

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
ALLEN L. PECK

Major, Army, World War II  
and  
Colonel, Army, Korean War

1994

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**Peck, Allen L.,** (1910-1997). Oral History Interview, 1994.

User Copy: 2 sound cassette (ca. 94 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 94 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

**Abstract:**

Allen Peck, a Madison, Wisconsin resident, discusses his career in the Army and his experience as a prisoner of war in the Philippines during World War II. Peck was born in Fort Wayne (Indiana) but grew up in Denver (Colorado). He describes his schooling in Denver in the 1920s and mentions he attended the University of Colorado-Boulder. After two years there, Peck petitioned his senator to nominate him for West Point. He mentions his mother pushed him to apply in honor of his late father, a sergeant in the Spanish American War. Peck describes life at West Point in detail: the strict discipline, challenging classes, hazing, and importance of rank. He comments the cadets came from a variety of regional and socioeconomic backgrounds. Peck touches upon prejudice, remarking a homosexual cadet was forced to leave West Point. Peck also noticed regional tensions between Southerners and Northeasterners. He recalls Benjamin O. Davis, a talented African-American cadet, was harassed by white southerners and was not assigned a roommate because of segregation. Peck remarks Davis later became a lieutenant general and commanded the Tuskegee Airmen. In 1936, Peck graduated from West Point and was assigned to Fort George Wright (Washington). He illustrates the lack of funding for Army in 1930s; his company trained with World War I rifles and did not have enough money to travel to Fort Lewis (Washington) to practice maneuvers. Peck observes that his four-year contract was almost over when World War II broke out. In 1940, he married a woman from Spokane (Washington) and was transferred to the Philippines. Peck claims the U.S. military in the Philippines knew that the Japanese were ready for an attack, but the general population did not. He describes plush accommodations and officer club privileges at Zamboanga (Philippines). Peck mentions his wife and other Army spouses were "bored to death" partly because each officer had servants who cooked, cleaned, and did laundry. To pass time, Peck's wife taught at an Episcopalian mission school. Throughout the interview, Peck analyzes relations between officers and enlisted men and emphasizes that there was little fraternization. Peck discusses in detail the various ethnic groups, tribes, and languages in the Philippines. In particular, he covers the Moro, a Muslim tribe on Mindanao, and their practice of juramentado, suicidal assassinations against Christians or enemies. He also describes Japanese immigrants in Zamboanga and a Japanese spy who ran a Kodak camera store. In May 1941, all families of military personnel, including Peck's wife, were sent back to the U.S. because of escalating Japanese attacks in the region. Peck outlines the Japanese takeover of southern Asia. Now a Major, Peck was sent to an isolated town on the island of Mindanao (Philippines) to train the Philippine Army. Peck characterizes Filipinos as "good athletes and good soldiers" and states "there was absolutely no question of their

loyalty." He remembers hearing a broadcast from Boston announcing the bombings of Pearl Harbor and Clark Field. Peck states when General MacArthur left the Philippines, the troops felt "alone" and "stuck." He criticizes General Wainwright for surrendering the Philippines when officers spread across the islands felt they had the men and training to fight back. On Mindanao, Peck was isolated from other American commanders. As the Japanese began to invade, Peck stole a Dodge and some gas in an attempt to return to the main base and find out what was going on, but he didn't get far because he'd stolen diesel fuel. Peck reveals his company was running low on food, so he bought cattle from a local farmer by writing him phony checks from the U.S. Treasury. Next, Peck describes his capture by the Japanese. He had been ordered to retreat, but he and his men were caught on the wrong side of the river, and U.S. troops had blown the bridge. Peck became separated from his men when he returned to base to disarm mounted machine guns so the Japanese could not use them. Peck explains he and other POWs were brought to a former Philippine Army training camp in May 1942. They remained there until November 1942, when they were moved to a former penal colony on Davao (Philippines). Peck claims all the convicts were released to make room for the POWs. He describes a typical day at the Davao camp, working on tropical fruit farms, sleeping on the floor, and eating the bare essentials. Peck also describes the wells, latrines, and barracks. He notes that the Japanese did not respect U.S. Army ranks, but eventually they allowed American officers to supervise their own men in the fields. Peck tells of going on an unusual mission: the Japanese gave him a jeep to return to his former base on Mindanao and look for any Americans who were wounded or left behind. Following this mission, he ate dinner with a Japanese colonel and his interpreter. Peck characterizes Japanese officers as brutalizing their own soldiers for small mistakes, stating that the Japanese "killed ostentatiously" and that the punishments "didn't fit the crime." He also addresses escape attempts by POWs and graphically describes the torture and execution of two Filipino prisoners; they were tied to posts and killed by a firing squad to deter other POWs from escaping. Nevertheless, Peck reveals a couple POWs in the Air Corps who worked as machinists at the Davao camp successfully escaped to Australia. In a roundabout manner, Peck describes the various prisoner of war camps he was transferred to. After Davao, the POWs were sent to Bilibid prison in Manila (Philippines). There, Peck witnessed U.S. planes bombing Manila Bay. He tells how the Japanese loaded the POWs onto a cramped ship in Manila Bay that was bombed by the U.S. Air Force. Peck describes serious casualties among the POWs. Eventually, the POWs were taken from Manila Bay to Lingayen Gulf (Philippines) where they transferred to another ship. Peck describes sharing a crowded cargo hold with horses and having little to eat. Peck states they sailed to Taiwan, where their ship was bombed again. Peck describes arriving on a third ship in Mogi (Japan) in the winter and being given new clothes: woolen Australian Army shirts and boots with no socks. Peck was finally taken to Mukden (now Shenyang) in Manchuria where he remained for the rest of the war. Peck spends time discussing the diet of the POWs. They were mostly fed rice with leafy vegetables. He reveals that, in Manchuria, POWs working in rice paddies would occasionally drown one of the caribou that pulled the plows, and the Japanese would allow the prisoners to cook the meat. He also states POWs in the Philippines sometimes captured snakes or sharks to eat. During his voyage from the Philippines to Japan, food became scarce. At one point, each POW

was given only one spoonful of rice for an entire day. In Mukden (Manchuria), the food improved: POWs were given soy beans, corn, and millet, but Peck recalls ironically that the soy beans were too rich for the malnourished POWs and upset their stomachs. Peck describes many illnesses afflicting the soldiers including: malaria, tuberculosis, malnutrition, scurvy, beriberi, ulcers and dysentery. He explains malaria was so common that the Japanese doctors would give a sick POW one day off work but expect him to work again the next day. He reveals the Americans had their own Army doctors who examined POWs at night, but they had no medicine and only a few unsterile tools to work with. He theorizes that the Japanese themselves did not have enough medical supplies to go around. In 1945 at Mukden, Peck recalls learning about the atomic bombing of Japan from POWs who worked in factories and had contact with Koreans and Manchurian civilians. Peck describes the Russians liberating the camp and stripping the Japanese officers of their weapons in a showy ceremony. The POWs remained in camp for several days, and Peck reflects "there wasn't a whole lot of change except that you felt free." Finally, a team of American airmen dropped into the camp and evacuated POWs based on medical need. Peck was with the second group of evacuees because he was suffering from diarrhea and malnutrition. He outlines his trip home via Sian (China), Kunming (China), Manila, Guam, Honolulu (Hawaii), and California. Peck states he arrived back in the U.S. on September 6, 1945, relatively soon after the war ended. He was transferred from hospital to hospital on his way home, and he ended up at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington D.C., where his mother was living. Upon his release from the hospital, he went on vacation to a Leave Center at Santa Barbara (California) and joined his wife who was with her family in Spokane (Washington). Peck mentions that he had no long-term health affects from being a prisoner of war, but in 1946, he was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis in Spokane and given six months leave from the Army. Peck ends the interview alluding to (but not covering in depth) his service in the Korean War.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Peck (1910-1997) was born in Fort Wayne (Indiana) and grew up in Denver (Colorado). He attended the University of Colorado-Boulder for two years before going to West Point. He graduated from West Point in 1936 and became a career officer, retiring with the rank of Colonel. He served in the 43rd Infantry in the Philippines during World War II and was held as a prisoner of war by the Japanese from May 1942 to August 1945. During the Korean War, Peck was commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion, 15th Infantry, 3rd Infantry Division. He earned the bronze star, silver star, and Purple Heart. In 1963, he moved to Madison (Wisconsin) with his wife Lee and hosted a show on Wisconsin Public Television.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1994

Transcribed by Joanna D. Glen, WDVA staff, 1997

Transcription edited by Darcy I. Gervasio, 2009

Abstract written by Darcy I. Gervasio, 2009

**Interview Transcript:**

Mark: Today's date is November 8th, 1994. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview today with Colonel Allen Peck, a veteran of World War II and the Korean War. Good afternoon, Mr. Peck.

Peck: Glad to be here, Mr. Van Ells.

Mark: Colonel Peck lived a distinguished military career. You were born in 1910?

Peck: 1910, Fort Wayne, Indiana. I lived my youth in Denver, Colorado. When I was about three we moved there. My mother was widowed at that point.

Mark: So, what was Denver like in the roaring '20s?

Peck: First of all it was about size that Madison is now. 175,000 or so. Had the same number of high schools, five high schools. Grade schools that you walk to. We first then got junior high schools, 7th, 8th and 9th grades. We just walked to school, carried your lunch or walked home to get lunch. It was a very simple life. Sports seemed to be the big thing outside of school, especially when you got to high school, there weren't any before that time. When I did graduate from high school in 1926, I wanted to go to the University of Colorado at Boulder and this was in the days before high school counselors. We had a home room and every day was the same. When I got to Boulder they wouldn't let me in. I couldn't understand this. "You don't have the proper the basic requirements. You need two years of science, two years of this, three years of that." They did not accept one year of science. So, I had to go back to high school for one year and take science. Anyway, I finally did get in. I stayed there two and a half years and I wanted to go to West Point. First of all, you have to get an appointment. You had to make a deposit of money to pay for your uniform and books and stuff like that. So, I went to work. Got a job for \$100 a month.

Mark: Doing what?

Peck: Oh, just basic clerk stuff in a what was then the counterpart of Madison Gas and Electric. It was the local city service outfit. I was able to save the money, but I couldn't get an appointment. It was not easy in those days, it's now about 1930. Finally, I persuaded a senator to get me an appointment, Senator Phipps, but I was an alternate and I didn't make it that year, the principal went. Because I could pass the test, he gave me an appointment for the next year when I did go. I graduated in 1936 [from West Point].

Mark: I'm interested in West Point a little bit. You are the first West Pointer I've spoken with out of 31 interviews and you're the first Pointer I've spoken with. I'm interested in what made--did you want to have a military career, did you just want a good education, why were you interested in a military academy in the first place?

Peck: I am too. I know its a strange thing to say, but--according to my mother and this was her idea initially, I knew nothing about West Point or the Naval Academy or any of the US government academies, but I wasn't able to stay in Colorado because I wasn't able to afford it and two, I wasn't doing very well anyway. My father had been a soldier in the Spanish-American War and came out as a Sergeant. This apparently was important to my mother, although she wasn't married until after he came home, and she started pushing it, maybe some friend of hers knew about it. You essentially enlist in the Army. So, if you get kicked out, you could still be held to your enlistment. But, no one ever is, I don't think. Anyway, there were several avenues to get an appointment for entry. From a senator or congressman, enlist in the Army and compete with other guys in the Army all over the world, enlist in the National Guards and beat out other National Guard people for a handful of vacancies. One thing, it was considered a good education, I found out and you did have a commission in the Army when you graduated and so you had a job when you got out. That wasn't a minor thing in the early '30s. As an example, a couple of my classmates at Colorado, both architectural engineers, both got jobs with bridge companies or you know, civil engineering companies. The Depression hit along about '30 or '31 they were both out of a job. One was trying to sell office furniture. Well, hell, there was no market for office furniture - you put on a little cushion if you had a problem. So, I had a commission, I had a degree and I had a lifetime of service if I wanted it. But, if you resign, which you were allowed to do after a while, one guy resigned immediately out of graduation, but he was given a special dispensation because he wanted to go into the priesthood. But then the war came along about the time that any one of us would have served out our obligation which was in four years, the war came along. By the time the war was over, we all had nine years service which was a fair investment.

Mark: It was almost half way to retirement.

Peck: Well, there wasn't any 20-year retirement at that point. That came along later, in the '50s. One of my classmates took advantage of that, I don't know if he was just testing it out or what but anyway, they allowed him to. I thought, what the hell, so I'll serve 30 years. There were changes all the way along. Actually, when I first came in the service, when I was first commissioned, people were retired at age 62 or maybe 60 if they wanted to, but 62 was more or less mandatory. But then they changed it somewhere along the line. With 30 years you were out, unless you were held because of special skill or

leadership ability. Westmoreland, he stayed in. So they kept changing things along the line. One of those things was the 20-year-out thing. Another thing was the selection business at 20 years of service. You were either selected up or you were out.

Mark: I'm interested in life at the Academy for a student. First of all, how big was the class? There are hundreds of them in the class today. How big was your class?

Peck: My class entered 420, I think and 276 graduated. The attrition, although it seemed severe, was not a whole lot greater than civilian institutions. There were about 1,300 cadets when I was there. We used to call ourselves the 1,200 mule team. The Navy at that time, however, had twice as many people as we did. They had a maximum of about 4,000, as I remember and of course, there was no Air Force Academy. So we were both Army and Air Force, with no distinction. Air Force was just one of the branches that you could choose. Infantry, artillery, engineers are some of the others. Sometime after the war, the Air Force became its own entity. They started the school and largely all three, that is both Army and Air Force about equal with Navy at about 4,000. That's where it is now. Other than that, life was pretty damn regimented and Plebes had absolutely no privileges at all. The first year guys are called Plebes and you're constantly being inspected by upper classmen who then could harass you for most anything, give you demerits for anything. They could step on your shoes and give you a demerit for having unshined shoes, for instance. Silly stuff. Childish stuff. But it always kept you on your toes. You were always supposed to be standing braced, shoulders back and stomach sucked in.

Mark: What did you study?

Peck: Basic stuff really. The same as everybody else, plebeians as I remember had English, Mathematics and French came in there somewhere. We had Chemistry, we had Physics, you know. But, I'd already taken all that in Colorado. It didn't help me much but I always felt then and now was the jewel of the system that they had, first of all, you went to every class. We had some three times a week, some five times a week. We went to class five and a half days. Monday through Friday and Saturday morning. Each class was about 10-12 students in a separate room with one instructor and each student was supposed to be prepared to recite in one way or another, orally, at a blackboard or at your seat or take a little test, every day. You got graded five times a week. They gave you a grace period of one day, but you didn't know until grades came out, which day you got the grace period. I remember one time, I prepared, this was Mathematics class, prepared on everything except one thing - I just could not get it. We had to go to the blackboard and recite on a particular problem and the instructor would have little cards, like 3x5s with questions written on it. He'd shuffle them and put them out on his desk

and we'd all have to go up there and draw one. I got the one damn thing I didn't know. Well, my protestation, I'd studied like crazy and knew everything else didn't drip a drop. I was considered unprepared for this class which is considered a very serious offense. I got five demerits, we were allowed nine per month, five for just this one thing. So, two of those and I would have been over my limit. But, anyway, it was strict but you did get with one instructor, you had to pay attention. He's looking down your throat all the time and the other is you have to study every night, but they gave you time for it.

Mark: In the papers you often read about cheating scandals at the academies. Was this a problem when you were there?

Peck: No. And, that surprises me too. Unless things have gotten an awful lot tougher, but we had one guy who was caught cheating. He was gone the next morning. That was one thing that wasn't done when I was there. It maybe was done, but if you got caught that was the end of you. Another guy was discovered to have been married before he became a cadet.

Mark: That was not allowed?

Peck: You sign a statement declaring yourself to have never been married. That's what happened to this guy. It wasn't discovered until his last year and he was gone the next morning. You don't even get a chance to say good-bye. You just pack up and get the hell out.

Mark: That's interesting.

Peck: We had one guy who was caught in a homosexual thing. He'd made overtures at least to an underclassmen, we were about third year at that time. He was a sprinter on our track team. He was gone, very fast.

Mark: So you finished in 1936 was it? And, went right into the Army?

Peck: Yes. You get a two and a half or three month vacation. You enter the first of July of a year. You go all the way through that year and that summer and until the next Christmas, you get a day or two off and most guys go down to New York City and just fool around for a couple of days and then it's time to go home. The next summer you get summer vacation of a couple of months. The third year, after your junior year, you don't get a vacation and then the fourth year it all comes together and you get about three months before you have to report to your first duty station.

Mark: So you went to the Infantry?



Peck: Yes. I guess with a determined War Department, how many vacancies there were for 2nd lieutenants in each branch of the service, for which they would take in the brand new lieutenants. They had so many for Engineering, so many for Signal Corps, so many for Cavalry (which was then horse Cavalry), and Artillery, and Field Artillery, and Coast Artillery, and Infantry. Just before graduation, a couple of weeks maybe, the whole class would get together in a auditorium and on the chalk board would be Engineers, five vacancies, Cavalry, 100 vacancies and always there were more for Infantry than anything else, that was the biggest branch. So, the number one guy in the class, determined by your accumulated all the way along, has first choice. "What branch do you want?" So then they'd cross his name off and then each guy would say - of, and at the same time you're doing this, you will have had a list, probably in your hand, of what stations, what Army posts there were vacancies, so you also picked that. He got down about 2/3 of the way and the only branch that had any vacancies left was the Infantry. So, I would have taken Cavalry had I made it, but I missed it by two notches. I was 216 in the class and the Cavalry went out about 214 or so. Sounds silly. I chose Fort Wright, in Washington state, I'd never been that far west, I'd never been anywhere west and it was beautiful so--

Mark: But you are from out west somewhere.

Peck: Denver.

Mark: This is Fort?

Peck: George Wright, Spokane.

Mark: Is this fort still in existence?

Peck: Not as an Army fort. During the war it was turned over to the Air Force, World War II, as a regional hospital and the Air Force had a base or a field outside of Spokane.

Mark: Fairchild.

Peck: Fairchild or Geiger, I'm not sure which, there were two there, I'm not sure which was the civilian and which was the Air Force. Now I think they turned it over. They probably put their hospital out on the base and this was turned over to the city, there was a school established there. I think a Catholic school. They used the barracks as classrooms and the quarters for teachers.

Mark: So what were your duties, I'm interested in all of the - the life of a young officer.

Peck: They were dull as hell. We were armed with - this is Fort Wright, a small post, one battalion with a regimental headquarters attached. You were using World War I weapons, the Springfield rifles for instance, the air cooled machine gun, the Browning automatic rifle. We had very little space for any tactical problems or say, maneuvers or exercises and that space was known by the soldiers, the soldiers mostly had been - times were tough for them too. Jobs were unavailable and so they tend to stay in and re-enlist and they got to know all this ground. Where you hiked, where you did your problems and - not very much fun for them and we had long winters up there, almost like here so you couldn't get out much. We went geared for outdoor work. We had to be out but not for field work. Long overcoats and stuff - that's not soldier stuff. At that time it was indoors. There's not much you can do indoors. Strip down the rifle and put it back together and have little contests, back [unintelligible] and not a whole lot of stuff. There wasn't much to do. It was a very dull existence there at that post.

Mark: It changed, obviously.

Peck: I think also that other posts, larger posts say at Fort Lewis which is outside Tacoma on the western edge of the state, they had a much larger reservation. In fact, we'd go over there for summer maneuvers, but one year, they didn't have money to go on maneuvers, so our maneuver, this was in the summer and we had not enough money to take this battalion over to Fort Lewis and we had a very small battalion, each company had only about 25-40 men. So we need a hike - a two-night hike with all your gear, a tent, a day or so, turn around and come back. That was our maneuver, because they couldn't afford the transportation over to Fort Lewis. The Army was a hard-up outfit in those days. But this gets to the lack of preparation when the war actually started. I imagine it must have been the same all over the place, all of the Army. We got the new rifles, Garand rifles, M1s just before the war started which was in the early Fall, 1941. The Springfields that we had we turned over to the Philippine Army and the recruits that were brought in. The Philippine [*sic.*] was a god-save. They were good shots and the firing bolt action of a Springfield more than anything was different from a firing rifle with a 5,6,7-round clip and the weight was different. They picked it up just like that. They were good.

Mark: I got a couple more questions about life in the Army before the war. I'm interested in some of the other officers with whom you served, where did they come from and sort of backgrounds did they come from and then I'm interested in the enlisted men and your relations with them as an officer and your impressions of the enlisted men. Did a lot of officers come from a background like yours? Rich kids from Harvard or how would you--?

- Peck: No, they are very average guys, I think. They--a few Army kids, you know, fathers in the Army and they, of course, had an advantage of knowing something about what to anticipate at West Point and also what to anticipate in the Army. I didn't have anything - couldn't anticipate either, but I remember only about one or two guys that might have been considered well-to-do. One was from Texas and you can more or less tell by the gals who would come up there. He had gals with a chauffeur-driven limousine who would come up to visit him out on weekends and most of the girls came up on train or something. No, they were - now they had to be fairly intelligent to have--see 'cause every way to enter was competitive, every single one. I finally got an appointment as I mentioned to you the second time around, but you still have to take and pass the basic tests, the physical tests as well as the mental tests and the mental thing was four days long. Mostly you had to compete on the mental tests not enough to pass it on the capacity. You had to get a better grade than this guy or he'd go. You didn't have to be honor students, but you had to have a pretty good basis of knowledge on several different subjects.
- Mark: Were there a lot of people trying to get into the military at the time? I know it's the Depression years, I'm wondering if people were seeking to--
- Peck: I think many of us who went to West Point were. That's just an impression although a few--never really said. I have a feeling that I was not the only one-- I was actually in an embarrassing situation. I don't want to tell you this on tape--I'll tell you privately.
- Mark: We'll skip it if you like.
- Peck: Ya, 'cause I was unique. If you entered, you paid \$300, which seems a pittance today but that went for your uniforms and your books. They gave you a little residue for your account and each of us had an account with the Cadet's Store. Everything you bought came from the Cadet's Store. The only other thing you had was if someone brought you something as a gift. If you wanted a candy bar, you got it at the Cadet's Store. Cigarettes, all your books, of course they were issued but they told you what you got and your pencils and everything you got came from there except for your candies and bootle, had to be on a requisition which was approved, in other words, you couldn't get extra uniforms. If you messed up a uniform, burned a hole in it or something, you had to have replacements, you still had to go through the requisition process and each of our uniforms was tailored, except for the gymnastic uniforms. We didn't have fatigues. Some pressed clothes even for sitting around your room. you still had the same old trousers and we did have a sweater, of course, which we were measured for and your laundry and you always had to send laundry. Your laundry slips were generally checked out by your we called them tactical officers, regular Army officer who had for each company of cadets, he'd be

the one to approve the requisition and if guys tried to save a nickel by not sending in underwear by doing their own socks for instance, you didn't get by with this for very long. They were supposed to be laundered and wear clean clothes so each guy was supposed to have so many undershirts and so many pair of socks, collars and cuffs.

Mark: There was someone checking this?

Peck: Ya, they'd check it. So, it was hard to save money. Each month you'd get credits to your account to pay, which was then \$65 until the President had cut the entire federal bureaucracy back 10 or 15% as I remember, as an economy measure.

Mark: This was 1933?

Peck: Yep. President Roosevelt Lieutenant Then we took the cut, but then we also had a ration of eighty cents a day credited to our account but immediately written off almost totally and that was it.

Mark: When you were in Washington, Fort Benning did you say? [It was Fort Wright] How many of the officers that you were with were also West Pointers and how many were just came into the Officer Corps various other things?

Peck: Well, at that time, West Point was not putting out very many officers. Three hundred a year maybe and the others, most of the company commanders, people of Captain rank or above and promotion very slow were holdovers from World War I. They'd been integrated into the regular Army after World War I, so they came from all over the country. As I say, promotions were very slow. Three years as 2nd Lieutenant, 7 more years as a 1st Lieutenant so you were a Lieutenant ten years before you became a Captain. All the captains had at least ten years and I think going from there on up, I don't know how many years but it was a big deal, at Fort Wright I remember one officer who was promoted from Major to Lieutenant Colonel and he had 25 years service. That's a long time to get to be Light Colonel. When the war came, things changed very, very rapidly. They introduced the idea of temporary promotions. You held a rank in the regular Army and you also had this temporary rank. Well, I was in a group that went from a year or say 15 months as a 1st Lieutenant and then suddenly I'm a Captain the same day. Fifteen months after being a 2nd. Lieutenant, I am now a Captain. I was a captain when the war started, which was in about another year and then I'm a Major within the next month. One of the reasons that we were promoted rather rapidly in the Philippines was that somebody wanted us to be superior to a Philippine officer with the same rank, we were much younger than they were, but they were inexperienced. They got a little bit of experience so then I was Major for the rest of the war. Immediately on being relieved, I'm a

Lieutenant Colonel. I have nine years service, but then I stayed in, I stayed at Lieutenant Colonel until 1953 (9 more years) then I'm a Colonel for the rest of the time, about 13-14 years.

Mark: I was based in Europe for three as a 2nd Lieutenant

Peck: That's standard.

Mark: I wonder if you could comment a little bit on enlisted men before World War II started. From your vantage point. What backgrounds did they come from?

Peck: I really can't tell you. I knew them all, your companies were small. I never did get into that kind of - only those who were married and not married. We didn't know. There were several - I thought they were good soldiers. What they could do in combat I have no idea. But I came into a company as a junior of two or three officers and I get to know the mess Sergeant and the supply Sergeant, looking over their shoulder and taking inventory, checking on the consistency of gravy, size of portions or whatever, and the 1st Sergeant He really runs the company. So they had to be good. If they were fairly well disciplined that was all you asked and they were rather simple individuals, didn't have much money, pay was low so they couldn't do much. We tried to provide things like sports and library but that was about it. Didn't have near the concern to get educated as you would now perhaps. However, I'm speaking Fort George Wright, Washington and it was, I think there was a considerable permanency of soldiers there. They all knew each other. Supply sergeants would swap stuff just before inspections come down or inventories are to take place. G Company would give F Company so many sheets or blankets or whatever. People wanted to go to Alaska because that was where hunting and fishing took place and apparently a lot of opportunity for that at that time. Not a whole lot I can tell you about these guys.

Mark: There wasn't much fraternization I take it. Didn't go out and have drinks with their Sergeants?

Peck: No you didn't. And another fact, although Prohibition had been repealed in '33 and drinks were available, you couldn't even get them downtown. You could buy liquor, but in the state of Washington, they maintained a rather strict control. You had to belong to a private club in order to go and buy a drink, or go with someone who belonged to a club. We lieutenants newly arrived officers at Fort Wright, gee whiz, you were sought after by the clubs 'cause they knew we had a job and might want to have a drink in a cocktail lounge or something, so they wanted us to join their club. You and I could start a club. We could say Friends of the Museum Club or something and if we could get that incorporated or registered, we could serve drinks right here or invite friends in for drinks or whatever. There wasn't really much of an opportunity

to do that [fraternize]. It was almost a segregation - pretty sharp. Enlisted men went to enlisted clubs, officers went to the officers club. They might have identical activities, we didn't have them there at Fort Wright but officers clubs could only be used for certain activities, the monthly dance, let's say. At Fort Benning, they were much more active. They had a regular meal program, they had a swimming pool, they had things like that - a golf course. Enlisted men didn't have [unintelligible] that was an officers' golf course and enlisted men didn't play. There was a pretty strict cleavage.

Mark: That's interesting to me.

Peck: Of course, in a war, you probably got to know people better, but I was always the battalion commander, well that's about three levels removed from the guys we're talking about, platoon leaders probably got to know their people fairly well.

Mark: I have one more question about pre-war Army life and that involves regionalism among people in the military. Did you find any sort of tension between rebels and yanks and that sort of thing?

Peck: Yes.

Mark: Do you want to elaborate on that please?

Peck: I'll elaborate on that only slightly because I didn't see this particularly after I was commissioned. But, as a cadet, very sharp on the part of a few people. The Southerners, of course you could spot them immediately, mostly by accent. They might be set upon by some Northerners. I had no such feelings. Most guys I think from Nebraska, that part of the country or even probably here had no such feelings at all. We didn't know, except what you read about in the Civil War books. But we didn't know southern people or their idiosyncrasies, but one difference - we had a Black cadet in my class and he was given hell by mostly by southern guys. Guys from Georgia and Alabama particularly. This Black guy was an outstanding cadet, I gotta say - as a cadet he was obvious. He lived alone 'cause they wouldn't assign anyone to live with him. It was just not done in those days. This was the days of separate drinking fountains and toilets and all this other stuff.

Mark: Was it that way at West Point?

Peck: Ya. Well, not with drinking fountains and stuff, but he never shared. You had in the barracks, two wash basins, they're side by side and one across the hall and usually they were full in the morning. But he went when no one else was there. He was very careful and he had to be. He was set upon all the time.

Mark: Did he graduate finally?

Peck: Oh, ya.

Mark: Was he from up north or down south?

Peck: He was from Chicago and the person who appointed him, appointed someone earlier who didn't make it for some reason or another. He was insistent upon getting somebody in there so he got this guy. He was good, he was sharp! I give him all the credit in the world. He did his damndest to help other people any way he could, and as I say he had to live alone, but he offered to help guys who needed help in English or Math or any subject, help tutor. I don't know if anybody took him up on it but he graduate rather high in the class and went on to become a Lieutenant General.

Mark: Do you remember his name?

Peck: Oh yes, sure. Benjamin O. Davis.

Mark: Oh, is that right? He was in your class?

Peck: Yes.

Mark: I've heard of him.

Peck: His father was a General and one of the first Black Generals in the Army, as I understand. Ben gained a little renown by being the Commander of the first and only Black flying group in the Army. They went to Italy and, I think, North Africa. They had a kind of a name, I forgot [Tuskegee Airmen]. Anyway, after he had retired and it was quite a little after I did, he became the first, he was put in charge of the national program to tighten up security and airports and on airplanes to try to stop all the hijackings that were happening at the time. In other words, he was a special appointee of the President.

Mark: That's interesting. Well, I suppose its time to go on to the war years. First, I suppose we start off by your going to the Philippines. How did you get to the Philippines? You went in 1940, if I'm not mistaken. I assume you didn't fly in a jet.

Peck: Oh, no. Actually, the only transportation across the water was by boat. **[End Tape 1, Side A]** So we went on the USAT Grant and it was a comfortable enough ship, if you were a bachelor you slept in a little cabin with three-four other guys. If you were married you had a little cabin by yourself. Even though I had just gotten married, they shifted around so my wife and I had a cabin. The food was good. It was a long, long trip - 23 days from San

Francisco to Manila, but we did stop off a day in Hawaii and part of a day - we were stopped in Guam because someone aboard was discovered, either somebody on shore or somebody aboard had a contagious disease and they didn't want us to mix and so we had to sit there in 100° with no shade, then after a few days in Manila, a contingent came in, a contingent went out and so they had what they called Biente Vida Des Podida party, hello and good-bye, so we waved those guys good-bye, we were welcomed in and about the next day, we who were going to Zamboanga were put on an inter-island ship, went down to Zamboanga and that took two days. Nice ship. The Philippine [*sic*] owned. The bunting unit wouldn't isn't done anymore anywhere. Every newcomer, officer anyway, to the Philippines had a sponsor, some guy that you knew or you to look over the roster and say, "Oh, ya, I know this guy Peck, I'll take care of him." So, here a guy I'd known in Fort George Wright that was going to be my sponsor. He was a bachelor and lived up there in Fort McKinley which is just outside Manila. First thing you did was go to a tailor and he'd take your measurements and then you'd go to the Quartermaster and you'd get so many yards of khaki, so many yards of white shark skin or whatever the white uniform was and take it over to the tailor, all the same color, right off a bolt and he'd make up your uniforms. So you'd go back in a couple of days and get your uniforms. So you got trousers, shirt, belt and cap all off the same piece of cloth. I used to have mine all numbered, like 127 or 123 or, but you didn't need too many because you'd wear them one time and they'd be laundered. Pound them on a rock out in the sun, or lay them on the grass to dry, because everybody had a laundress. This was the life. Then we also got towels and bathrobes. We had very heavy terry cloth toweling. We had many towels all monogrammed of course. Anyway, we got to our quarters, about as big as your museum and all open air, windows are just screens and lined up inside as we entered four servants. Number one guy who is your cook and your shopper. He insisted on being the shopper. Number two guy was the guy who scrubbed the floor and picked up the laundry and took it to the laundress, laid out your clean outfit and made the bed. We had a laundress, Laundindara (sp??) and in our case she had a daughter of about 13 who assisted her so we had four servants. You just had to have them, you couldn't do your own work or your wife couldn't do the work. She [Peck's wife] wanted to shop. Number one guy said, "No ma'am, I do that." But he'd go down to the market also. He could buy these--we had lobster, warm water lobster and it was always fresh fish every day that was caught the night before. Fresh vegetables and fruits.

Mark: Sounds much more accommodating than your post in Washington was.

Peck: Oh, indeed! You could either go the PX and get a cup of coffee and that was about it.



Mark: So what did your wife do and the other military spouses do? What sorts of activities?

Peck: Bored to death. My wife did--was a little different. The ladies all got together midmorning usually, to share a coke or a cup of coffee. In the afternoon everybody was off. We only worked early mornings, 6:30-7:00 until about 1:00 p.m. and then we'd take the rest of the afternoon off unless you wanted to go and try to reconnoiter a little spot to do some military exercise. So you played golf, too hot for tennis. Played tennis on Sunday morning but it was still too hot. But the ladies really had nothing to do. They'd go downtown and shop, but they'd wait until the afternoon for that. There weren't many places to shop. Japanese bizarre and the Chinese food place and that was about it.

Mark: Is this in Zamboanga?

Peck: Zamboanga. You could drive a little bit. Each of us took a car over there. You could drive up each coast, we were on the tip. You could go about 30 miles one way and 50 the other. That was the end of the road. So we were pretty isolated. My wife had one hell of a time getting a driver's license. She knew how to drive. She had a driver's license from the State of Washington, but the guy who was testing her for the license liked her apparently and he didn't want her to get a license 'cause then he couldn't keep going out driving with her. So she finally just gave up. If we wanted to go anywhere I'd drive. She got a bicycle. She also got a job as a substitute teacher with an Episcopal mission which ran a little school there. There was a Catholic mission that ran a school too. One person at the Episcopal mission had to go home so my wife took over so she was one of two or three teachers there. She'd ride her bike through Zamboanga and up the coast five miles or so to the school. So she had business all morning. The ladies just - there wasn't much to do. Very boring. So, you'd have evenings, just about as bad. You might share drinks back and forth, but, hell, your number one guy is always fixing dinner for you so if you - you might have dinner with the guy next door and vice versa. Not a lot of social activity either. You'd get together and talk. That was about it.

Mark: You mentioned several times this questions of preparedness. This is a key area here. The war in Europe started-- the Japanese, 1940-1945.

Peck: We weren't in the war until--

Mark: But the war had already started. The Japanese had already taken French Indochina by--

Peck: Oh, ya.

Mark: In retrospect, hindsight is always 20/20. But it seems that the handwriting was on the wall that we were going to be in the war. I'm interested in sort of the attitudes within the military - the threat of the Japanese at this time and the whole issue of preparedness.

Peck: I'm not in a good position to tell you that, but I'll tell you--well, first of all, I mentioned that we had a very small contingent down in Zamboanga. We're remote, the only - you knew what was happening with the Japanese at least and vaguely what was happening in Europe, but unless you can visualize a map of Europe you had a little problem thinking where anybody was, but the - in Japan we knew about the business in China, Raven 19 and all that stuff, knew about the Japanese taking over Korea and Manchuria, Taiwan. They were moving down the coast, took over Hong Kong. All this happened before the war, moved into the upper part of the peninsula, I guess they must have taken Saigon along the way and probably Bangkok. I've forgotten that part, but the collapse of Singapore at the end of the Malay Peninsula took place about Christmas Eve. Then they just moved on to Indochina and Indonesia. But in the meantime, they'd taken two key places in the southern Philippines right close to Zamboanga. One was the island of Jolo which is about 50 miles west of us.

Mark: It's between Mindanao and Borneo.

Peck: Yes.

Mark: I studied southeast Asia a little bit.

Peck: The other was Davao which is on the east coast in a little bay. That had a rather large Japanese contingent before the war. The Japanese had moved in to use that as a base to move around the south as they did with Holan.

Mark: Weren't these American territories at the time? Or, were they British colonies?

Peck: No, that's all part of the Philippines. Davao is on the island of Mindanao and Jolo is one of the Philippine islands, hundreds and hundreds of Philippine islands. We had a fair - Japanese and Zamboanga, as a matter of fact they ran a Kodak store, sold film and processed your film. They also ran a tuna fish canning factory and had a fleet of ships would go out south and gather tuna and bring back here where'd they'd clean them and cook them. It's the tuna you buy, they'll have some fancy name. Those are the cans right there in Zamboanga, could have been 'cause they were packing identical cans all from the same sausage tube, mechanized and then the can was closed up and they'd put a label on. You could see a stack of labels, a bunch of greens, a bunch of

reds, yellows or whatever all for the same tuna. But we used that when the war started. We garnisheed stuff, just took it over, our emergency rations. We had emergency rations of rice, salt and tuna and we just had to gather up all the Japanese and turn them in excluding--

Mark: Were there many Japanese in Zamboanga at the time?

Peck: No, not many.

Mark: Like 10-15?

Peck: Oh, more than that. They were running a factory and they had a few business people there. They were good business people. No question about that. One of them, however, the guy who ran the Kodak shop was a master photographer. He had took some beautiful shots of local life and sunsets and what not. Turned out to be a major in Japanese Intelligence Service. So when the Japanese came in there, of course he was already interned, but when he got out here he is Major So and So, into active duty.

Mark: I'd like to backtrack a couple of days here. I'm interested in - do you recall when you first heard the news about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and what the reaction was among the people?

Peck: Another guy down there in Zamboanga was a ham radio operator. He brought with him a bunch of stuff and so all of us had to have radios 'cause our only communication was by radio. Newspapers took a month, stateside newspapers, the New York Times or your home town paper, because it had to come over by boat and so with this big powerful radio, he could tune in practically the whole world. One thing that he told us about was that he could tune in on Boston. They had a far east beam. Their broadcast would beam many places. One was aimed at the South Pacific and San Francisco also had it. He got both. I then ordered, from Allied Radio or somebody where you can make up a short-wave radio kit, you could tune that just like long-wave then I could get these stations so one Sunday night he said "Hey, listen to Boston station (whatever letter) and I did at 6:00 our time. They announced the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It was then about 6:00 am back in Boston. I had to rush on and tell the boss. He took it very calmly and there was a radio station in Manila that he could get on his set (English language) and very good. He tuned that in at 7:00 next morning and sure as hell, Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Well, almost before he turned the radio off, Clark Field had been bombed. But our commander was pretty sharp. Maybe they'd already made some contingency plans for this and moved the guys out of barracks and into a covered area, coconut grove and the only ones who stayed there were the commander and his little staff, four or five guys and I don't know why I was there, I wasn't commanding anything at that time, I was sort of second in

command. Then we all just doubled up and I ate with the Colonel so I got the news every day and then we experienced a little enemy activity. We were raided by four of these zeros and it just happened as I was walking from the Colonel's quarters where I had lunch, across the parade ground to where the barracks were. The parade ground was not deep, 100 yards maybe. Boy, they, it was right after lunch, say 1:00 and although we had fox holes all around the quarters and around the headquarters, there weren't any on the parade ground so these guys, I wasn't paying too much attention and then I noticed they were trying to zoom in on the parade ground, what appeared to be. I think they were probably trying to knock out our pier, the local city pier and maybe overshot a little bit. They were firing at this parade ground, I plopped on the ground there and bullets were landing all around. I stayed there, they fired at the parade grounds or the barracks or whatever, went around, came back again. But the same one who found a dog or a dog was reported to have been shot, just somewhere in the periphery, they were using exploding bullets and just blew the dog apart, significant news, you had to pass that on - big intelligence guy somewhere.

Mark: So, after the war started, you mentioned earlier that they evacuated the families?

Peck: Oh, they'd done that long before. As a matter of fact, we were scared to death that they weren't even going to get through. They were evacuated in May of '41 from Zamboanga. The War Department ordered these people out. The Japanese were controlling the Mariana Islands and the ship goes through the Marinas. There wasn't any war on the U.S. yet, but we were still very leery about this ship getting through. It's a slow moving ship, an old transport, but they got through all right, although it was a rough voyage. But no incident.

Mark: What happened after the attack on Pearl Harbor? You mentioned earlier that the Japanese didn't come to Mariana Island until much later.

Peck: Much later. They took over - well they were there on Mindanao and the troops on the ground, the Army battalion or more Filipino Army troops under this guy McGee that I told you about had written a book, were facing off the Japanese down there, but they had free use of the harbor 'cause we had no - our Air Corps was either shot up or evacuated to save what few planes we had down in Australia and this was just a stalemate. They fired back and forth a little bit but there wasn't a whole lot of activity there. Later on they came in to Zamboanga and people there didn't do much either. There was hardly any - they were out of communication with us anyway so that didn't come into the major part of Mindanao until about April. But you never knew when they were coming. They did control the skies, they were flying over everyday and they did control the waters.

Mark: So, if the Army had wanted to evacuate they couldn't?

Peck: No.

Mark: Did you realize that you were stuck then?

Peck: You knew that you were there, especially when MacArthur and his staff pulled out. They submarined down to Mindanao and they flew out of Mindanao. There was a little makeshift airfield right next to the Del Monte plantation and it was just an open field with straw lights that you'd light up when they were coming in. So they'd come in after dark and go out before daylight. They'd fly from there to Australia and back and forth so that's the way MacArthur went. When he left you did feel kind of alone but you kept hoping all the time that reinforcements or something was coming, 'cause that's what you'd hear on the radio. The President was putting out this poof, and there are battalions on the way or ships - make convoys under the ships or whatever. They weren't coming into us immediately, they'd go down to Australia and work their way up. You couldn't get all the way through. We were very hopeful. Even after the thing was over, we were prisoners, you just knew they were going to come in within a few months and clean house on the Japanese. No, we were hopeful. You did feel alone and the guys on the Bataan had their little ditty you know where--

Mark: Bastards of Bataan?

Peck: No father, no mother, no Uncle Sam.

Mark: So, the Japanese finally came in April or something. How much resistance were you able to put up or did you put up any at all? Did you declare it futile? You were fairly high up in the rank, I wonder where were you in the decision making process?

Peck: I made no decisions at all except for this little piece of ground. I was isolated the entire time after the war started. After we got up on the main part of Mindanao until the war was over and I became a prisoner. We were dumped, dropped halfway between the major part of the island, between where the headquarters was up by the Del Monte plantation. Apparently the Army's guys had taken over where the hierarchy would go - at war where they were, before they abandoned the place and where Davao was clear down at the bottom of the island, this is a fairly big island and I was dropped there in a forest to establish a training camp for the Philippine Army guys who were going to be filtered through there as they - no, whole battalions would come in and I'd have to try to teach them how to shoot and how to get them organized, basic soldier things. But, I had no communication with anybody, no radios and no telephones and no vehicles. I finally commandeered, stole really, a old

1934 Dodge and then I had to steal gas to put in it. But, I felt I had to get somewhere, tell somebody something or ask a question or get some - just want to know what the hell is going on. I remember stealing a drum of what I thought was gas and that's very heavy, and worked out a way to get the damn thing in the Dodge, get it back down to where I was holed up and turns out I've got diesel fuel. We didn't get any rations, we were still living on our rice and tuna fish - to hell with this - I did find a guy (a Filipino) who was raising a - he had a little ranch and was raising Brahma cattle, so I made a deal with the guy. I'd buy one cow or one bull or whatever a day. He'd slaughter it at night. After dark I'd have my doctor, who was a dentist really but he was my battalion's surgeon come up and inspect the meat and be sure it was cut up in smaller pieces, load it and bring it back. I would pay this guy with a check written on the U.S. Government. Oh, I had no authority to write a check on the U.S. Treasury, but I did. So, I'd pay him. Nobody had cash anyway and if you did have, you couldn't spend it. So, every day I'd get one animal and pay by a check written on a piece of paper, Treasury of the United States, to the order of and I don't know if he ever tried to cash these things, I never heard another word about it, but I had meat every day.

Mark: So you were training Filipinos at the time. Could you comment a little bit perhaps on your impression of the Filipinos as soldiers and the relationship between the Americans and the Filipinos and was there any question of their loyalty?

Peck: I think there was absolutely no question of their loyalty because first of all, I hadn't thought of this before, but it is their land. We were just visitors there so if there was any loyalty, it would be on the part of us, but then we didn't have much choice either. We were there, you're not going to hide behind a tree, so no, that part there was no problem. I think they were, although many of them did not speak English and none of us spoke their language, although there was some Spanish spoken but their language was really - they had tribal languages down there in the Mindanao. The only people who would speak to them were some of their own tribal people.

Mark: The Philippines have a lot of different ethnic groups but were these the Tagalic?

Peck: No, mostly Moro. I had two companies there of my own. There were two companies at Zamboanga, one was a Moro company - that's the Muslims, the former pirates and the troublemakers and the others were Christian Filipinos. The Muslims had several tribes and I'm sure some of these other guys did too, but the Moros were the rough guys. But the Philippine Army did not have Moros in it. In fact, only the scouts had the Moros and the Moros, oh hell, they were all over the place. They were up on Lake Lanow in the central part of the island. That was our headquarters virtually. Jolo was a stronghold of

the Moros. These people were rough. They'd decapitate people. They're the ones who would run amok. We called it Moromontado. [*sic.* He means juramentado]

Mark: Moromontado?

Peck: Yes. I think that's their term. That's probably a Spanish word or a Chipachano, one of their basic languages that's salt and peppered with Spanish. Moromentado [*sic.*] means that a guy goes on a mission of killing Christians or killing non-Muslims until he himself is killed. Or to go after you as the boss of this or that. In other words they can pick out key people, they'd have to kill people on the way to keep going to get to that guy and we had several Moromentado alerts. My wife and I were downtown one afternoon when the stores started to - the holler went up and down the street and the store owners started dropping their steel shutters down. These guys would break in - they didn't care what happened to them. They were determined to die in the execution of their mission. I think if they didn't die in doing this, they probably would feel disappointed or put themselves in a position where they would die. They would generally be given this mission by one of their superiors, chiefs.

Mark: So after the Japanese hit, after the war had started, how did the Moros respond?

Peck: Well, of course,

Mark: Were they anti-Japanese or?

Peck: They were anti-everybody. No this is not a joke. They did not accept anyone's jurisdiction. They really didn't. They were subjected to it, but they never did accept it and so they're always erupting in one place or another against authority. At the time I was there, there were American troops down there, they did not erupt against us - the military and of course we had some Moro troops. I think they just stayed in their own little enclaves. The Japanese didn't - actually after we became prisoners I don't know what they did because they released all the Filipino prisoners after about a month or so. They wanted to go back to their homes and start farming their crops or doing whatever they were doing because the Japanese expected this to be a permanent acquisition and they wanted the economy to keep going. That's the way I understand it worked. No, they'd challenge them and fight with them as quickly as they would anybody I guess they were just a belligerent group, although as soldiers they were well disciplined and well trained. They were good soldiers and good athletes.

Mark: I wonder if you could tell me about the time you were captured?

Peck: Ya. I don't like to but--no. We were ordered to surrender. The order came down from whoever was in command surrendered almost a month after Tan. When that collapsed I think General Wainwright was more or less in the surrender business, promised that we wouldn't fight anymore forever. In other words he was ceding virtually the entire Philippines. Well, there were groups like we had this little Army scattered all over the place on Mindanao. Another one on Subu, and the other commanders said, "No. We aren't going to surrender, we haven't been fired on yet, and we're organized and ready for them." So they refused. But then I guess somebody got the word, I don't know, our commander down there Major General Sharpe just sent the word out. So, I was the only one in contact with Japanese, I was surrounded anyway at that point, so we just pulled on back and I had ordered, before I got the word, I had ordered troops to come on back 'cause I was expecting to be overwhelmed within a matter of hours. So, there was a river ran behind us and I had to cross that river, but by the time I got there the bridge had been blown by our guys. The troops got back there, but at the last minute I realized that we had left some machine guns mounted and ready to fire on what we thought was the expected avenue of approach. They had just been abandoned and I don't blame the guys. They were heavy, water-cooled machine guns, .50 caliber. So I went around with George Brindley (Sp??) to try to incapacitate any guns that were left mounted. I would just take the back plate off the machine gun, but that separated us from the other guys. We had to join about a day later. We just had to fall on back to where our people were. The headquarters had been back there but - no it was - and then I still had a pistol which they took from me and we didn't have a choice. So, then they marched us back to this camp which had been a Philippine Army training camp before this and that was the camp that they used for a prisoner of war camp.

Mark: And so you stayed there?

Peck: We stayed there, that was June or Mid-May I guess, until about November when they moved us down to Davao. To do that they trucked us up to the coast, place called Caging and we went around on a ship to Davao and walked on up to this former penal colony where they had all their murderers and, you know, the bad guys.

Mark: Were they still there?

Peck: No. The Japanese released them when they came in. They just turned them loose 'cause they wanted this place. This was being used, they used these bad Filipinos as laborers and they had an experimental farm system. They were Philippine agriculture people trying to grow coffee and various kinds of bananas, some papaya, you know the typical tropical stuff, lemons, limes, squash, rice - a big rice plantation. So we got to do that work once we got



down there. The Japanese made it very simple, you worked if you want to eat. If you don't want to eat, "OK".

Mark: Was there much military courtesy involved with the Japanese; did they treat the officers with respect?

Peck: Only right at first. Once we - everybody - when the camps got organized, although the Japanese separated officers from enlisted men in the barracks, they did sleep in the same barracks. Still, rank was not part of it. Any rank was just held by yourself, among Americans, lieutenant colonels were superior to a Captain, but the Japanese didn't recognize any of this. Officers were in charge of work parties and enlisted men but officers also had work parties and we were in charge of ourselves. When I - I was sent out on a mission from our first camp. I was given a jeep. The Japanese, although they confiscated these things, they gave me a jeep and my mission was to go back to where I had my last position where I started to disabled machine guns and see if I could find any Americans or Philippine soldiers up there, may be wounded or unable to move, deserters, trying to escape or dead bodies, the American General particularly wanted to know about anyone who might have died up there and had to be buried. So I had this jeep and I had had a pass written in Japanese to go and check through each headquarters on the way. I was at this one, there was an English-speaking Japanese. Well, he was the interpreter for the Japanese commander and he and the Japanese commander invited me and my companion to dinner when we finished our job on the way back. Of course, we had to get back by dark. So, that was very nice. So, we went on back there. It wasn't much of a dinner, they had rice and vegetables but turned out that he was the commander for the Japanese opposing me when I was in that area just before the surrender. So we compared notes, how much did I know about where he was. I knew a lot because I had to do a hand map. We had no maps - oh yes, we did. We had a Mobile gas map and it showed main roads one north and south and one around over by Zamboanga and that was it. But, he knew much more than I had thought about us. It was interesting and the guy that was his interpreter was a graduate of some school in the U.S. and had taught school in the U.S. before the war. He got back just in time to join their Army. That was kind of interesting.

Mark; This sort of thing was exceptional.

Peck: I think it was, but as an example on the way up there to this guy, the road kind of took a little dip down like this - and I'm going north on it and this guy is coming south. Here's a Japanese Army guy in full regalia - sharp. Not fighting clothes, these were dress clothes and he stopped part way down on his side and I don't know why I stopped but I was driving this jeep so I knew enough to stop because they would have shot me right off the road, I'm sure. So I got out and we tried to talk. We couldn't talk 'cause they had no English

speaking people. I tried to show the guy my pass and every time I'd make a overt move toward him to let him see this pass, his two body guards would get him in a position - I'd back up right away. Finally, he let me go but he was - that could have been very rough.

Mark: Now I'm interested in the camp. I don't want to press you for too much, but I'm interested in conditions in the camp. The reputation of Japanese prison camps is that they are incredibly brutal and that a lot of men died in these camps. I'm interested in your observations.

Peck: Not where I was. It was fairly clean, the barracks were formerly a Philippine penal colony and we just moved in, no bunks or anything, just floors. Scrub them or whatever and sleep so many guys to a barrack so you divide yourselves up. Each guy got about a 6x2 or 6x3 and that was about it. You had no belongings anyway. You could gather things and some guys gathered some wood from the penal colony shops - automotive shop, carpenter shop and some guy got some 2x4 and you make a crude bunks to give you a little more room in this little area. **[End Tape 1, Side B]** The latrines were out back, they were actually little sheds with a bunch of holes on a bench and in between that and the barracks were wells. One well for barracks. Somebody dug them, I don't know who - probably the Filipinos before. The water was there about five or six feet down which you could get if you had a bucket. Well, everybody could get a bucket 'cause gasoline came in 5 gallon cans. These square cans and that was the transport of liquids. But the water was very gray, I'm sure it was seepage from the latrines down there and through a bunch of dirty clay, but that was the water. You didn't have soap anyway so you just rinsed off.

Mark: So your daily routine consisted of laboring in the fields. Sunrise to sunup kind of thing?

Peck: Yep. We'd get up and have breakfast and just barely have time to go to the john if you had to go and line up to go out to work. About 6:30-7:00 and take your lunch with you. You had to go through the chow line again, take your mess kit or whatever kit you had, a coconut shell and get a bunch of rice for your lunch. That was it. You'd have a cold lunch and come back and shower, have dinner or have your lunch - whatever they served, rice and we didn't have any lights so we just plopped down and go to sleep. Which you could.

Mark: I imagine it's pretty exhausting. I assume the Japanese were overseeing you in the fields.

Peck: They were and that was where a bunch of problems came with some groups. I didn't witness much of it, although they were in charge. We were kind of semi-in charge but first of all, after about, we'd been in Davao for two or three

months, our senior guys were able to convince the camp commander that things would go better if we could manage our own people, better than they could manage our people. In other words, if we managed our own people, they would be more likely to do what was wanted than if the Japanese forced them to do it. So, from there on each work detail had an American supervisor - overseer. But then they would guard each one. They'd surround you with armed sentinels and they could interfere at any time. Sometimes they didn't know as much about doing what we're supposed to do as we did. But if they wanted it a certain way, it had to be done that way. An example of how far down rank went, when you worked in the rice paddy, you took a narrow gauge railroad about four or five miles out to where the rice paddies were. Maybe it wasn't that far - maybe three or four miles and they'd bring you back. This one night coming back, it was raining and they always had a bunch of prisoners and a guard at each end. Well, something slipped, I don't know exactly what happened but the train either jumped the track or slipped or something and the guard at the forward end of the car was thrown off - he lost his balance and was thrown off into the field. I guess he landed all right and didn't hurt himself but he broke the stock of his rifle. Well the corporal and the sergeant just beat the bejesus out of this poor little private. But it was not his fault, really, but never mind, this happened and so the sergeant whacked the hell out of him. One time we were in a corn field picking corn and some guys would find a baby ear and sort of gnaw on it. I guess the Japanese detectives, they weren't in the fields they were around the field, and we had to open our mouths and stick our tongues out. If they saw any corn in anybody's mouth, he was pulled out and just beaten down to the ground. Their punishment was rather merciless. It didn't fit the crime.

Mark: I was going to ask about beating prisoners and how frequent that was.

Peck: Not frequent where I was. Although if any of our guys did something that the Japanese thought was terrible and put them in our little brink, we had a brink about half the size of this room, with guards. The guards used to use prisoners as a tackling dummy. They'd try various things. They are put in a painful position and hold them for hours. They'd have him kneel down and put a block of bamboo behind your knees and jump up and down on your thighs and pop your knees out and stuff like that. The guys had trouble recovering from a bout in one of those breaks. But not many guys went in. One guy went nuts, and he figured out a way to escape. He'd knock out a guard, sneak up on him and knock him out and take his rifle and use that to kill guys at the gate so he could get out. Well, he didn't get very far. He didn't get to the gate and was overpowered and put in same. He didn't come out alive. You rather expected that. They killed ostentatiously rather. Executed a couple of guys who escaped at the beginning. After about a week they said that they had captured two guys who tried to escape - two Filipinos. This was before the Filipinos were set loose. So they had these guys, now this is July or late June, tied to

posts right out in the open where the barracks were and they were in the sun the entire time, no water, no nothing. They were there a couple of days - long enough so that all the prisoners, Filipinos and Americans, could troop on by and see them. This is what happens to guys who escape. Later that day, they had us all out on a little hillside and across a little gully. Here are these two guys tied to posts. Firing squad on this side, graves already dug right in front of them. They just killed them. As we see firing squads do in movies. But we were all there to watch. They cut them down and let their bodies tumble into this trench. Some of the prisoners had to cover it up. It was just a lesson. If you try to escape this is what can happen

Mark: That was my very next topic. That was the idea of escaping, attempted escapes.

Peck: That's enough to scare you. Also, there was a ten for one deal too that we never saw. Actually put into practice. One guy escapes, ten guys get punished or executed. No, that was the first thing - those two guys. When they got down to business, they'd taken the Colonels and Generals away, they released the Filipinos and a short time later the Americans were sent down to Davao. It was tough then all the time. We all kind of weighed the chances. We were 50 miles inland at the end of a road from Davao which was guarded by the Japanese of course. Nothing but forest around us, one volcano, Mt. Polar or whatever, and we're white and everybody else in that area are colored. Brown skin for Filipinos, Hershey brown for Japanese. So you had to have a support group out there. You had to have something. You had to know the country. So we all figured, better not. However, after about one year down there, a bunch of guys who were, I think they were all working in the machine shop, in the shop where the engines stuff was made, escaped. They had - but all the rest of us guys working in the rice paddies or food places, were - had Sunday off. These guys had to do extra work and sometimes worked hard to do extra work to keep the machines or the Japanese trucks running. So they'd go down there to the shop and do some work. Well, I'm not sure how they handled this, but one day they didn't come back. I guess they were all such good workers that the Japanese weren't really guarding them very much. So they were able to get away and got back. One guy was killed before leaving Mindanao, never got off the island. I think the others got off. There were a couple of Air Corps guys and they got down to Australia and they came back to the U.S. and went on bond selling drives. One guy was from Spokane, Washington and where Fort Wright was and where my wife was during the war. This guy's a big hero. But how they got off the island I don't know. I think one of them must have written a book and it's probably in there somewhere. Dyess was the name of one Air Corps guy and I think they named an airfield after him.

Mark: Is he from Texas?

Peck: I think so.

Mark: I had two more questions about your POW experience. One involves medical problems. Here's a camp full of American guys, someone like you comes from a temperate environment and you're in this tropical prison camp where diseases spread and such. I'm interested in if you had problems with malaria or malnutrition or any sorts of other things.

Peck: Sure did. First of all, I got to say, being in the tropics and even though you had to work outdoors and without clothes unless you made them yourself, and in the sun, it really was a break over the requirements of say living in some of the work places up north, say even in Japan where they do have some winter, or Korea or wherever. We didn't need the clothes of course for the warmth. Yes. There was a lot of malaria. I had malaria 20-25 times probably. It got so routine that the Japanese virtually paid no attention to it. If it hits you during the day, you're out in the rice paddies and they'd let you rest the afternoon and maybe take tomorrow off and go back to work the next day. We all worked unless we were physically unable to work. The Japanese doctors determined whether or not we were able to work. We had our own little sick call at night. Ulcers and what not, and infections of one kind or another, he could take care of more or less. Except he had no medicines and he had no tools. We had two sets of tools, one set and a partial set. For about ten doctors. Well, the doctors didn't have much to do, no drugs and no tools, but they did have one fairly complete and clean set that they kept aside for any kind of emergency operation. The other they used for sick calls and stuff. The knife would be dull and whatever. Even though they might have to cut out an ulcer. As I say, no medicine so if you needed medicine you just didn't get it. Probably in late '43 or early '44 some Red Cross stuff started coming in and although it didn't get down to us, to the soldiers, the Japanese kept these packets, but the medicines they split with our doctors. What they really had was some sulfa drugs, and so they powdered those up and put that powder on wounds. That was about it.

Mark: Do you think that was because the Japanese didn't allocate many supplies to prison camps or do you think it was the problem with the Japanese didn't have any supplies period?

Peck: I think that was it. I don't think they had the stuff. I don't know what they did with their own people, I don't think they sent any of their own people to our doctors for instance, but on the other hand, I don't know what they did with them. Of course, prison guard is not tough duty except for maybe the malaria. But they wouldn't get malnutrition diseases such as we had. People in our camps-- scurvy was very common, beriberi was common and I was fortunate on most of those things except for the malaria.

Mark: Was malnutrition a problem?

Peck: Yes. You all just all gradually lost weight. We all got skinny, but you had a little strength left to keep doing things, but the diets were primary rice in Davao, augmented usually by a can of boiled vegetable soup. There was a plant we called kang kong, a long vine and tough as hell stems, but the fish would eat it or at least the leaves and so the Japanese gave us that to eat. They'd boil this up to pour on your rice and so you'd have these damn stems were like chewing on a rope but the leaves - you could swallow that. But, that was it. No salt to flavor the stuff and every now and again, not very often, but one or two of our guys would drown a caribou. They use caribou to pull the plows and the stuff out in the rice paddies. Of course, then you had to fill the paddies with water and you still had to go back and harrow and all this other stuff you do. They'd kill a caribou. Then the Japanese would give us the dead caribou. You couldn't do it very often because it would be too obvious. The rice paddies were pretty open anyway. But now and again somebody would catch a snake - a cobra or something. Also, rarely but it did happen three or four times, a shark would wash up on one of the beaches at Davao Harbor and then after it had rotted a couple of days on the beach, the Japanese gave it to us to salvage and put in our rice. We'd have that usually at a breakfast meal and that was pretty good. Other than that, just rice and vegetables - enough to sustain you for a while. As we moved north, the meals were a little better. They had more stuff in the soups.

Mark: As you went farther north, how were the conditions in the various camps and how was the discipline on the part of the Japanese. Did the conditions get worse?

Peck: Not really because our people were - by the time we got north, now I'm speaking just of an isolated group, we were weakened considerably by this lack of enough food all the way up there and we were never a problem, I'm sure. When we got to Manchuria for instance, we had nothing to do, idle around. The enlisted men all had to work. When they dumped all these officers in there, they had nothing to do but sit and chat and just eat your meals. There was no where to go - you couldn't get out - it was a walled compound and well guarded by the Japanese. So anything would be foolish - then you're so damned isolated. Manchuria? That's the end of the world! At first, I think the conditions probably in [Unintelligible] and [Unintelligible]. The first prison camps the guys from Bataan and Corregidor went to. They were probably pretty harsh until they got things organized and guys got places to sleep and some food in there - they could cook their own stuff. They did have some doctors, but no medicines. They may have had some because they were in an area where there were Filipinos, they weren't too far from Manila - maybe 60 miles and there were people who had contacts with Manila, for

instance guys in the camp who had contacts they could work deals with some business people who had reserve commissions. I think right at first, at the end of this March which was a horrible thing, they are all weakened as hell and there was a lot of disease on Bataan, I think until they got this thing all fairly organized, things were rough.

Mark: I have one last area I want to cover about the camps. That's your knowledge of the outside world. Did you have any idea of how the war was going and how the forces of the U.S. and Japanese were?

Peck: I don't know if we did or not, because I don't think the U.S. was the least bit truthful in any of the broadcasts, but a guy in camp made a radio from nothing, hid it in the canteen, which he'd taken the bottom out of. He had come to me 'cause I had smuggled a flashlight into the camp. We weren't supposed to have anything in the camp except clothing, but I hid it under something. The batteries were dead, it wasn't worth a lick anyway, but I did have a flashlight. So, he said the condition of the batteries didn't mean anything to him. The next thing I know he used the carbon it in or whatever is in a battery and you hear these stories coming out of the latrines, the word always passed around in latrines. You'd sit there and you weren't guarded and "Say, I heard that so and so and so and so". Some guys would just start a rumor and it would get passed around. Well, he started passing rumors around, some ridiculous and some things that he'd heard on his radio. He could only turn it on a few minutes at a time at odd times so you wouldn't always get any stuff, but he was getting it. But, overall I guess we did get a smidgen here and a smidgen there but in our lack of ability to try to separate that from what was true and what wasn't true and then also the Japanese for a while in this one camp down there, gave us English language newspapers. Well, just clippings. They'd put it up on a little board and you'd go and read them. It was always about how heroic the Japanese defended this place or that place or that the Japanese knocked down 422 U.S. planes and we only lost 6 or something ridiculous like that. The same with naval battles. But you could follow a little way. Where the action was, this way or that way or who was doing what - but we didn't all know very much about the island. We had some Navy guys that had pretty good knowledge of the island.

Mark: So you left Mindanao when again?

Peck: Left early June '44.

Mark: I wonder if you could describe your long voyage from Mindanao to Manchuria eventually in '45.

Peck: Ya, I can. I'm not going to go into great detail here because this is the gruesome part. And you could read this in that book, *Some Survived*. We

were waiting there in Bilibad Prison in Manila. We had already come down from Diliman (sp??) earlier in the month. I don't know how long we were there, maybe a month. Let's say - and this was at the time when U.S. activity was heightening, air planes, while we were still at Mindanao we saw this huge fleet of planes, U.S. planes going over Diliman (sp??). Guys just cheered like crazy and the Air Corps guys knew that these were U.S. planes, many of us Infantry guys didn't, but and they went down to Manila, apparently bombed the harbor there and came on back. But then we got down to - the U.S. troops frequently, Air Force and Navy, were bombing Manila Bay. So the Japanese had a hell of a time getting a ship in there. Well, they need the ship to get us out of there and so finally one came in and the Japanese took out, marched us down from Diliman (sp??) down to the Port and loaded us aboard in order of rank. The ship was loaded to the gunnels with Japanese civilians - this was much of their hierarchy they brought them down there to run the Philippine government. They were sitting on the decks, leaning up against the bulk heads, feet up and we had to step over them to go down into the hold. The hold was black and they just kept cramming you in. You could not - lock the hatch cover on them. They had another hatch somewhere, I'm not sure where this was, but toward the center of the ship. We were at one end. We spent that night and this was very bad because no air, no light and no toilets, they had buckets there but you couldn't find the buckets in the dark and food came down, probably had a mess kit or cup or something to eat from, but it came down in buckets, but they'd get this stuff away from the bottom of the ladder and into this darkness. Well, you just didn't get any food, some of us were pretty far back. I was a Major then, so a couple of Light Colonels went in first, only a handful of them and then a bunch of majors and then captains farther and so on. But then the next day, now I should say the second day, we're bombed early in the morning and the bombing blew out one huge chunk of the skin of the ship of the hold in which I was. I remember waking up, of course you just sort of passed out from lack of anything, I guess seeing this light come in and seeing guys laying around floating around or died before hand, I'm not sure and one guy just a couple of guys over from me had a hole in his head, he'd been hit by a little fragment of something and it knocked out a chunk of his skull. Finally, somebody was able to open the hatch and guys started crawling out after the Japanese themselves had left. They didn't open it up for us. So the Japanese got their own people off and their own troops off first. Then apparently they just abandoned the ship. The ship was on fire and was listing and I crawled over to this whole in the skin, looked out and couldn't see anything but water. I had no idea where we were, but I wasn't going to go out there because I'm not that good a swimmer anyway. But, I got up on deck and saw land right close. We were not out of the harbor so I started looking for food. All I found were these Dicon (sp??) pickles sour Japanese or Korean pickles. They're a kind of a pickled beet and I saw a few Japanese bodies laying around there on the deck. I just finally had to jump off and try to swim ashore. Well, fortunately I was able to get there and the



Japanese then had armed people all over this one shoreline so if anyone tried to, and I understand some did, make a little raft say out of a door or a table and paddle around out of sight, they didn't get ashore. They'd be shot off this raft and so you couldn't really try to escape there. Then they put us on a tennis court - double court and our ration there was one water faucet and about 1,000 guys and we got a spoonful of rice per person per day. Uncooked - raw. So that's better than cooked. We discovered if you soaked it in water it would swell up a little bit and was easier to eat. We were there about a week and they moved us to a jail then in a day or so they put us on a train and took us up to Lingayen Gulf and we stayed on the beach until another boat came in - no food. They didn't harass us either while we were there on the beach. Finally a boat came and so they loaded horses first and then they put us in where the horses were so it was not clean and a lot of flies and we were crowded and at least we were there and if you could keep the flies off your chow when you got chow, two times a day, you were all right - you could sleep there. Then they split us into two groups -half in one group were moved to another hold. I thought "Gee, this is great we can have a little more room here." Oh, they wanted to clear this place out where the horses had been and load sugar in there. So we went to the deck above and that's where we were by the time we got into--and Taiwan or Formosa and hit by a bomb. One bomb hit directly into this hold across the bulkhead where the guys were that split off from our group and killed practically everybody in there. One also hit right into our hold. It went right down through planks that were covering this opening down to where the horses had been and we had been and now the sugar was. So that splattered and a killed a lot of people--it disabled the ship. So, they had to put us on the third which eventually did get to Japan, Mogi. Once we got there nobody had any clothes, it was winter, the end of January and it was a blizzard or snowstorm. We were paraded around on deck, most of us naked, but paraded around and they throw a shirt at you, a pair of pants and a pair of shoes. Turns out the shirts came from the Australian Army, the pants - I don't know where they came from - maybe left over Japanese, but the shoes were Australian also. The problem there, they were sturdy shoes but they had hobnails without socks, all the cold went right up those hobnails and your feet just froze, but the shirts were good, they were wool and very warm. But then we were paraded off the ship, not paraded but unloaded, had to go across this gang plank and we were disinfected as we went across this gang plank they had sprays going up like this so your shirt got soaked with disinfectant, but they were scared to death of any kind of a disease getting into Japan. Anybody with dysentery for instance, wasn't allowed to go, they kept them back in the Philippines and I don't know about malaria. I'm taking a lot of time here.

Mark: That's okay. I suppose we could skip around a little bit. I'm interested in our experiences in Manchuria and your eventual liberation.

Peck: Not much in Manchuria except that that was an occupied camp before we got there.

Mark: You were not at Harbin you were at--

Peck: Mukden. Harbin was where the generals, commanders of Armies, the Governor General for instance, of the Dutch East Indies was there. This was colonels on down. There was a work party there that had been there from early in the war, in fact there were work parties in Korea and this one at Mukden. There were several in Japan, various places in Japan were established shortly after late '42 I'd guess. These guys spent the war up there instead of down where we were. We had to work in rice growing fields, but up there they worked in factories, coal mines and those kinds of--the one we came in we were just dumped in on top of this work force of enlisted men. They had a kitchen set up, I guess our guys were cooking in it with whatever the Japanese gave them. Of course, the food was different. We had soy beans and millet and some corn. The soy beans at first were very difficult for our systems to handle because until that time, we had no oils, fats or anything else. Soy beans are very, very rich. Everybody got diarrhea and upset stomachs and that. We had no story - rumors or new items or whatever you want to call them would come in through the enlisted details because they had contact with Koreans and civilian Manchurians or whatever who lived in houses and had access to some sources to news. In fact this is the way we heard about the atomic bomb. We didn't know what it was, they didn't know what it was, just this huge explosion down there. But shortly after, things started to change. We did hear it that way but nobody could see what this was. Even the people out on work force. The Japanese came in and made a big to-do of a ceremony of taking over the camp. We were sure the guy who made the speech and was heading that little outfit was a Major General at least. He had ribbons and gaudy uniform. Turns out he was a Captain but he was just giving the Japanese hell. He couldn't call them, one of our people understood a little Japanese, he said that he called them (the Japanese) all kinds of names and nothing good to say about them. But then he did, he went through quite a ceremony, having the Japanese guards lined up with their weapons, their rifles and we were on the other three sides. The Japanese stacked their arms, our guys came and picked them up.

Mark: This was before the Russians came?

Peck: No, this was the Russians doing this. They conducted this little ceremony and so--

Mark: Oh, it was a Russian camp.

- Peck: No. A Russian Captain making the speech. The way he was gaudied up you'd think he had to be a Lieutenant General, but turned out he was a Captain. Then we were in charge of the kitchen and the storeroom and the camp jail. The little brig where all the Japanese were held.
- Mark: I'm interested in your thoughts and feelings of your fellow prisoners at this time. For example, having the Japanese as prisoners. I'm interested in how you perceived the irony of all that.
- Peck: I wish I could think on this, but we didn't - there wasn't a whole lot of change except that we just - you felt free, and there were only a few of our guys that were monitoring them anyway and I wasn't part of that. I imagine most of that was done by the original group that was there. The enlisted men who were there on this work party. If anybody had been maltreated, they would probably be the ones and we had to set up a little, kind of a military police system among the prisoners just to keep guys from getting out of camp and going down into Mukden just to look around or just to feel more free and to steal some stuff--a bottle of liquor or whatever, cigarettes, but I imagine when the Russians came in a lot of people who lived there in Manchuria had left. Like leaving ahead of any troops coming in time of war. It was rather a feeling of freedom and yet when our troops came in, parachuted in, looking for the generals and when they came in dropping or didn't come in, but when they started dropping supplies which didn't hit the camp at all, they were outside the camp. The Japanese, the Koreans and other people, civilians, got to them before we could anyway, or much of it. You knew it was coming but you didn't know when, how or anything else. Pretty soon, it didn't take too long, an American team dropped in there to sort of evaluate our health and the general needs of the group.
- Mark: This was after liberation?
- Peck: We were liberated but we were still in camp. This team dropped in to be of assistance and to help get us out of there. They evacuate people on the basis of medical need and the neediest were determined to be a group of guys who had TB and they were isolated from all the other prisoners in a TB ward. So they went out first and I was in the next group. I couldn't hold anything on the stomach. I had this diarrhea where I was just losing everything, every hour on the hour practically. First stop, Sian, China which was a forward air force base for their air force. Just a detachment up there. Eight hours south of Mukden. The next stop was about another eight hours south, Kunming, China. There they had a general hospital and we had to be cleared by that hospital for further travel. When you were cleared or if you weren't cleared, they would give you what you need, apparently. As soon as you were, you went on to Manila and went through the same procedure in a general hospital

there until you were cleared to go to the next place. I got home, I think early September 6th or early September.

Mark: Of '45.

Peck: Ya.

Mark: That was pretty quick then.

Peck: It was actually. I think they got in there about the 2nd and started taking us out. As I say, I was in the second group to go out and I wasn't detained at any place. We made a stop at Kunming, China for a couple of days and went over to Manila for a day or two, next to Guam, next to Honolulu where I stayed a couple of days. Then off to Hamilton Field, California.

Mark: We're probably going to have to save Korea for another time. I just have one last thing I want to cover about World War II and the POW experience and that involves medical problems you might have experienced after the war. POWs are known to suffer many more medical problems after the war than they used to. I'm interested in your own experiences. Did the malaria affect you later, for example?

Peck: Only when I tried to give blood. Even when I came here and had been out of camp for 30 years, I volunteered to give blood. "Have you had malaria?" "Yes, during the war". Forget it. But anyway, no I didn't feel any affect although I did have - first of all we were put into a general. I was at Walter Reed because my mother lived in Washington D.C. and I requested to go back to Washington. There were other prisoners there and a lot of guys from Europe. But I was dismissed after a month or six weeks and I went on a leave. We all got to go to a leave center. A real fancy place - Santa Barbara, Hot Springs, Arkansas, Greenbriar County Club in Virginia, you know, places like that. Asheville, NC was in there. So I chose just for the hell of it, to go to Santa Barbara, well I'd never been there and of course I was out west where my wife's family was. After I got back to Spokane, I felt very - you know, wasn't feeling right, so I went to the Air Force area hospital there and they just diagnosed me as having ulcerated [ulcerative] colitis, ulcers bleeding into the colon. They couldn't do anything except check it. Finally sent me down to Letterman. I was down there a couple of weeks and they discovered some pill or whatever, but then I was on - this was way up in Spring of '46 and I was put on a convalescent leave for about six months and then on duty after early '47 and in the Spring of '47 I went to 5th Army Headquarters in Chicago as a way station and then went down to Benning to Advanced Officer Corps. But I didn't really have problems, I was malnourished in the beginning but with some food I was okay and I didn't have the Beriberi. There are two kinds a wet and a dry. Wet your legs particularly swelled up greatly. I've seen legs

just burst, thighs burst. And then this dry stuff, would just drive people nuts. It was a pain in the bone and nothing anyone could do about it. Some guys had malnutrition things where they'd go blind. Whatever vitamins they weren't getting.

Mark: I must say you're in remarkable shape.

Peck: I've been very fortunate.

Mark: I suppose this is an opportunity to stop for the moment at least. I'm just gonna turn the machine off--

**[End of Interview]**