

Oral History #2  
Maryanne Wyn.cchenk

by Jennifer A. Tunick

-TITLE- Maryanne Wynschenk  
-I DATE- September 20, 1989  
-SOURCE-SFHOHP  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND QUALITY-Excellent  
-IMAGE QUALITY-Excellent  
-DURATION-1~ hours  
-LANGUAGES-English  
-KEY SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC NAME-  
-PERSONAL NAME-  
-CORPORATE NAME-  
-KEY WORDS-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-One woman's account of her four year stay in an Indonesian concentration camp under Japanese rule. Also included is an analysis of her li:\_-e since World War Two.

O : O O : 2 0

Marianne was born on the island of Sumatra, the largest island in Indonesia, at that time a Dutch colony. Her father, a Dutch architect, moved --o Indonesia because he loved the country. She is the oldest of four children.

0:01:23

Maryanne was nearly five years-old when the Japanese first invaded the island on January 27. She and her pregnant mother were at a clinic for expectant woman that her father had built in the mountains.

0:03:46

Maryanne's father had told her after the war that many Japanese spies had infiltrated Indonesia prior to the invasion under the guise of storekeepers and businessmen. This was easy to do because Indonesia had an enormous ethnic mix. In this way, the Japanese knew the island and were completely prepared before war broke out.

0:05:36

When the Japanese arrived at the center, all the inhabitants were confined inside the building. After two weeks, the residents gathered only what they could carry and were transported to a school that had been transformed into a camp surrounded by barbed wire. Maryanne recalls that, like the German camps, men and women were separated. She was then sent to a women's camp which held two thousand women and children. Her mother was able to smuggle the family's valuables in her brother's diaper.

0:08:40

Maryanne discusses many of the restrictions of the camp. The children were not allowed to be educated and the women worked as slaves in the fields. If anyone disobeyed, they

were tortured by being put into a wooden cage in the sun for hours. There was very little food, so the mothers tried to smuggle food into the camps from the fields.

0 ~ 2 4

Maryanne says that she and the others were imprisoned because they were white, regardless of nationality or religion. Natives were not imprisoned, although they did have to work for the Japanese.

0 : 1 2 : 5 7

She explains that when she was older she read that according to Japanese ideology, the Japanese believed that they were the superior race and had the right to dominate the world. Maryanne says that Emperor Hirohito compromised with Hitler so that each could take half of the world into their empire.

0 : 1 6 : 2 9

When she and her family were in the camp, her father was fighting in the Royal Dutch Infantry, known as the knil. At the time the Dutch were completely unprepared for war in Indonesia. The Dutch army had to rely on sabotage techniques to fight the Japanese. Maryanne asserts that the

Japanese wanted to take over Indonesia as a base for an Australian attack.

O : 1 9 : 3 0

Because Indonesia was isolated and surrounded by the enemy, the Dutch soldiers had to surrender and were sent to concentration camps. The men were forced to build a railroad for the Japanese. Torture was common.

0:21 :45

Maryanne recalls that she was in t;wo different camps for a total of four and a half years . Her j ob was to gather wood f or cook i ng .

O : 2 3 : 1 5

The Japanese never attacked young children. Instead they punished the mother.

O : 2 3 : 4 2

The women set up a clandestine school using the remaining materials. Imprisoned nuns estab] ished a crude hospital. Many inmates came down with dysenl;ery.

0: 25 :46

One day all of the boys over ten were rounded up and set to the male cam~s. The Japanese treated them ~s adults. They were force~ co do slave la~or ancl make cofflms.

0:27:15

When she was six, she and her mother were almost late for curfew. A guard grabbed her mother, beat her, and put his

bayonet in her stomach. At that moment Maryanne ran away screaming. The guard dropped his rifle in surprise and her mother fled. She still feels guilt because she abandoned her mother.

0:31:32

Maryanne remembers that every night the guards counted the inmates. She was sleeping with her doll and she awoke and saw the guards over her bed. She was afraid that the guards had mistaken the doll for another person and would kill her. In her child's mind the doll was a human.

0:33:05

Maryanne says that she had diarrhea often and was extremely ashamed because she could not clean herself. Her intestines often came out. She also had tape worm.

0:34:24

The Japanese would post the names of all of the men who had been killed to bring down morale. Her father's name appeared four times on the list. However, her mother knew he was alive because one of the family's native servants was

able to smuggle notes between her mother and father.

0:36:58

The prisoners were transported to Medan on a cattle car. On the way they passed by her house which had been transformed into Japanese headquarters.

0:39:21

Maryanne remembers that at Medan, there were three different camps. The prisoners were kept in what Maryanne calls big open stables. There was no drinking water except for rain. The conditions were primitive and there was little food. Maryanne believes that they were doomed to die there.

0:44:27

Maryanne's father told her that the conditions at the men's camp was even more terrible. They lived on tree bark and insects. The men were forced to sort automotive parts to be sent to Japan. They often chewed on the leather from the discarded cars as a form of meat.

0:46:10

One day the inmates stole some salted fish. The Japanese found out, but allowed the prisoners to eat it because they knew that the salt would cause the inmates to dehydrate.

0:48:20

Her father was transported to Japan on a cargo ship. En route, the ship was torpedoed and her father was thrown into the sea. He grabbed a piece of wood and was picked up by a Japanese ship. When they realized that he was a prisoner, they threw him back. He clung to the piece of wood for

another day and night. Finally he was picked up by a Japanese ship and transported to a camp in Malaysia. He never spoke about his experiences at that camp.

0 : 5 0 : 1 5

Maryanne's uncle was in the merchant marines when he was captured by the Japanese and sent to the Burma Railroad where he died.

0:51:34

One day Maryanne was playing in the dust at her camp when her mother and other women came out of the stable and planted a pole in the ground with a flag. Everyone started singing the national anthem. Maryanne still does not know how the women knew that the war was over.

0:53:02

The American soldiers arrived and her brother wanted to know if one of them were his father whom he had never known. They received food and medicine. She remembers holding onto a potato for hours. The women were given make-up and the

children were given toys.

0:56:20

The Americans ordered the Japanese to protect the Dutch prisoners who were now threatened by the native extremists and communists. After a while they were transported to Medan. At Medan, the Red Cross h-used, fed, and clothed the liberated prisoners. Maryanne received medical attention for her tapeworm. The children st~rted school almost immediately.

0:59:35

After several months a Red Cross officer came and told the family that they had found Maryanne's father in Malaysia. He was so diseased and malnourished that it took over a year to get his health back.

1:01:07

Maryanne remembers going with her mother to visit her brothers and sister who were under the care of nuns when she saw a plane overhead and innately knew that her father was in it. Her mother thought she was ridiculous, but the next day her father came home. She did not recognize him because he looked like an old man.

1:03:43

A few months later there was a measles epidemic. Before any families were transported, the Americans wanted the children to have had the measles. However, the extremists had made political situation had gotten much worse, so the nuns painted spots on all the children who did not have the measles so that they could leave.

1:04:20

In April, 1946, she and her family were transported to Holland by ship. Her father got malaria and her sister got the measles during the trip.

1:05:48

Maryanne believes that the atomic bomb saved her and her family's lives. If the war went on, there would have been a massive American invasion and the Japanese would have exterminated all of the POWs on August 9, 1945. She says that even though the bombs killed many people, it saved many as well. In addition, she feels that Japan deserved this punishment for their cruelties.

1 : 1 0 : 2 2

Maryanne points out many of the similarities between the Germans and the Japanese. The Japanese also carried out many medical experiments.

1:12:28

When Maryanne got married, she found out that she could not have children as a result of all of the diseases she had when she was in the camps. Ironically, she eventually adopted an oriental daughter, which she believes is a gift from God.

1:15:39

Through her daughter, she was able to forgive the Japanese. She tore up all of the documentation from the camp and threw it out so that she can start over again.

1:18:40

She is very thankful to America for peace and freedom. She now lives in America.

1:20:58

Maryanne believes that children are the biggest victims of the war because they cannot defend themselves. Also, their development is abnormal which leaves emotional scars throughout their lives.

(New Segment)

1:25:27

After six months in Holland, Maryanne's father returned to Indonesia to rebuild his family, while the rest of the family remained in Europe. Two years later, in 1949, her father had a heart attack, so her mother returned to Indonesia with the two youngest children. Maryanne and her brother went to a school in a convent. Maryanne feels that the convent was like a second concentration camp because she was separated from her family and there were many rules.

1:29:23

Her father had several more heart attacks and was finally kicked out by the Indonesian government. By the time he

returned to the family, Maryanne was grown. Maryanne blames the war for her lack of family stability.

1:30:57

Her brother developed a terrible nervous condition and was eventually killed in an accident. Her father died shortly later. Maryanne says that all of her family members have some type of nervousness. She also feels that she needs to protect and give her daughter everything.