions they may have.

Kind regards,

H. Clifford Chaderton
Patron Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada

NEWS RELEASE

"The War Amps which is handling the claim on behalf of the Hong Kong Veterans is requesting a payment of \$10,000 for each of the 705 Hong Kong survivors and approximately 400 widows. The total claim will amount to \$13.5 million."

Most of the survivors are living in the United States. They are spread all over. So ten thousand dollars, that's not a hell of a lot of money.

COMING HOME

When I left Toyko and the war was over, I came home on a stretcher. We went to San Francisco, from there we took Coast Rind back to Vancouver. I was in a hospital in Vancouver. We had our check up and we took hospital train to Saskatoon. I got off in Saskatoon and into the sanatorium. I couldn't go very far. A man like me weighing 129 pounds, couldn't go very far. I weighed 200 pounds when I went. I had tuberculosis in the spine and T.B. in the chest. 2 operations, the spine and the chest. 5 ribs removed.

When I got to Saskatoon Sanatorium, I never thought of anything. I was so weak I didn't know where I was. I was in Saskatoon for two days. Then I got a phone call from Regina from the armoury. I had to go report there. I waited there so long that I fell asleep on the bench. Finally someone came and got me. They said, "Mr. Malbouef, the officer wants to see you upstairs." I didn't know if I could make it upstairs. I told him someone would have to help me. I got help up. After I was finished there, I went to a military hospital for a week, from there to the General Hospital. I was in the General Hospital for about 1 month. Then I got my strength. They were going to send me to the sanatorium but I told them no. I wanted a pass so I could go home. So they gave me a pass for a week. I was able to go home. I was able to walk by then.

My brother Ernest got a job on the railroad in Sintaluta as soon as he got home. He got married right away. Got a job on the railroad and started working. I did my best. I tried. I used to get a job but I couldn't keep it. I couldn't handle it and I would quit. I'm not kicking today. I'm satisfied with the pension I'm getting right now. I think I deserve it. All of us deserve it.

I'm satisfied. All I went through. I got a good experience out of it. You talk to a lot of people, especially the young people. Talk about war. It goes through one ear and out the other. They don't believe you. I know what happened to us over there. I don't need to read it. There is no use me telling you about the guys who got beat up, or hanged, or starved. These things happened. I saw it with my own eyes. I know.

