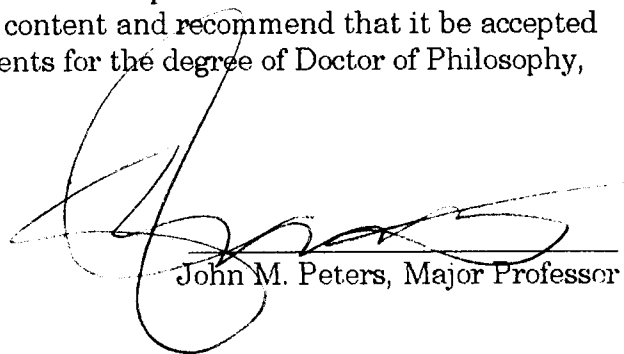


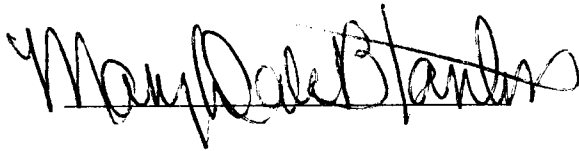
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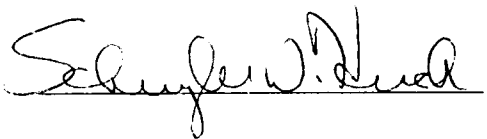
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THE EXPERIENCE OF LAUGHING IN PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Gail H. Romer
May 1997

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DEDICATION

To Our Father, my God, The Ultimate Authority

To Him be the Honor and Glory.

To my father, in memory of my daddy, "We receive the degree together."

To my husband, David, my mother, June, and my brother, Dale,
and all the rest of my loving family who experienced it with me.

To the POWs who "walked through the Valley" with prayer, love, and laughter.

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I acknowledge God in all that I do and do all for His honor and glory. I thank and praise God for His grace and power; The Holy Spirit for guidance and peace that passes all understanding; and Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and mentor for life. Thank You for my faith and help with my unbelief!

I acknowledge my whole family in appreciation for their continued love, support, and understanding. Thank you for your food, hugs, stability, tranquillity, prayers, and a safe, secure "HOME"! God made it possible and you helped it happen!

THANK YOU! I LOVE YOU!

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If I have slighted any others, I apologize. "God Bless Us, Every One!"

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study, using an existential-phenomenological approach, was to investigate the relationship between laughing and health or survival in the context of World War II (WWII) prisoner of war (POW) camps. Based on their first-person perspectives, the current meaning for ex-POWs of their experience of laughing in POW camps was described in terms of themes, an experiential description, and a pictorial representation of thematic structure.

The existential approach provides four fundamental grounds of human experience: body, time, others, and the world. In this study the POW camp represented the most extreme context of existence. The POW experience became figural against these existential grounds and involved awareness of lack of control, restriction, threat to life, boredom, and isolation. This experience became the ground from which laughing as a POW broke through and became figural. The laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience involves an awareness of surviving, passing time, reaching out, freedom, and happiness.

From their experience, ex-POWs confirmed a connection between laughing and health. Laughing provides a healthy experience reaching out to connect humans in freedom, health, and happiness. Laughing opposed the POW experience. It provided the face of positive affirmation in spite of a world of extreme constraints.

The themes and affirmations highlighted in this study provide educators, health care professionals, and other researchers suggestions of linking their work with learners, clients, and research subjects to the phenomenon of laughter.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Popular and professional interest in laughter and its connection to health heightened after Norman Cousins reported in *Anatomy of An Illness as Perceived by the Patient* (1979), that laughing helped him recover from a life-threatening disease. He explained in *Anatomy* that he posed questions about laughing and its involvement with health. Following this publication, researchers began in earnest to explore the positive effects of laughter on the human body.

In his book *Head First: The Biology of Hope* (1989), Cousins encouraged researchers to explore the effects of laughter on the body, but he expressed concern that researchers were focusing too narrowly on the physical aspects of health. According to Cousins, the whole person should be the concern of researchers, including the person's social relationships, cognitive functions, and emotions. For Cousins, laughter is "a metaphor for the full range of the positive emotions" (1989, p. 127). However, health care professionals and researchers continued to examine the physical correlates of health, ignoring what Cousins referred to as the first-person perspective. It remained for Antonovsky (1987) to ask the salutogenic question of why some people stay healthy in the same situations in which others get sick or even die.

Like Cousins, Antonovsky (1979, 1987) realized the importance to health of the first-person perspective. He began exploring why some people remain healthy in stressful situations. He described his investigations into the relationships among health, stress, and coping and their influence on mental and physical well-being. He found evidence of "a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a

pervasive enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected" (p. 123). He added, "It may be that when confronted with stressors, the person with a strong sense of coherence can activate a variety of immunological factors, thereby preventing tension from being transformed into stress" (p. 181). Laughing may be one of these factors. His salutogenic model for studying human health explores health enhancing-versus pathogenic issues. Although Antonovsky did not address laughing per se, his outlook on health research could be used to explore whether laughing is a factor sustaining health under stressful conditions.

Antonovsky was concerned with "understanding the fundamentally important question of how to maintain health in the face of the myriad of life's stressors. In a larger sense, the question is how to maintain fundamental human integrity in the face of the catastrophes of the Twentieth Century" (Lenderking & Levine, 1995, p. 71). He believed that a sense of coherence, including components of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness, helped explain the health of individuals. He admitted that "this contention must, of course, be put to the test. The methodological implications are considerable as far as populations, situations, and tools of measurement are concerned" (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 180).

Like Cousins and Antonovsky, Victor Frankl understood the importance of the first-person perspective in characterizing human survival and health. In *Man's Search for Meaning* (1959/1962), he reported from and about the first-person perspective within WWII concentration camps. People's "will to" and "search for"

meaning dominated his telling of their stories. Finding meaning was important to people in the extreme context of the concentration camps. It was important for their survival.

Frankl also mentioned laughing and its importance to survivors of the concentration-camp experience. Laughing was one of the factors that provided human dignity, a way of finding and expressing meaning. Therefore, laughing offered a means of surviving. Prisoners "came to have a few laughs or perhaps to cry a little...to forget. There were songs, poems, jokes....All were meant to help us forget, and they did help" (Frankl, 1959/1962, p. 40). Frankl explained that "one could find a sense of humor there [concentration camp] as well....Humor was another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation. It is well known that humor, more than anything else in the human make-up, can afford an aloofness and an ability to rise above any situation, even if only for a few seconds. I practically trained a friend...to develop a sense of humor...to invent at least one amusing story daily" (p. 42). Frankl continued, "The attempt to develop a sense of humor and to see things in a humorous light is some kind of a trick learned while mastering the art of living. Yet it is possible to practice the art of living even in a concentration camp, although suffering is omnipresent" (p. 43). As Frankl further explained, "We laughed and cracked jokes in spite of, and during, all we had to go through" (p. 44).

Gordon Allport (1950) discussed laughing as an integrating factor for one's personality. He explained, "Integration is a by-product of various favorable techniques of living....[Man's] laughter disposes of much that is unpredicted, capricious, and misfit in his life. Humor may throw an otherwise intolerable

situation into a new and manageable perspective. The neurotic who learns to laugh at himself may be on the way to self-management, perhaps to cure" (p. 104). The integrating quality of laughing links Allport's view to Antonovsky's theory of coherence and health. As people in stressful situations or environments laugh, they became able to view their lives as more manageable and meaningful. They adapt, orient toward health, and survive.

Charles Johnson, Director of the University of Tennessee Center for the Study of War and Society, also realized the importance of gathering historical information from a first-person perspective. He collected personal stories from those who served in the military and survived WWII. As director of the Center, he guided the recording of interviews with approximately 200 WWII veterans. Church (July 28, 1995), interviewing Johnson, explained that "men will frequently tell him [Johnson] things they say they've never told anyone in 50 years" (Church, 1995, p. B1).

Johnson (personal communication, March 1996) reported that these men have clear memories and that their experiences are still vividly present. They tell their stories with emotion. Eager and happy to share when asked, the men seem surprised that others find their stories interesting and important. Because of their age, Johnson considers that we have only about 15 more years to collect information from these veterans.

Problem

The first-person perspective, a person's story and its meaning, provides the most direct source of information about any personal experience. Despite this, the

majority of researchers continue to omit the first-person perspective in studies of laughing and health. Health care practitioners attempt to use laughing as a panacea without asking what it means for the patient to laugh. They examine the anatomy, but leave out the meaning. Well-meaning professionals forget to ask, "What does laughing mean to the individual in this context?" Leaving out the person in the discussion of laughing and health poses a problem.

As will be discussed in Chapter Two, research has been conducted concerning physical, social, and psychological effects of laughing. No research has explored the meaning that humans derive from laughing as it relates to staying well or healing. The first-person perspective has not been assessed in determining how laughing affects surviving and moving toward health.

No research explored laughing in the extreme context of prisoner of war (POW) camps. Ex-POWs have not had the opportunity to report, in a formal study, their own experience of laughing in a POW camp. They have not had a chance to describe and derive meaning from their experience. Because of WWII ex-POWs' ages, the unique experiences that these men endured and are willing to share soon will be lost. Their stories of laughing in a POW camp need to be gathered now to discover what that experience now means to them—the first-person perspective of laughing in and surviving an extreme context.

Purpose

The purpose of my research, using an existential-phenomenological approach, was to study the relationship between laughing and health or survival in the context of prisoner of war (POW) camps. I intended to discover the current

meaning for WWII ex-POWs of their experience of laughing in POW camps. Based on the first-person perspective of ex-POWs, I sought to provide information about the meaning of laughing for those who experience laughing in stressful, restricted and life-threatening circumstances and remain well enough to survive.

The research question asked in this study was "What is the current meaning for WWII ex-POWs of their laughing in a POW camp?" The answer to this question should contribute to our improved understanding of the POW experience, and to the relationship between laughter and health of the whole person.

Scope of Study

While most researchers speak of humor and laughter as synonymous, I focused this study specifically on laughter. In an attempt to understand a portion of human existence, or the lived realm, I investigated the structure of the experience of laughing. Humor is considered the cognitive ground, or one environment or context, for laughing, but not the same experience. Laughing is a uniquely human, yet universal, experience.

Chapman and Sheehy (1987) lend support for a qualitative study of laughter, one that is empirical but not experimental. They commented,

It seems that humour loses much of its splendour, infectiousness and power under laboratory scrutiny, to such an extent that exuberant laughter is rarely elicited from experimental subjects. There is a need for more trenchant empirical work, and particularly research in 'the field,' rather than for any continuation in the escalation of asocial, laboratory studies. (p. 322)

POW camps provide a novel context within which to examine laughter. WWII POW camps represent a prototype for severely restrictive and lack-of-control environments of body, mind, and spirit and will be considered as metaphors for extreme physical and psychological ordeals. This context parallels Frankl's (1959/1962) portrayal of WWII concentration camps. In the present study, I focused on the laughing-in-a-POW-camp stories of WWII ex-POWs; Frankl told the stories of people in WWII concentration camps. As did the people whom Frankl references, the ex-POWs participating in this study experienced (1) WWII, (2) an extreme context and, for some, (3) Germany as the backdrop, or ground, of their experience. In its search for meaning, this study also related to Frankl's discussion of meaning. This study focused on the meaning of laughing, or searching for meaning in the laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience.

Employing existential phenomenology as an approach for this study necessarily involved searching for the meaning of existence. In his discussion about the search for meaning, Frankl clarified the use of "existential" in relationship to "meaning": "The term 'existential' may be used in three ways: to refer to (1) *existence* itself, i.e., the specifically human mode of being; (2) the *meaning* of existence; and (3) the striving to find a concrete meaning in personal existence, that is to say, the *will* to meaning" (p. 102). The focus of this dissertation is on laughing as an aspect of *existence* and seeks to learn how it helped WWII POWs find *meaning* in their lives in POW camps.

Overview of Dissertation

The following chapters of this dissertation contain details of the study. In chapter two I will present a two-part review of literature relating to the study. The chapter's contents focus on literature relating to the experience of laughing, and on studies of the POW experience. In chapter three I will describe the method I employed in conducting this investigation. In chapter four I will furnish the results, including selected stories illustrating those told to me by ex-POWs—descriptions of their laughing as POWs. I also discuss meaning themes derived from these stories, and provide an experiential description and an overall pictorial representation of the thematic structure of the POWs' experience of laughing. Finally, in chapter five I discuss these results and share several conclusions about their implications for practice and research in the areas of health and education.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two presents a literature review of the two main topics serving to contextualize this research. The first section concerns the basic experience of laughing. The second section describes research related to the experience of being a POW during WWII.

The Experience: Laughing

The uniquely human experience of laughing provides the targeted phenomenon of this research project. This human behavior is an “expression of meaningful experience rather than a mechanically learned response to stimuli” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 43). To introduce the basic experience, I briefly review the historical and theoretical perspectives in the literature on laughing. Information relating to laughing, as it is currently understood, also emerges from anthropological descriptions of its behavior. The language people use to share their experience of laughing adds knowledge about its meaning for them. Results from past investigations regarding the effects of laughing on human beings, or how it affects body, mind and spirit, should seem to reveal more about its connection with health.

Historical Perspective

Scholars have debated the benefits of laughter for centuries. The Bible says, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Proverbs 17:22). Plato warned against strong laughter in his *Republic*, 388e (as cited in Piddington 1963) and Aristotle

defended laughing if wit was used with tact in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, vol. iv., page 8 (as cited in Morreall 1987).

Early physicians, such as Joubert, investigated and described the physical attributes of laughter. He explained that "the physiological mechanism causing the convulsions so characteristic of laughter....[is] clearly in the heart, not in the mind" (Joubert, 1579/1980, p. xii). As did Plato, he saw the heart as the seat of emotions and reminded his readers that "we say commonly: he laughs heartily, and not brainily, thus denoting the place from which the risible emotion proceeds" (p. 36). He further asserted that, what he labeled healthy laughter, "comes about through the sole working of nature in bodies that are in good health and untroubled by any unhealthy affliction" (p. 74).

Descartes also described the physical characteristics of laughter and believed that it resulted from a mild mixture of particular emotions, complimenting people who used it wisely. He identified laughter as "a quality pertaining to the well-disposed man which gives evidence of the gaiety of his temper and the tranquillity of his soul, which are characteristic marks of virtue; it often also shows the ingenuity of his mind in knowing how to present an agreeable appearance to the things which he ridicules" (Descartes, Article 180, Morreall, 1987, p. 24).

Kimmins (1928) also agreed on the value of laughing for well-being. He notes that

From the physiological point of view there can be no doubt as to the value of laughter. It deepens the inspirations, quickens the circulation, and there is a large mass of evidence available to show that it improves the digestion.

Moreover, the joyous condition of which laughter is as a rule the expression is naturally favourable to the general well-being of the individual....Joyous laughter, as an expression of happiness, is heartily welcomed by the physiologist as well as the psychologist. (p. 4)

More recently, Stearns (1972) and Kahn (1975) studied laughing, noting that it may be a reflex to a specific physical stimulus, such as tickling; a psychosomatic response to specific cognitive stimuli, presupposing perception, learning, memory, and a neurophysiological mechanism, lacking voluntary control; or a psychosomatic phenomenon brought about with less than full informative stimuli and more easily terminated "at will." Today, the public accepts laughing as healthy. Kahn (1975) observed that "comedians and humorists are very much liked and they help to create health" (p. 98). Chapman and Sheehy (1987) remarked, "The possession of...the capacity to laugh frequently at pleasurable and amusing events, is regarded as thoroughly desirable by almost all of us...[and] is now taken as a sign of health and well-being" (p. 320-21). After much debate and shift of attitude through history, the social meaning of laughing today is that it benefits human beings. As well as involving the body, it closely associates heartfelt emotions and relationships among people. Laughing provides a healthy experience.

Theoretical Perspective

What is the meaning of laughing as revealed in prior theories? Over the years, scholars have defended several different theories of laughter; however, only three or four major theories are currently evident. Superiority, incongruity, relief from constraint, ambivalence and dispositional theories encompass all of the basic

attitudes, background, and content contained in the writings of major authors.

There is still no one theory accepted as "the" right theory. Few books review a large number of writings on the subject, although Chapman and Foot (1976) did prepare a bibliography, containing most of the analyses that are published in English.

Kimmins (1928), Eastman (1936), Bergler (1956), Piddington (1963), Monro (1963), and Morreall (1987) reviewed humor and laughter theories of the past, cross-referencing each other frequently. J. C. Gregory (1924) warned, "A full survey of theories of laughter would be tedious if not impossible" (p. 15).

In the past, theories tended to be global, containing functions or properties and listing laugh-provoking stimuli or laughter-evoking conditions. Presently, theories draw on more general psychological principles, addressing "stimulus (e.g., content, structure, complexity), or individual differences (e.g., personality, cognitions, physiology), or overt expression (e.g., verbal and nonverbal reactions), or social influences (e.g., effects of companions and audiences), etc." (Chapman & Sheehy, 1987, p. 321). Chapman and Foot (1976) stated that "at present the theories seem to be particularly related to developmental stages, to understanding the functions of...laughter....[Laughter] must be defined in terms of what the authors have chosen to talk about" (p. xiii). Kimmins (1928) explained, "The quality of laughter has probably improved with a higher and more general standard of education. We have become more refined and find amusement at a higher level of culture....Laughter appears to vary with the social attitude of the period" (p. 4-5).

Laughter seems to depend on the social setting or situation in which humor is presented, as "research indicates that the quality and quantity of laughter which,

temporally, follows a joke is primarily governed by social aspects of the prevailing situation in which the joke is presented" (Chapman & Sheehy, 1987, p. 322).

Chapman and Foot (1976) noted that for the adult the "functions [of laughter] are social, the evidence being that people do not laugh when they are on their own...(and) when one has forgotten that one is alone" (p. xiv).

Kimmins (1928) commented that "the comparative success of the...professional humorist, is largely due to his power of gauging adequately the atmosphere in which he finds himself and the nature of the wares in his stock of jokes and funny stories which are suitable for the particular occasion" (p. vi).

Chapman and Foot (1976) stated their beliefs that "the difficulties involved in analyzing...laughter introspectively suggest that there is something early and basic about...[it], like trying through introspection to work out how language is acquired. It looks as though...laughter [is] concerned with boundary phenomena, with making discriminations between what is done and what is not done, between them and us, between sanity and insanity" (p. xiv). Laughter is a complex phenomenon; therefore, many theories may be used to understand its components. Based on several theories of laughter, the meaning of laughing for humans derives from its positive function or acceptance in a society or culture consistent with the current *Zeitgeist*, i.e., its context, ground, or environment. In the present people believe it provides a healthy experience.

Natural Language Perspective

In *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Morris, W., 1970), laughter is defined as "the act of laughing, the sound produced by laughing,

the experience of or appearance of joy, merriment, amusement, or the like" (p. 740). And the meaning of laugh is "to express emotion, typically mirth, by a series of inarticulate sounds, characteristically with the mouth open in a wide smile, to produce sounds or cries resembling laughter, to manifest or resemble the manifestation of joy in any way, to drive, induce, or effect with or by laughter, to exhibit amusement at, to poke fun at, ridicule, deride, to refuse to consider seriously" (p. 740). *The Cambridge Thesaurus of American English* (Lutz, 1994) lists the following words as synonyms for laughter: chuckle, chortle, giggle, titter, guffaw, hoot, snigger, chuckling, giggling, tittering, and chortling (p. 264). As well as those synonyms, *The Oxford Thesaurus, American Edition* (Urdang, 1992) also includes "split one's sides"; "break or crack or roll on the floor, go into hysterics, roar with laughter"; and many negative terms sometimes associated with laughter such as "deride, ridicule, mock" and "spurn, dismiss, brush off, minimize, shrug off, reject, ignore, disregard, deny, belittle" (p. 257).

The Dictionary of Quotable Definitions (Brussell, 1970) offers quotes by famous people describing laughing. Here are a few: A universal bond that draws all men closer.—Nathan Ausubel; The corrective force which prevents us from becoming cranks.—Henry Bergson; The cipher-key wherewith we decipher the whole man.—Thomas Carlyle; An instrument of happiness.—John Dryden; We only laugh at those instances of moral absurdity to which we are conscious we ourselves are not liable.—Oliver Goldsmith; Medicine to weary bones.—Carl Sandburg; The innocent, youthful side of repentance, of disillusion, of understanding.—George Santayana; That older and greater church to which I belong: the church where the

oftener you laugh the better, because by laughter only can you destroy evil without malice, and affirm good fellowship without mawkishness.—George Bernard Shaw; A kind of joyousness that is incompatible with contempt or indignation.—Voltaire; Instant vacation.—Robert Zwick (pp. 317-318).

Because there is a lack of universally accepted definitions for “laughing,” researchers attempt to use operational definitions in their investigations. Everyone knows “laughing,” but no one agrees upon particular aspects of the experience suitable for study. Fry and Rader (1977) contended, “Laughter is the end point of humor, represents the climax of humor, and indicates that the amount of mirth has exceeded a critical threshold” (p. 40). Moody (1978) felt that as humans “we are so accustomed to experiencing it [laughter] as an automatic, spontaneous response, we are seldom aware of what a complex activity it is physiologically” (p. 1). He believed that “laughter...[is a] phenome[non] which, in order to be understood, must be looked at and evaluated from numerous, interrelated perspectives” (p. 5). Sveback (1982) used “mirthfulness” to define laughter in his studies on brain waves. He (1987) examined humor and amount of laughing, or arousal. In both studies he classified laughing as opposite to depression and distinguished it from humor appreciation. Also investigating laughing on the basis of brain wave technology, Bick (1989) found evidence for a distinction between “laughter on command...[and] the healthy, liberating species of laughter” (p. 38). Esar (1983) defined laughter as “the sensation of feeling good all over and showing it principally in one place” (as cited in Robinson, 1991, p. 10). Apte (1985) revealed that “laughter” shows up in

most studies of "humor," sometimes used as a synonym and other times as a definition of the domain of humor.

Fry (1986) defined terms relating to humor and laughter research by attempting to clarify the relationships between relevant concepts. He believed that "we are exposed to humorous stimuli and we perceive and respond to that humor. Within our psyches, an emotion of mirth is stimulated. Mirth is accompanied by or results in various behaviors, such as mirthful laughter. There are three basic elements in this system: the stimulus (humor, comedy, etc.); the emotional response (mirth); and the accompanying behavior (laughter, smiling, chortling, guffawing, tittering, giggling, etc.)" (p. 8).

Chafe (1987) defined laughter as "a kind of activity that seems to be beyond...intentional control, which is characterized by strong expirations accompanied by vocalizations not otherwise heard" (p. 16). He further noted: "The humor state is manifested prototypically in laughter, and to be in that state without overtly laughing is only a failure to have entered the state completely" (p. 18). Defining laughing by setting its stage, describing its actions, and recounting its effects, Chafe stated that "in circumstances when we recognize a funny world for what it is and simultaneously realize how we got ourselves into it, we react with paroxysmal expirations, decreased muscle tension, and a special feeling of pleasure, all of which have the effect of putting us out of commission and thus of preventing us from taking any overt action or thinking in any serious terms about the world into which our misuse of familiar reasoning devices led us" (p. 24).

Berk, Tan, Nehlsen-Cannarella, Napier, Lee, et al. (1988), Berk, Tan, Nehlsen-Cannarella, Napier, Lewis, et al. (1988), and Berk, Tan, Fry, et al. (1989) defined mirthful laughter as that which is elicited by humor versus nervous laughter which is elicited by embarrassment. Ziv (1989), in a conceptual framework similar to Fry's, explained that humor transmits a voluntary message with the main goal "to elicit a behavioral response (laughter) reflecting a cognitive-emotional process" (p. 102). A reaction to humorous communication involves both the cognitive-emotional process and the behavioral response, i.e., "laughter is the expressive and observable element of the internal cognitive-emotional process" (p. 103).

Pasquali (1990) presented similar notions, supporting the appropriate use of humor and laughter in the health field. She identified humor as a form of communication taking "the form of 'laughing at' or of 'laughing with.' Because humor implies some ability to laugh at one's own imperfections and troubles, a sense of humor may be an indicator of a person's degree of mental health and maturity and may function as a coping mechanism" (p. 31).

Robinson (1991) presented a collection of definitions in her seminal book about humor and laughter in the health professions. She highly recommended that investigators provide their "parameters" for laughing, because "scholars have not been able to agree on a central definition" (p. 9). She explained, "Most definitions of humor are described in relation to laughter, with laughter as the indicator that humor had occurred....The two words are often used to describe each other interchangeably" (p. 10). Robinson also noted that humor and laughter occur in

natural settings, contain an emotional component, and serve distinct functions, not the least of which is communications. Distinguishing between them, she built a framework from which to further discuss these topics: a "three-part process of humor as a cognitive communication leading to an emotional response of amusement, pleasure and mirth, which results in a behavioral physical response of laughter and its counterparts" (p. 10).

From these definitions of laughing one may derive this meaning: a uniquely human response to humor, a form of communication, an indicator, and facilitator, of relaxation, contentment, health and integration. Laughing serves varied, yet unique, healthy functions for the physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional human being.

Metaphors, or other figurative language, of laughter also help answer the question, "What is the meaning of laughing?" Kimmins (1928) used the metaphor of springs of water to reveal something about the nature of laughing. Josh Billings used the same metaphor: "Men who never laugh may have good hearts, but they are deep seated; like some springs, they have their inlet and outlet from below, and show no sparkling bubble on the brim" (Sommer & Sommer, 1988, p. 393). In figurative language collections, many metaphors and similes reveal a theme of comparing laughing to water or other liquid (Beale, 1986; Rodale & Fluck, 1953; Sommer & Sommer, 1988; Urdang & LaRoche, 1980).

Frequently people figuratively express the powerful physical, or embodied, nature of laughing (Rodale & Fluck, 1953; Sommer & Sommer, 1988; Urdang & LaRoche, 1980). Laughing is described with strong action verbs. Similes are often

used to compare the sound of laughing to the sounds made by familiar animals. From Sommer and Sommer (1988) *Similes Dictionary*, many similes associate the laughing sound with music, musical instruments, or the voice of singers; while others relate the sound of laughter to the sounds of birds, children, coins, or leaves. Rodale and Fluck (1953), in *The Phrase Finder*, found that the healthy benefits of laughing are expressed by people when they refer to it as "Vitamin L" (p. 1230). Rogers (1985), in *The Dictionary of Clichés*, noted that the cliché "to have the last laugh" is used to express an experience of scoring "a belated or unexpected triumph; get revenge" (p. 151).

Figuratively speaking, the meaning of laughing is as a strong, embodied experience. It reminds one of feeling the motion of powerful water or hearing the sounds of liquid falling or other sounds of nature. People often associate laughing with health or an unexpected triumph.

Behavioral Perspective

Another way that we share the meaning of our experience of laughter is in terms of our behavior. Anthropologists describe behavior and often propose survival or evolutionary benefits. What is the meaning of laughing from a behavioral perspective? Lorenz (1963/1966), Morris (1967), Darwin (1969), Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1972), and Apte (1985) tell us what laughing "looks" like and why it is important to humans.

Lorenz (1966) noted that "Laughter is not only the overt expression of humor, but it very probably constitutes the phylogenetic base on which it evolved" (p. 293). This benefits human beings because they "have for their ally a heaven-sent

gift of man that is anything but dry, a faculty as specifically human as speech or moral responsibility" (p. 293). It facilitates social bonding as it "produces, simultaneously, a strong fellow feeling among participants and joint aggressiveness against outsiders. Heartily laughing together at the same thing forms an immediate bond, much as enthusiasm for the same ideal does. Finding the same thing funny is not only a prerequisite to a real friendship, but very often the first step to its formation. Laughter forms a bond and simultaneously draws a line" (p. 293). Lorenz commented that "if you cannot laugh with the others, you feel an outsider, even if the laughter is in no way directed against yourself or indeed against anything at all" (p. 294). He added, "If laughter is in fact directed at an outsider, as in scornful derision, the component of aggressive motivation and, at the same time, the analogy to certain forms of the triumph ceremony become greatly enhanced. In this case, laughter can turn into a very cruel weapon" (p. 294). One takes on the superior role. Lorenz stated, "Laughter is...specifically human....Barking dogs may occasionally bite, but laughing men hardly ever shoot" (Lorenz, 1966, p. 294).

Morris (1967) examined laughter as a vital aspect of human life. It "convey[s] the same messages to everyone everywhere....They relate to basic emotional moods and give us an immediate impression of the motivational state of the vocalizer" (p. 94). Laughing is a retained trait "common to all societies and persist[s] despite the acquisition of many cultural gestures" (p. 94). He stated that "in evolutionary terms...we cried until we laughed" (p. 95). Anthropologically, "it is as though the long wail of the crying infant has become segmented, chopped up into little pieces, and at the same time has grown smoother and lower. It appears that the laughing

reaction evolved out of the crying one" (p. 95). Morris believed that humans learn limits and the give-and-take of social interaction for "if they (the interactions) become too frightening or painful, then, of course, the reaction can switch over into crying" (p. 97).

Morris reiterated this vital involvement of laughing with learning: "The naked ape, even as an adult, is a playful ape. It is all part of his exploratory nature. He is constantly pushing things to their limit, trying to startle himself, to shock himself without getting hurt, and then signaling his relief with peals of infectious laughter" (p. 97). Morris explained that "laughing at someone can also, of course, become a potent social weapon among older children and adults. It is doubly insulting because it indicates that he is both frighteningly odd and at the same time not worth taking seriously" (p. 97). Morris believed that "the professional comedian deliberately adopts this social role and is paid large sums of money by audiences who enjoy the reassurance of checking their group normality against his assumed abnormality" (pp. 97-98).

Morris viewed laughing, smiling, and crying as related in human evolution, but that they are now separate and serve unique functions. Laughing enters a child's set of behaviors around the same time as she or he recognizes his or her parents. It becomes a signal with which to communicate and to facilitate a playful relationship. Laughing performs a vital role in learning limits and developing social relationships. It can also provide a powerful weapon in society. Laughing is universally understood within the human community. In social interactions, it reveals a multitude of information about emotions, attitudes, and relationships.

Darwin (1969) discussed laughter in his chapter on joy, high spirits, love, tender feelings, and devotion. He reported that "laughter seems primarily to be the expression of mere joy or happiness" (p. 196). However, he related a story in which "German soldiers, after strong excitement from exposure to extreme danger, were particularly apt to burst out into loud laughter at the smallest joke" (pp. 198-199). Laughing provides an outlet for "superfluous nervous energy" as "an unexpected event will sometimes suddenly turn...crying into laughter, which apparently serves equally well" (p. 199). The sounds of laughing are "associated with a pleasurable state of mind, [and are]...as different as possible from the screams or cries of distress" (p. 204). Darwin noted that he has "often seen...[someone] suffering from deep grief, burst out into hysterical fits of laughter" (p. 206). While laughing, "the circulation becomes more rapid; the eyes are bright, and the colour of the face rises. The brain, being stimulated by the increased flow of blood, reacts on the mental powers; lively ideas pass still more rapidly through the mind, and the affections are warmed" (p. 210). Laughing in derision may be blended with contempt "to show the offending person that he excites only amusement" (p. 212).

Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1972) began his discussion of laughter by describing its significance as a greeting behavior. He believed that "in addition to the 'threat greeting' intended as a demonstration of one's own strength, there are also 'gestures of threat-greeting' expressing readiness for the common fight" (p. 166). About these greetings, he explained, "The individuals greeting one another feel themselves bound together as a fighting community" (p. 166). He acknowledged that "one form

of ritualized threat that has a cohesive effect is actually innate, namely, laughter” (p. 166).

Anthropologically speaking, “this expressive movement probably arose from a form of behavior that we describe as ‘mobbing,’...threaten[ing] jointly against an enemy,...show[ing] their teeth...and emit[ting] rhythmic threat sounds” (p. 166). He admitted that “people laugh *about* someone or they may laugh *at* them, and we like doing this together with others” (p. 166). Unfortunately, “The person who is laughed at experiences the laughter as aggressive” (p. 166). As I believe will be found true about laughing in a POW camp or within the POW experience, “The people laughing together feel themselves bound together by this ritualized mobbing” (pp. 166-167) or laughing together. If one is *laughed at* she or he considers it aggressive. If one *laughs with* others the experience offers bonding with a group.

Apte (1985) addressed the uniquely human characteristics of humor and laughter, initially discussing a common problem with researching these topics. Writers and researchers often use “humor” and “laughter” synonymously. Apte explained that “a sense of humor and the ability to laugh and to speak make human beings unique in the animal kingdom” (p. 13). He identified laughing as a behavioral response and one of three elements that must be considered in studying humor. Apte believed that it is “the mental activity experienced by an individual, that is most crucial” (p. 14), i.e., the meaning of this experience for the person. Apte explained that “while laughter and smiling are probably the most overt indicators of the humor experience and are therefore important in determining its occurrence, they differ from humor in being anatomically and physiologically observable overt

activities" (p. 14). He identified humor as "a cognitive, often unconscious experience involving internal refining of sociocultural reality and resulting in a mirthful state of mind;...external sociocultural factors that trigger this cognitive experience;...the pleasure derived from the cognitive experience labeled 'humor'; and...the external manifestations of the cognitive experience and the resultant pleasure, expressed through mirthful laughter and smiling" (p. 14).

This conceptualization or model fits well with those of Darwin and Lorenz, clearly delineating the importance to laughing of the social context and cultural its interdependence, the pleasurable emotional state of the experience, and its resulting healthy effects. Apte reported that "laughter and smiling are evoked by different stimuli both across and within cultures" (p. 259) and that they "need to be differentiated by sociocultural, linguistic, and contextual criteria, because anatomical and physiological criteria are inadequate for this purpose" (p. 260).

Ethologists and anthropologists support an evolutionary theory or function of laughter. It "may have developed for its cathartic effects and adaptive value. As an evolutionary device, laughter may have served to thwart aggression, spread information, and preserve social unity" (Black, 1984, p. 2995). Laughing is a uniquely human expression of the emotion, joy, and relates to the cognitive appreciation of humor. Depending upon its intensity, laughter involves the whole body, but appears primarily in the face. Its genuineness can be recognized universally and bonds people together in friendship, facilitating high spirits and positive attitudes. Crying and laughing are thought to be closely associated in human evolution, providing forms of communication that aid in learning limits. The

human laughing experience occurs within a sociocultural context. Performing vital social functions in communication and learning, laughing provides a healthy link between people. It facilitates and means healthy social relationships.

Health Perspective

Although Freud (1938) developed an extensive theory of humor in the early 1900s, McGhee (1989) admitted that, from the public's point of view, Cousins' 1979 book "enhanced the awareness of the value of laughter" (p. 6). While personal experience and Freudian theory suggested that humor and laughter contribute to mental health, little research had been done to support this belief. Following Cousins' lead, however, researchers began to test the idea that laughing contributes to health. They wanted to understand laughter's connections with health and its healthy effects. Researchers employed experimental methods and sometimes high-tech equipment to investigate laughing. With a shift in research methodologies, other investigators have employed qualitative approaches to ask various populations about their experience of the connection between humor and health, i.e., their experience of laughing.

Although the nursing field leads in number of articles supporting application of laughing for health and healing, other fields also are conducting empirical research concerning the effects that laughing has on the physical, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the human—the health of the whole being. Functionally, laughing increases communication, improves social skills, provides psychological coping strategies, and offers physical rehabilitation aids

(Bellert, 1989; Buxman, 1991; D'Antonio, 1989; Robinson, 1977, 1991; Ruxton, 1988; Tennant, 1986). Laughing affects health.

Physiological

Research, conducted on laughing and its effects on the central nervous system, reveals that laughter affects brain waves. Electroencephalograms (EEGs) provide evidence of how the brain functions during laughing. Topographic brain-mapping adds another high-tech tool for investigation and offers a "picture" of laughing in the brain. Laughing manifests in areas closely associated with emotions. With natural, liberating laughing, certain brain-wave patterns emerge that are associated with healthy, relaxed alertness (Bick, 1989; Matsuoka, 1990; Okuda, Matsuoka & Mohri, 1988; Sveback, 1982).

Laughing also affects the peripheral nervous system and the rest of the body. Increased activity and improved functioning occur in the human respiratory/pulmonary, cardiovascular, skeletal/musculature, and immune systems during and following laughing (Berk, Tan, Nehlsen-Cannarella, Napier, Lewis, et al., 1988; Berk, Tan, Nehlsen-Cannarella, Napier, Lee, et al., 1988; Berk, Tan, Fry, et al., 1989; Dillon, Minchoff & Baker, 1985-86; Dillon & Totten, 1989; Fry, 1986; Fry & Savin, 1988; Fry & Stoft, 1971; Pinkston, Saltini, Muller-Quernheim & Crystal, 1987; Svebak, 1982; Svebak & Apter, 1987). During laughing, a stimulation-relaxation pattern exists for respiration and the pulmonary system. Frequency of exhalation and inhalation sharply increases and then decreases to below normal cyclic breathing for a short time. As respiration rate increases and breathing deepens, more oxygen circulates throughout the body. Oxygenation

increases, allowing more oxygen to be introduced into the blood, i.e., the lungs show an increased ability to process oxygen. Laughing immediately affects the cardiovascular system. Initially, heart rate and blood pressure increase sharply. Then they fall back below baseline rates. More oxygen gets into the blood and is transported more efficiently throughout the body.

Laughing also manifests itself as a pattern of tension and release in the skeletal/muscular system. The effects of laughing on the bones, joints, and muscles closely parallel those of exercise and/or a good physical workout. At the same time, the digestive system comes to operate more effectively as the abdominal muscles alternately tense and relax with laughing.

Immune system functioning increases and improves during laughing, helping people to resist disease and recover from illness. Researchers continue to investigate and verify these findings (Berk, Tan, Nehlsen-Cannarella, Napier, Lewis, et al., 1988; Berk, Tan, Nehlsen-Cannarella, Napier, Lee, et al., 1988; Berk, Tan, Fry, et al, 1989; Dillon, Minchoff & Baker, 1985-86; Dillon & Totten, 1989; Fry, 1986; Pinkston, Saltini, Muller-Quernheim & Crystal, 1987). Laughing produces short-term effects. Current investigators suggest that future investigation focus on its long-term effects. Longitudinal studies with people who do or do not laugh frequently could assess the effects of laughing on a regular basis over an extended period of time.

During and following laughing, people report feeling less pain (Cogan & Waltz, 1983; Cogan, Cogan, Waltz & McCue, 1987; Davies, 1989). Moody (1978) speculated that "some of the alleged anesthetic benefits of laughter could be related

to a decrease in muscle tone....[With laughing] the tension of [his] muscles in the affected area decreases, and the pain is relieved" (p. 112). As well as experiencing less pain during laughing, people seem to be able to tolerate much higher pain levels for a short period of time after laughing. Cousins (1979, 1987) claimed that ten minutes of genuine belly laughing allowed him two pain-free hours. In their *Laughter Prescription* (1982), Peter and Dana advocated laughing, stating, "Laughter may not cure, but at the very least it reduces pain, diffuses trouble, has no bad side effects—and it's free" (p. 47).

While muscle tension is part of a stress reaction, initial tension and then total relaxation is characteristic of laughing. Short, shallow breathing and restricted blood flow to the extremities are common aspects of responses to stress, whereas laughing generates increased and deepened respiration and oxygenation, as well as dilation of blood vessels and increased speed and volume of blood flow. Although a stress response may cause discomfort in the digestive tract, laughing improves digestive functioning. Blood pressure raised by stress and remaining elevated over an extended period of time has detrimental effects on the body. With laughing, however, blood pressure rises initially but then returns to a level below the original pressure and lowers over time with regular "doses" of laughing.

Under stress, one perceives pain as more intense. Laughing facilitates a body's production of its natural painkillers, endorphins (Cogan, Cogan, Waltz, & McCue, 1987). Laughing can reverse the devastating spiral of stress, pain, more stress, and feeling pain more intensely. The additional social and psychological benefits of increased communication, rapport, cooperation, intimacy, sense of well-

being, learning, and creativity, in conjunction with the beneficial changes or shifts in perception, and welcome decreases in conflict and anger seem like advantages well worth obtaining. Laughing is easily accessible to everyone and can facilitate positive effects, creating a healthy experience.

Stress researchers such as Selye (1956, 1976, 1982), Holmes and Rahe (1967), Kiecolt-Glaser, Speicher, Holliday, and Glaser (1984), and Kiecolt-Glaser, Stephens, Lipetz, Speicher, and Glaser (1985) discovered connections between stress and the immune system, indicating the deleterious effects of stress on health. Research by Berk and his associates about laughing and immune system functioning (mentioned earlier) revealed that laughing leads to a decrease in the classical stress response. Martin and Lefcourt (1983, 1984), Lefcourt and Martin (1986), and Martin (1989) confirmed the usefulness of laughing for coping with stress. Laughing improves one's perspective on life and pain, thereby aiding in major life adjustments (Anderson & Arnoult, 1989; Nezu, Nezu & Blissett, 1988).

Prerost and Ruma (1987) reported that laughing enhances the stress-reducing quality of muscle relaxation. Laughter facilitated the release of tension, allowing subjects to enter the relaxation-inducing situation in a proper frame of mind and to attain a state of relaxation more quickly. The authors noted that "some cathartic effect of laughter aids in the subsequent process of relaxation" (p. 72). These researchers proposed that the relaxation achieved in a positive affective state is more beneficial than relaxation achieved through fatigue.

Tennant (1986) stated that humor and laughter "relieve stress, tension, and anxiety...[and] facilitate the expression of feelings" (p. 245). She confirmed that

laughing produces beneficial physiological effects and postulated that these effects may have helped patients recover quicker from cataract surgery.

Physiologically speaking, the meaning of laughing is relaxation and stress reduction. Following the patterns of physical tension and release that accompany laughing, a sense of renewed physical energy, strength, and relief occurs. The body reacts in a pattern similar to Benson's (1975) relaxation response and the person experiences a reduction in stress. The response pattern affected by laughing is the opposite of the stress response affected by extended, unexpected, or uncontrollable stressors.

Psychological

Again we ask, "What is the meaning of laughing? Allport (1950) suggested that laughing provides new perspective on one's place in society and is a very effective, integrating factor for one's personality. Moody (1978) noted that it reflects a sort of "joint, playful regression" (p. 111) and "can take one away from oneself, one's worries. For at least a moment, a person who laughs can forget his troubles" (pp. 111-112). Fry (1986) reported that the production of catecholamines and adrenaline during laughing increases alertness and memory and enhances the learning process. Laughing increases creativity and flexibility of thought (Isen, 1987; Isen, Johnson, Mertz, and Robinson, 1985; and Isen, Daubman, and Nowicki, 1987). Ziv (1989) announced that laughing has a "liberating effect" on ideas. He believed that "laughing together probably augments the fun mood and contributes to the tendency to look for funny, incongruous and original answers" (p. 112). At a Power of Laughter and Play Conference sponsored by The Institute for the

Advancement of Human Behavior in November 1989, researcher Goodheart, in her presentation called *Loss, Laughter, and Healing*, confirmed that humor and laughter help people confront problems within a more relaxed and creative state. Klein (1989) summarized with: "In laughter, we transcend our predicaments. We are lifted above our feelings of fear, discouragement, and despair. People who can laugh at their setbacks no longer feel sorry for themselves. They feel uplifted, encouraged, and empowered" (p. 4). He explained that "laughter...focuses us outward. Laughter expands our vision and gives us a new way of seeing our situation" (p. 21).

The relaxation response affected by laughing is healthy for psychological well-being. Laughter's positive effects on cognitive functioning may relate directly to the physical effects of improved cardiovascular system functioning and tension release. Other positive psychological benefits flow from bonding with other people and improved social relationships. These all allow for more relaxed learning and an increased ability to focus one's attention, e.g., in problem solving.

People enjoy the positive mental effects of improved thinking and learning. These psychological benefits tend to be manifested immediately after a "good" laugh, dropping off after a short period of time. People who laugh easily, heartily, frequently and regularly may reap the more pronounced long-term benefits of increased reasoning skills and creativity. Psychologically speaking, people experience laughing as healthy. It means gaining new perspective and at least a momentary liberation from worry, focusing us outward with courage and a sense of power.

Emotional/Social/Spiritual

Aamodt (1976) reported that laughter is one of the culturally defined patterns for coping with alterations of feeling for the Papago, a North American Indian culture. Even though not the only healing element needed, laughing "must be allowed to take its rightful place among those positive emotions that produce emotional stability" (Bonham, 1988, p. 122). Ziv (1989) explained that "we know for instance that the inability to laugh is one of the main symptoms of depression. The same people, when nondepressed, laugh and can enjoy humor" (p. 112). Blumenfeld and Alpern (1986) concluded that "laughter is a positive emotion. And as long as we can choose to laugh, it means we affirm life—no matter how burdensome it might become" (p. 3).

Close bonds form among people who laugh together. The social setting plays an important role for laughing and is enhanced with laughter. Laughing is contagious, alleviates depression and anxiety, and eases tensions. As it enhances social interactions, it provides added cooperation and group cohesiveness (Bick, 1989; Fry, 1986; Chapman & Sheehy, 1987; Scogin & Pollio, 1980; Ziv, 1989).

Educational consultants, Saul and Saul (1990) recommended laughing as one of ten facets of joy useful in working with groups of elderly people. The authors asserted that "a good laugh can, and often does, reverse negative energy. The sharing of laughter develops a camaraderie which enhances group cohesiveness" (p. 362).

Allport (1950) asserted that laughing contains a spiritual aspect. He explained that "humor says essentially that nothing really matters, for basically the

universe is comic....Religion takes up where humor leaves off" (p. 104). Yet even after deciding "that there is something beyond laughter, a core of life that is 'solemn, serious, tender,' there yet remains plenty of clear room for jesting...[because] the design of the universe is by no means apparent at all times, and its *non-sequiturs*, its 'mechanical inelasticities' are fair game for laughter" (pp. 104-5). Mullen (1983) affirmed that "the ability to laugh in a world like ours is an act of faith, a declaration of belief in a God who can be trusted" (p. 95).

The spiritual concept "will to live" is vital to human health. Although it is very hard to define or measure, Frankl (1959/1962), Freud (1938), and Moody (1978) all discussed humor and laughter in connection with it. They speculated that laughing has a powerful, positive relationship with this force.

At a 1984 conference about love and laughter's role in the healing process, a psychologist, Bernie Siegel, asserted that his success in motivating patients to fight their illness came from the power of laughing to restore or create hope. Hope tended to bring about healthy physiological changes. Fry (1986) supported laughing's role in facilitating hope. He noted that "experiencing mirth conveys a sense of hopefulness" (p. 8). After reviewing laughter research, Cousins (1989) also emphasized the importance of laughing for reducing fear and panic by creating hope within individuals.

Co-founder of a cancer research center, Carl Simonton asserted that play and laughter "increase vital energy, creativity, flexibility of the mind, and the will and desire to live" (Warga, 1984, p. 38). He believed that as life gets richer we want to live more, and that laughing and play enhance that richness. His evidence shows

that patients stop playing early in their illness and live longer once they can laugh and play again (Simonton, Matthews-Simonton, & Creighton, 1978). He suggested that doctors encourage patients to find ways to play and laugh. McGlone (1990), writing about healing, also noted that laughing provides the means by which humans get in touch with their whole being—body, mind, and spirit. She explains that it allows for a spontaneous or “gradual awakening to a deeper sense of self, body, mind, and spirit, and of the self in relation to others” (p. 78).

Laughing offers healthy emotional, social, and spiritual benefits. It increases self-esteem, a sense of well-being, and the will to live, thereby returning hope to any situation (Cousins, 1979, 1989). A more positive attitude becomes apparent during and after laughing and it is almost impossible to be angry with someone while laughing together. Social bonds form, communication improves, and intimacy deepens; each person becomes more in tune with or attuned to self, others, and a supreme being. Laughing means affirming life.

Summary

Moody (1978) discussed laughing's link with health in *Laugh After Laugh: The Healing Power of Humor*. He enumerated the medical implications and power of these God-given abilities to aid in the healing process, emphasizing their positive affect in the physical, social, and psychological aspects of being. He pointed out that “within the context...of human relationships...the distinction between *laughing with* and *laughing at* acquires its meaning, and becomes so important. In cruel laughter, in laughing at someone, we exclude him from the network of love, understanding and support; in laughing with someone, we enfold him within it” (p. 109).

Moody further explained that "laughter and humor have not only physiological and psychological aspects but pervasive social ones as well. Laughter and humor integrate the physiological, the psychological, and the social events and processes that shape each person as do few other phenomena. This fact gives us an overall perspective from which to view many findings about mirth and its relationship to health and to illness" (p. 108). He noted that "over the years I have encountered a surprising number of instances in which, to all appearances, patients have laughed themselves back to health" (p. xi). He stated his conviction that "a human being's ability to laugh and to appreciate funny material is just as important a fact about him, and just as valuable and valid an indicator of the state of his health" (p. xii). Laughter aids "in assessing the state of someone's physical and emotional health...[and] the connection between laughter and health is drawn almost universally, by laymen and medical professionals alike" (p. xii). Moody reaffirmed that "the ability to laugh is one of the most characteristic and deep-seated features of man" (p. xiii).

Warm, spontaneous laughter provides healthy effects on body, mind, and spirit. This kind of laughing indicates a healthy being, is part of a healthy environment, and can be used for healing and/or bringing people back to their greatest potential. People benefit from experiencing humor and laughter in real-life settings, thereby taking advantage of the connections found among humor, laughing, and health. Empirical research reveals that humor and laughter improve the physical, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual health of individuals. From this perspective, laughing means health and provides stress reduction,

improves communications and social closeness, and furnishes hope and personal integration.

First-person Perspective

The preceding information about laughing was obtained predominantly from the third-person perspective, involving observations and experiments. Plessner (1970), Parse (1993), and Romer (1992, 1993) have gathered information from first-person perception which attempts to describe the experience of laughing. Asking people about their experience of laughing gains the first-person perspective answer for "What is the meaning of laughing?"

Plessner: "Limits of Human Behavior"

In his 1970 book, *Laughing and Crying: A Study of the Limits of Human Behavior*, Plessner attempted to describe the experience of laughing. He noted that laughter provides a unique relationship between the person and his or her body as well as a mode of expression. Plessner considered laughing a type of expressive behavior in relation to the fundamental nature of human life. It is not intentional but an involuntary action and only human beings laugh (p. xi). Laughing is an outburst "of an elementary character, incapable of higher development" (p. 7). For Plessner, any "creature without the possibility of laughing...is not human" (p. 7).

Reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty, Plessner explained, "The living thing is body, is in its body (as inner life) and outside the body as the point of view from which it is both (body and inner life). The person is subject of its experience, of its perceptions and its actions, of its initiative. It knows and it wills" (p. xii). Laughing constitutes a

unique expression of the breakdown of this dual position. "It is when the ambiguity in our fundamental situation breaks forth in such a way that we can't control it" (p. xiii).

Plessner's investigation "resembles phenomenology, for its aim is description rather than argument, insight rather than analysis. But it entails no method of reduction, no intuition of essences....Plessner's source...is just 'experience'...experience in the most ordinary and comprehensive sense" (Preface, p. xiii). He felt that he had a "duty of clarifying what laughing...really mean[s]" (p. 7). He did not do the clarification, but went to others and asked them about their experience. He believed that to understand laughing "as with all specifically human utterances, man himself must be heard. Only his grasp of these utterances, the interpretation which he gives them, the significance which he confers on them in the management of his life, reveals them in their full extent...natural and innate in every human creature, distinguish this creature from nature, from animal existence" (pp. 7-8). Laughing provides "a mirror, indeed a revelation, of human nature" (p. 14).

Plessner asserted that "man's existence in the world is determined by the relation to his body, [and] that the understanding of human nature is bound to the possibility of expression as a unity of intellectual, affective, and physical components" (p. 17). Plessner explained that "to understand laughing...means to proceed from man as a whole, and not some particular aspect which can be detached from the whole...like body, soul, mind, or social unit. Man is accessible to us as a whole,...as our fellow man, and we are accessible to ourselves, in the context of

behavior, in commerce with our own kind and with the environment. We live in and by this context...the basis of all experience" (p. 21).

In describing the experience of laughing, Plessner explained that "the curve of laughter stretches from the mediate occasions of boundless joy and titillation to the boundary situations of embarrassment and despair" (p. 113). He explained that for humans, "Laughter...is pleasurable as the release of tension....[and] is pleasurable and 'healthy' as a reaction of letting oneself go in a physical automatism, as a surrender of the controlled unity of man and body, which demands a constant expenditure in inhibition and in drives" (p. 113).

Plessner reiterated that "we laugh...only in situations for which there is no other answer" (p. 138). We laugh in situations "dominated by the effective impossibility of giving it any other suitable answer" (p. 139). Laughing means that "insofar as he can, or will, 'do nothing more with them,'...[he] gives expression to this impossibility" (p. 139). Plessner asserted that for humans "it means arriving at a boundary which thwarts every possibility of accommodation" (p. 139).

Emphasizing this point, Plessner reiterated, "If it [the situation] did not hold us fast, did not positively bind us, then we could free ourselves from it without expenditure of energy, and the explosive reaction of laughter would remain incomprehensible" (p. 141). Plessner explained that where laughing results "the situation does not become too much for the person involved, and yet holds him fast. He cannot free himself from it without difficulty, but is kept in tension through the entwinement or intersection of attracting and repelling aspects" (p. 142). In these boundary situations "antagonism between binding and repulsion, answerableness

and unanswerableness, and...the conditions which exclude our responding to and entering into the situation...determine their binding, uniting power" (p. 142).

Laughing comes from "a situation which is vitally, spiritually, and existentially 'contrary' to sense (which does not dwindle away to nothing, like the simply contradictory or the purely senseless, but unfolds its 'sense in nonsense' in irresolubly oscillating tension, in meaningful transparency)....[Laughing reveals] both self-assertion and self-abandonment" (p. 142).

Plessner (1970) offered a summary of the laughing experience and its meaning:

When a man laughs, he gives way to his own body and thus foregoes unity with it and control over it. With this capitulation as a unity of ensouled body and mind, he asserts himself as a person....In the loss of control over his body, in disorganization, man still gives evidence of his sovereignty in an impossible situation. In this situation, he is disrupted as an ordered unity of mind, soul, and body, but this disruption is the last card he plays. In sinking below his level of controlled, or at least articulated, corporeality, he directly demonstrates his humanity: to be able to deal with something at the point where nothing further can be done. (p. 142)

Laughing is a limit human beings reach, a boundary at which we let go of an impossible situation that binds us. Yet in this surrender to our bodies we are emancipated and assert ourselves as persons. Laughing provides a direct answer: we deal with a situation in which nothing more can be done.

Parse: Buoyant Immersion

Parse (1993) developed a formal thematic structure for laughter. Her research question was, "What is the structural definition of the experience of laughing?" She wanted to know how laughing was experienced in the everyday life of people over 65 years old. She transformed the data through several levels, taking it out of the realm of lived existence and the natural language of experiencers. On the basis of her analysis, she described laughter as "characterized by an uplifting self-immersion sparked by the recognition of some incongruence, prompting a happy feeling....[It] erupts when the person experiences an amusing event or when something calls up in the person humorous images of a remembered connectedness which reflects lived values" (p. 40). She concluded that "the laughing experience transforms the moment and lingers, creating a happy feeling and prompting a sense of oneness and contentment often reflected in personal descriptions of health" (p. 40).

In her research, Parse asked 30 elderly volunteers, both men and women, about their experience of laughter. After explanations of the study and their involvement, writing their descriptions was considered to be informed consent. She used van Kaam's system of analysis and found "four elements common to the experience of laughing[:] buoyant immersion, harmonious integrity, contemplative visioning, and unanticipated glimpsings" (p. 41). From her results, she formulated the following "structural definition of laughing...[:] Laughing is a buoyant immersion in the presence of unanticipated glimpsings, prompting harmonious integrity which surfaces anew in contemplative visioning" (p. 41).

Even though the present study also inquires into the experience of laughing for elderly participants, it will use the natural language of participants. It will attempt to stay closer to lived experience rather than to a reflection on that experience. This study will attempt to determine what meaning the laughing experience holds for the participants by allowing the common elements and structure of the experience to emerge. As with Parse's analysis, mine will follow van Kaam's system, but without any attempt to coerce correspondence to a previously developed theory.

Romer: Relaxation, Relationships, Renewal

Leading up to the present investigation, several studies were conducted using paper-and-pencil questionnaires. Brief lists and essays about a particular phenomena or experience were elicited from participants. With this method, researchers spend less time and effort during data collection, usually soliciting input from larger numbers of participants, and more time performing thematic analysis of the gathered data.

Helping to validate a paper-and-pencil method for phenomenological research, Beier and Pollio (1994) conducted a study of social roles. Using a similar abbreviated method, they asked students to make a paper-and-pencil list of three situations in which they were aware of the targeted experience. The students then described in detail one of the situations. After thematically analyzing these short essays, the authors concluded that "a meaningful thematic structure may be obtained on the basis of interpreting a large number of brief written protocols....The

structure appears complete and consistent with more theoretical descriptions" (pp. 16-17).

In 1992, Romer canvassed the first-person experience of laughing from a general population. Participants were recruited from several local civic and social groups, as well as from Introductory Psychology classes at a major university. Romer asked her participants to write down three instances in which they were aware of laughter or laughing. The participants then described "one of the times in as much detail as possible," answering the question, "What were you aware of while you were laughing?"

After analyzing the 80 or so questionnaires, themes of "body," "others," and "feelings" emerged and Romer offered the following experience-close description of laughing. Laughing is an uncontrolled, embodied, enjoyable action, enhanced by the presence of friends. It can be explosive and sometimes mimics the motion of a roller coaster or the sound and movement of waves over time, fully involving the whole body. Its intensity may evoke pain that feels enjoyable. Laughing connects or separates others depending on how well they know each other. The experience, therefore, can be one of either comparing oneself to or sharing with others. During and after laughing, one experiences positive feelings, both physically and emotionally. Laughing relieves or releases stress and tension allowing one to relax and not worry about anything. It renews energy and lets one feel cleansed and carefree, providing a reality break or chance to escape.

Romer conducted a second, smaller study in 1993 using a more specific population, ex-POWs from WWII. A few of these participants filled out a paper-and-

pencil questionnaire similar to the one used with the more general population. The questionnaire asked participants to list three times, during their POW experience, when they were aware of laughing and to describe one instance in as much detail as possible. Nine surveys were returned and analyzed. Themes that emerged to help form a structure of the experience were "contrast," "control or power," and "relationships." From these themes, she developed the following preliminary description of ex-POWs' experience of laughing in a POW camp: Laughing in a POW camp provides the contrast between us (POWs) and them (the enemy, guards). This symbol of absurdity bonds "us" together and distances us from "them." It communicates or is understood as survival and a reversal of existing power relationships. These dynamics are played out against a background of danger and lack of control. There was a difference between guards who were dangerous, but human, and those who dehumanized POWs, treating them as less than human. Going by these results, Romer characterized POW laughter as bonding POWs with each other and separating them from their guards. In addition, it communicated survival and a reversal of power. The meaning of laughing derived from information gathered by Romer on the basis of paper-and-pencil questionnaires is that laughing feels good and offers physical tension release and relaxation. It enhances close social relationships and, even under extreme conditions, lightens emotions and communicates health, survival, and control.

The POW Experience

Research about the POW experience is sporadic and investigations often center around the effects of the experience as currently assessed, i.e., after survival

and repatriation. Ursano and Rundell (1990) proposed that "prisoner of war (POW) captivity is one of the most traumatic situations in the human experience" (p. 176). However, except for several authors discussing the Vietnam War POW experience (Butler, 1977; Howes, 1993; Hunter, Plag, Phelan & Mowery, 1976; Stenger, 1973; Stockdale, 1984), few books or research articles offer accounts of POW-camp conditions and the POW experience from the first-person perspective. One exception is Bird's 1992 book which focuses mainly on a compilation of stories from men held in captivity during WWII.

Moreover, no one has studied laughing in the context of a POW camp from the first-person perspective of ex-POWs about their laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience. In this extensive POW-experience literature review, I only found three discussions of laughing: Ketchum's (1965) discussion of a WWI German POW camp, Ruhleben; hostages, Anderson (1993, and in a 1996 interview with Dunn) and Jacobsen (1993), concerning their captivity experience; and Urwin (1984) in his descriptions of "The Defenders of Wake Island."

A flurry of research about POWs occurred in the mid-1970s and late in the 1980s. In the 1990s, a few investigators published studies annually. Many of these focused on the long-term effects of having been a POW and on the experiences of the POWs' families. Hunter (1988a) believed that some factors individualize each hostage, concentration-camp, or POW-camp experience, but that the long-term psychological effects are similar for all captives. She noted, "Each captivity or hostage experience is different, depending upon the time in history at which the incident occurred, the culture of the captor, the duration of captivity, its harshness,

and the support received from other, both while in captivity as well as upon return" (p. 157). Ursano and Rundell (1990) agreed that environmental and social factors of particular captive settings influence the experience.

Some of the factors influencing the POW-camp conditions and the experience are: the national policies of different countries concerning the treatment of POWs, the specific war in which the prisoners participated and, for U. S. personnel, the Military Code of Conduct. Research on the POW-camp experience often mentions the hostage and concentration-camp contexts as affording similar experiences and vice versa. During WWII, diverse groups had differing POW experiences at the hands of various countries.

One might explore the American POWs' experience of the Code of Conduct, i.e., the difference it made in the POW experience from wars prior to and after its establishment. The code was mentioned a few times as being part of the American POWs' experience, but no research surfaced concerning its influence. Information about national POW-treatment policies, the POW experience in different wars, and the POW experience in various countries provides background material.

Descriptions of camp conditions and the POW experience come from first-person accounts as much as possible. This study focuses on the experience of laughing in a POW camp for American WWII POWs, emphasizing conditions in German and Japanese POW camps.

Soon after prisoners began returning from Vietnam POW camps, researchers started numerous investigations into the effects of the POW-camp experience. A research institute dedicated to that goal operated in San Diego from 1973 to 1978,

The Center for Prisoner of War Studies (CPWS). In a joint Navy, Army, and Marine Corps effort, and in liaison with the Air Force, this group gathered much information that is still to be analyzed and understood. McCubbin and his colleagues published several articles concerning the families of POWs (McCubbin, Dahl, Lester & Ross, 1975, 1977; McCubbin, Dahl, Lester, Benson & Robertson, 1976; McCubbin, Hunter & Dahl, 1975). Following this initial flurry of articles, however, further research into the POW-camp experience seemed to become dormant for a while.

A few studies by Ursano and his colleagues were conducted in the 1980s (Ursano, 1981; Ursano, Wheatley, Sledge, Rahe & Carlson, 1986; Ursano, Wheatley, Carlson & Rahe, 1987; Ursano & Rundell, 1990; Wheatley & Ursano, 1982). In these studies, they investigated the personality, coping, and stress levels of Vietnam-era POWs. Transitioning into the 90's, Hunter wrote about the experience of being a POW (Hunter, 1988a, 1993; Hunter, Plag, Phelan & Mowery, 1976). She also focused much of her work on the POWs' families and the readjustment of the ex-POWs into "normal" society (1986, 1988b) and Hunter-King (1993).

Sutker and colleagues, beginning in the 1990s, examine WWII and/or Korean ex-POWs and published their results almost annually (Sutker, Thomason & Allain, 1989; Sutker, Winstead, Galina & Allain, 1990; Sutker, Winstead, Galina & Allain, 1991; Sutker & Allain, 1991; Sutker, Allain & Winstead, 1993; Sutker, Allain, & Johnson, 1993). These studies all have focused on long-term effects of the POW experience, as measured in the present.

National Policies

To some extent, studies conducted in the last decade concerning the POW-camp experience have seemed to focus on national policies concerning the treatment of POWs. These policies tend to vary widely from country to country even after international conferences (1648, Treaty of Westphalia; 1863, first Geneva Convention; 1899, the Hague Convention; 1864, second Geneva Convention; 1907, the Fourth Hague Convention; 1929, Geneva Convention; 1949, Red Cross Prisoners of War Convention; and 1949, Geneva Convention) supposedly resolved the issue of appropriate treatment of POWs (Gansberg, 1977; Hunter, 1988a; Khan, 1987/1989; Roling, 1976). Hunter (1988a) has noted that "thirty-three nations signed the provisions of the 1929 convention. Thus, when WWII began, there finally existed a legally binding convention with regard to treatment of POWs that all who signed were supposed to observe" (p. 159). Despite this, treatment of prisoners, and therefore the POW experience, still varied from one nation to another depending on the country's policies, economics, and even religious belief systems (Schulte, 1989; Vance, 1994; Wadley, 1993). As of WWII, Russia had not signed the agreement and Japan had not ratified it but had announced intentions to abide by the Geneva Conventions. Germany denied that the rules applied to their treatment of Russians (Hunter, 1988a).

Japan

Hunter (1988a) reported that Japan's treatment of U. S. POWs in WWII proved that they failed to follow the Geneva conventions. Khan (1987/1989) and Jones (1990/1991) discussed Japan's attitude toward prisoners. It was the Japanese

national mission to rule the world. Ancient social and religious traditions and myths combined to form their belief that they were of divine origin and that all other races were inferior. Therefore, they controlled with cruelty, coldness, and firmness. They inflicted punishment and torture upon POWs, brutally treating or killing many people of other races for their emperor. Vance (1994) recounted that Japan's view of captives changed. He noted that "events during the invasion of Manchuria suggested that Japan was adopting a much less liberal attitude towards prisoners" (p. 184). Earlier the Japanese had "a reasonably good history of treating captives humanely" (p. 184). In several subsequent pages of this report, Vance cited verified accounts of much more severe treatment in which POWs were treated as less than human during World War II.

Germany

Schulte (1989) described German soldiers' treatment of Soviet POWs. Members of the German army were primarily influenced by social, socio-psychological, and institutional ideologies within the Third Reich. Christiansen (1994), in his accounts of being a YMCA representative among allied prisoners of war in Germany, noted the differential treatment given POWs from different countries. The Russian POWs had "to sleep in the open, exposed to snow, rain, and cold" (p. 24) had to use their hands and mess tins to dig shelter. Hunter (1988a) stated that 60% of the Russians captured and held by Germany never returned from POW camps. She noted that "the Germans did attempt to live up to the requirements laid down by the Geneva Conventions insofar as American POWs were concerned" (p. 159); however, they treated Jewish political prisoners and

civilian populations much more harshly. Speed (1990) commented that "German policy during the First World War was radically different than it was during the Second World War. During the earlier conflict, Germany, like its Western opponents, made a serious if sometimes faltering effort to conform to the tenets of the liberal tradition in the administration of its prison camp system" (p. 79).

The Soviet Union

Wadley (1993) noted that the Soviet Union continued to hold prisoners even after they were liberated from German concentration camps. The Soviets failed to support or apply rules set forth in the Geneva Convention of 1906, the Hague Convention of 1907, the Geneva Protocol of 1925, and the 1929 Geneva Prisoner of War Convention despite their initial agreement to and promises to observe such standards. The Soviet government denied their responsibility to follow the guidelines set forth in these conventions concerning the treatment, release, and repatriation of prisoners. Instead, they continued to link their treatment of POWs with that of Soviet POWs in other countries' camps. They also used POWs as pawns in political negotiations.

Different Wars

The POW experience also varied due to the focus of international attention on the issue following WWI. Stricter rules about humane treatment were developed and adopted, or at least signed by, several nations. Improved communication and transportation technology from one war to the next allowed for closer, more detailed monitoring and almost instantaneous reporting of violations. Presently, most

countries are supplied with “real time” media coverage of events, including the capture and incarceration of civilians and military personnel during a war. This was not the case during earlier wars, including WWII, when it took days, if not weeks, for reports from the front lines, much less from secluded POW camps, to reach “home.”

Although sources give different “exact” numbers, many Americans were POWs: in World War I, close to 4,000; in WWII, close to 130,000; in the Korean Conflict, close to 7,000; and close to 700 in Southeast Asia (Bird, 1992; Hunter, 1988a; Spaulding, 1977). Hunter (1988a) noted approximate lengths of captivity in different wars: Southeast Asia, nine years; WWII, four years; and Korea, three years.

World War I

Speed (1990) related that “overall camp conditions in France were superior to those of further east....The care of prisoners did not tax the French as much as the Germans....The French government generally strove to adhere to the provisions of the Hague Conventions....At times it felt driven to violate these standards in order to secure proper treatment of its own captive nationals. At other times deficiencies in French camps were the result of administrative or logistical failures” (p. 95). Most of the problems could be attributed to the impact of the war.

Speed (1990) also reported that “the United Kingdom, like its enemies and its allies elsewhere in Europe, was unprepared to care for large numbers of war prisoners” (p. 97). The British POW camps succeeded fairly well in caring for their prisoners because “the government took seriously the injunction of the Hague

Conventions to treat prisoners with humanity...[and] the British captured relatively few prisoners,...[finding it] much easier to care properly for their prisoners" (p. 105).

Additionally, Speed (1990) noted that "the fate of Russia's prisoners was bound up with the nation's own harsh fate. Prisoners suffered for a wide variety of reasons, including the climate, poor transportation, administrative disorganization, battlefield reverses, and social upheaval" (p. 121). He did admit that "incompetence does not explain the use of propaganda to exploit Balkan nationalism and ethnicity and manipulate the loyalty of prisoners. This was deliberate policy adopted in response to the pressures of the conflict and subsequent revolution" (pp. 121-2).

Hoffman (1920) wrote of his experience as a YMCA representative in German POW camps. He finally was allowed to visit some American POWs and described some as "a pitiful group; they seemed so utterly alone and lost" (p. 148). One POW got "six months' punishment in solitary confinement as a penalty for his attempted escapes" (p. 148). In another camp holding American POWs, Hoffman felt a "certain refreshing, cheery spirit, a fullness of life, and a jolly good fellowship....The men displayed a truly splendid spirit in spite of their environment, which left much to be desired" (p. 154). In still another camp, POWs experienced living quarters looking "much like the trenches in which it is customary...to store potatoes and other root crops for the winter, rather than the abode of hundreds if not thousands of human beings" (p. 156).

Hoffman also visited a camp of British POWs at Ruhleben. These 5,000 men were caught in Germany at the outbreak of the war and were held for the duration. He described their accommodations as being in the horse boxstalls of a popular

German racetrack. Each stall housed five or six men with little more than straw for bedding. The men soon readjusted to live with others of similar backgrounds and interests. They organized activities to counteract the feelings of injury from "being torn from their business and activities...[and] interned in the camp" (p. 43). These activities helped to alleviate "the unbearable consciousness of imprisonment...sufficient to drive men crazy, unless they had some means of occupying their bodies, minds, and souls" (p. 43).

Ketchum (1965), in a first-person narrative, described his experience in the same camp in more detail. Although the conditions were just as extreme and severe as in other camps, the POWs created a viable society within which to live. Although many of the same horrors abounded, Ketchum revealed the importance of humor and laughter to the morale and survival of the POWs:

Humour and wit...were the Ruhlebenites' stock outlets for emotions that had to be repressed. Nothing is more characteristic of civilized man than his treatment of danger and discomfort, when nothing can be done about them, as subjects for laughter....The device proved itself, and it was used in Ruhleben almost from the beginning....Laughter is so essentially social that it is meaningless when it cannot be shared; whatever jests were heard as the stables were first filled must have come from those who entered them with friends or shipmates. Once the men had recognized their fellow prisoners as comrades, however, the demand for a courageous bearing made humour a constant feature of the camp. (p. 72)

As evidenced in Ruhleben, "The men's refusal to take their prison seriously was the first sign that they would ultimately transform it" (p. 73). Ketchum explained again the great value of laughing in the POW camp:

Mobs seldom laugh; their emotions pass undisguised into action. But where direct action is impossible aggression may be converted into ironical laughter, and Ruhleben's early crowds laughed almost as much as they cheered. Resistance to the guards was out of the question, but laughter could convey a sneer at German militarism and still be relatively safe. Not entirely, of course; more than one man was rushed to the cells for an ill-timed guffaw. But when an unpopular German sergeant came to lead his men to the kitchen and found the whole column roaring with laughter he could do little but bawl for silence. The joke might have nothing to do with him, but his flushed face and suspicious glances gave his charges deep satisfaction. Officers were not laughed at—it was too dangerous—but they were frankly puzzled by the men's frivolous reaction to a serious situation....This was Ruhleben's way, and one of obvious psychological value. (p. 73)

Speed (1990) revealed that National Socialism "in one manner or another" (p. 63) had an enormous impact on Germany's treatment of POWs. Its practices were so morally repugnant that they would not be comprehended in contemporary society. However, Speed concluded that "in general its prison camps were rigorous but not overly harsh places of confinement" (p. 79).

Korean

Using data obtained during interviews, Sutker, Winstead, Galina, and Allain (1990) described severe stressors that were a part of the POW experience during the Korean Conflict:

Harsh and continuously brutal [treatment] with capricious killings, forced marches, high death rates from dysentery, other diseases, apathy, and meager protection from freezing temperatures....For the entire period of captivity, there were physical and nutritional deprivations, unpredictable responses from guards and inquisitors, little or no opportunity for sanitation or medical attention, and constant threat of death and psychological abuse, including exploitative interrogations and demands for reeducation by the Chinese. (p. 173)

In addition to the above conditions, Sutker, Winstead, Galina, and Allain (1991) added these psychological elements of the Korean Conflict POW experience: mass indoctrination, including "group and individual interrogations, incessant demands for self-criticism and compliance, and structured reeducation sessions" (p. 67). Manuto (1990/1991) examined brainwashing as an element of both the Vietnam and Korea POW experience. Brainwashing consists of various, systematic attempts to educate or persuade "non-believers to accept a different belief system or set of behaviors" (p. 24).

Vietnam

Several authors discussed the Vietnam POW experience, writing from the first-person perspective (Butler, 1977; Howes, 1993; Hunter, Plag, Phelan &

Mowery, 1976; Stenger, 1973; Stockdale, 1984). Hunter, Plag, Phelan, and Mowery (1976) explored the resistance stance of POWs. Their results revealed that "older men tended to show firmer resistance" (p. 295); men held captive longer were more likely "to avoid actions which might be used by the captor for propaganda purposes, and they were less inclined to bargain with the captor" (p. 306); and "harsher treatment by the captor was associated with firmer resistance postures" (p. 295).

Butler (1977) discussed the tap code created by POWs in Vietnam. From a first-person perspective, he analyzed the meaning that communication holds for POWs. He related that "the necessity for a method of covert communications...becomes clear when it is understood that the very physical and mental survival of the individual POW depended upon his being able to talk with fellow prisoners" (p. 400). Deaton, Berg, Richlin, and Litrownik (1977) revealed coping strategies of Navy aviator POWs in Vietnam. They gave accounts of "specific 'time-killing' activities or adaptational strategies for coping with extensive periods of solitary confinement during captivity," (p. 239) which included communication, thinking about the future, physical exercise, observation of captor's behavior, mental exercise, reliving past events, and humor, to name a few of the most "useful" (p. 245). "Captor-Captive Relationship" activities were rated as most useful, activities involving reliving the past were used more during the first weeks in solitary, while activities for self-development occurred later (p. 239).

Rutledge, Hunter, and Dahl (1979) revealed that "the majority of the POWs 'perceived' that their value systems had changed significantly as a result of the captivity experience" (p. 242). The authors considered this a "totally deprived state"

for value enhancement and a situation offering unique experience. They supported qualitative research as possibly being necessary to understand meaning and significance of the experience and recommended in-depth interviews with POWs as a way to provide some definitive answers.

Hunter (1988a) also recounted the experience of "being a POW," explaining that "American POWs were recipients of a concerted campaign of torture, terror, and deprivation of food, medical treatment, and sleep. The most prevalent form of torture was a technique known as 'the ropes'" (p. 161). She noted that the Vietnam POW experience was quite different before and after October 1969. Ursano (1981) related, "Before October 1969 the POWs in the prison camps of North Vietnam underwent solitary confinement for months to years, maltreatment, torture, deprivation, and complete separation from the outside world. After October 1969 conditions improved somewhat, with torture dropping off considerably. The POWs began receiving more food" (p. 315).

Ursano, Wheatley, Sledge, Rahe, and Carlson (1986), investigating the coping styles of USAF flyers, added that "these flyers were subjected to lack of food and medical attention, maltreatment, torture and solitary confinement. All had to cope with boredom, loneliness, and fear; all experienced guilt after being 'broken' under interrogation" (p. 707). Using the recorded and transcribed debriefings collected in "Operation Homecoming" shortly after POW repatriation, Ursano, Wheatley, Carlson, and Rahe (1987) analyzed information about the captivity experience, relating it to POW illness and resiliency. They explained that "the POWs were often left in this [the 'ropes'] position for long periods. Wounds

sustained in ejection were manipulated during interrogation and medical attention was denied. Torture sessions were heralded by the rattle of keys in the hall or the screams of a comrade in an adjacent cell" (p. 532).

Stockdale (1984) told of his experience as a POW in Vietnam. He described his prison as a political prison: "They are places where people are sent to be used for political purposes, or to have their minds changed, or both" (Preface, p. vii). Slow learners had a "tourniquet-wielding torture specialists help them clear their mind" and "diehards' are kept in solitary confinement" until "treatment' has been completed" (Preface, p. vii). The single most important thing for Stockdale and others POWs was communicating with each other.

For the American POWs, "the Code of Conduct became the ground we walked on" (Stockdale, 1984, p. 8) and "the star that guided us" (p. 9). These average Americans set up a strictly disciplined and efficient military organization among themselves. Only this "organized body of prisoners could beat their (Vietnamese) system" (p. 8). He offered, "We hope our experience will help to guide them (others who become POWs) and will give them the heart and hope they will need" (p. 11).

In "Lesson from Everett Alvarez on conquering adversity...and rebuilding a life," an interview with *Bottom Line/Personal* in 1992, the American POW held the longest in Vietnam discussed his experience. He endured imprisonment, beating, and torture, but also related the qualities that helped him triumph over these adversities. Although he said that you really cannot be fully prepared for the experience, he stated that many of his fellow POWs were officers and were trained in coping with capture and the importance of remaining as a group. Their team

spirit and developing a secret communications system helped them survive. Alvarez also related that being "bound by the Code of Conduct for members of the US Armed Forces" (p. 13) played a key role in survival. He explained that "it helps to hear stories of people who have gone through trying times" (p. 14). Hunter (1993a) noted that the Vietnam experience was often longer, but that it was similar to "earlier harsh prisoner experiences in Korea and those Americans held captive by the Japanese during World War II" (p. 299).

Hostage and Concentration-camp Experiences

Computerized, data-base searches for resources from which to gain knowledge about the POW experience also yield sources examining hostage and concentration-camp contexts. In a few studies about each of these settings, authors compared the other two environments to highlight particular characteristics of these differing contexts.

Hillman (1981) compared the hostage experience to that in of being a POW or a concentration camp victim. He realized that most psychological studies of stress have focused on physical injuries and nutritional problems as variables in the POW or concentration camp experiences. While hostages may have captivities of shorter duration with less physical injury and malnutrition, their experiences "can have profound psychological consequences" (p. 1193). All three of these captivity situations include experiences for the captive of: "helplessness, existential fear, and sensory input overload" (p. 1193).

Sigal (1993) admitted that the experience of survivors of a Nazi concentration camp was "equivalent in some respects" to the Japanese and Korean

WWII POW camp experience. Sigal explained that "American servicemen imprisoned in the Japanese prisoner-of-war (POW) camps during World War II and in the Korean POW camps experienced malnutrition and stresses greater than their compatriots in the German POW camps. Those in the Japanese camps were also subjected to forced labor and beatings. Thus, there was considerable similarity between their experience and that of those imprisoned in the Nazi concentration camps" (p. 160).

Christiansen (1994) attempted to explain some differences between concentration camp victims and POWs: "POWs were captured soldiers wearing uniforms, whereas people in concentration camps were usually civilians who were considered political prisoners. The POWs fell under the responsibility of the German military command and were protected by the Geneva Convention....Concentration camps...were run by Gestapo officers and guarded by men from the security police, and neither the International Red Cross nor the YMCA were permitted to visit concentration camps" (p. 16).

Former hostage Terry Anderson (1993) wrote that he endured many conditions similar to a POW experience, such as being blindfolded, being chained to a cot so tightly that he could not move, being separated from his peers, fighting boredom, and clinging desperately to sanity, as well as much more horrible and humiliating treatment at the hands of his captors. He mentioned that he and his cohorts laughed a lot. He explained that one of his fellow hostages, McCarthy, could make a joke out of even the most grim moments. Anderson related a few situations, like sending a captor out for ice cream, that also provided them a source for

laughter, or a situation in which they would find themselves laughing. David Jacobsen (1993), another hostage, wrote about using humor and laughter as part of his "survival kit" to overcome the despair and hardships of each day.

In an interview with Dunn (1996), Anderson explained some of his strategies of survival. The Bible, faith, and shared support among fellow hostages helped him get through. They played games and did things in their heads. Everyone tried to stay calm and rational and devised ways to communicate with each other even when their guards forbade them to talk. Never knowing how long they would be held captive, the hostages "did time" but didn't think about it. Anderson agrees that "laughter is as vital to survival as anything else" (p. 4). Anderson related to the interviewer, "We laughed frequently. Sometimes all we could do was make a joke out of our situations....Sometimes we would laugh at ourselves, sometimes at one another and sometimes at guards. The guards were not exactly intellectual giants, so we would laugh at them as sort of a defense mechanism. We used to say that our guards couldn't walk across the room without stopping for two arguments and to find the one who got lost" (p. 4). Something they read in an old encyclopedia about an obscure, early Pope gave them another "hilarious afternoon one day" (p. 4). Anderson said, "We got a whole routine going....We had a lot of fun with that" (p. 4). Concluding the interview Anderson explained, "When ordinary people are tested, they usually come through pretty well. People face all kinds of crises that they don't think they can handle, but they get through them. Ordinary people are incredibly strong. Being able to laugh is part of that strength. You have to be able to laugh. It

is important in all situations. Look at the POWs in Vietnam—the most miserable kind of existence—yet they managed to laugh” (p. 5).

Frankl (1962) wrote of his own concentration-camp experiences. In the book's Preface, Gordon Allport noted that in this context people were “stripped to naked existence...[their] every possession lost, every value destroyed suffering from hunger, cold and brutality, hourly expecting extermination” (p. ix). Frankl related that “hunger, humiliation, fear and deep anger at injustice are rendered tolerable by...a grim sense of humor” (pp. x-xi). Almost metaphorically, he described a typical scene out of his experience: “The dawn was grey around us; grey was the sky above; grey the snow in the pale light of dawn; grey the rags in which my fellow prisoners were clad, and grey their faces” (p. 39). Remembering their experience, Frankl offered that “former prisoners, when writing or relating their experiences, agree that the most depressing influence of all was that a prisoner could not know how long his term of imprisonment would be” (p. 69). Frankl shared “that which was perhaps the deepest experience I had in the concentration camp. The odds of surviving the camp were no more than 1 to 20....[and] I had to overcome the loss of my spiritual child [the draft of his book]....I had to surrender my clothes and in turn inherited the worn-out rags of an inmate who had already been sent to the gas chamber” (pp. 116-117).

Heisdorffer (1992/1993) investigated the concentration-camp experience through the autobiographies of some non-Jews who spent time in the German camps. He discussed several elements of this harsh experience, including the dehumanization process, the search for and struggle to preserve autonomy, and

confronting solitude. Those who are incarcerated experience a search for meaning and a role in life, a conviction and belief in survival, attempts to influence their environment and, what the author labeled, a divided self. They must face solitude, eventually using it as a self-defense or a means of communication.

Parshall (1995) wrote "Freeing the Survivors" of Nazi concentration camps. This narrative was written primarily from oral histories, letters, and diaries. Accompanying pictures spoke a thousand words, showing emaciated individuals. German soldiers attempted to follow Hitler's orders to annihilate inmates "before the Allies reached them" (p. 52) by sending prisoners on death marches; stuffing them into railroad boxcars; or shooting, clubbing, starving, or hanging them to death. Some humans had been left in the piles alive to starve or die of exposure. Other evidence of harsh conditions and threats to human life were "living skeletons lying on stacked sleeping platforms in their barracks, too weak at 50 or 60 pounds to rise and celebrate, or too close to death to realize there was cause for celebration" (p. 54). Some prisoners had been forced to mine "granite in a quarry...[or] forced to jump to their death off a 'parachutist's wall'" (p. 58).

World War II POW-Camp Experiences

Offered in this portion of the review are a general description of the WWII POW experience, descriptions of the experience of WWII POWs held in Japanese or German camps, and descriptions from other camps. Hunter (1988a) noted, "Those POWs held by Germany suffered fewer long-term effects than those captives held by the Japanese because of the differing treatment" (p. 161). Bird (1992) let *Forgotten Men Tell Their Stories* of being POWs in WWII. Stories by Emerick, Curley, and

Mapes represented the group of 17,000 American troops captured by the Japanese in the Asian/Pacific theater during the first five months of the war and incarcerated for as long as 44 months, enduring tortures not experienced by POWs in other settings. Also in Bird's book, Garbin, Perun, and Grove told their stories, representing others captured at the Battle of the Bulge and held by Germany, a country that "barely had food for its citizens, let alone the captured soldiers of enemy nations" (p. 35). Here the POWs faced the resentment of the citizens of Germany, but experienced "occasional displays of tremendous compassion by individual Germans" (p. 35).

A General Description

Stenger (1973) has offered a general description of the experience of being a WWII POW, his own and that of others. He explained that a POW's "life style is suddenly and completely altered....Environmental forces physical and social, no longer can be relied on to be supportive but instead are seen as unfamiliar, unpredictable and hostile" (p. 1). Captivity and isolation from other Americans and their support proves devastating. Stenger explained, "Self-esteem drops. He was somebody, now he is nothing. With it drops his confidence to cope actively with his environment" (p. 2). As well as the fear of death, the dread of being only a symbol of the enemy versus an individual human being, of being of little value and that value only temporary, shakes a prisoner's stability. Realities of his environment reconfirm continually the tenuousness of his existence and he perceives his captors as having complete control. They have no concern for his life much less for his well-being. He experiences vulnerability, dependence, helplessness, and no self-esteem or identity.

His perception of other POWs is that they are “powerless, without status or influence, unsupportive, distant, and not really concerned about him” (p. 2). Under these conditions, the POW becomes depressed, resigned, and oppressed with only dulled senses to experience human existence.

Other Countries

Some research reports concentrated on foreign WWII POWs held in the United States (Gansberg, 1977; Smith, 1988/1989; Wall, 1988) or about WWII POW camps other than those run by Germany or Japan (Christiansen, 1994; Vrga, 1974; Wadley, 1993). Gansberg (1977) wrote about German POWs held in “Stalag” USA, i.e., in the U. S. during WWII. Although somewhat overwhelmed by the large numbers of POWs that they had to care for, the U. S. complied with the Geneva Convention requirement for treating POWs, i.e., “good food, work, and warm beds for all” (p. 2). Relating the opinion of one POW, Gansberg wrote, “Anti-American feelings among the German prisoners were somewhat eased by the good food and comfortable conditions they found in the United States, [but] such gains were often nullified by the hundreds of cases of missing POW property” (p. 13).

Nazism in the camps created a problem. The author noted that “the single-minded viciousness of this fanatic philosophy and its followers among the prisoners created an inevitable demand for a plan to reeducate the Germans held in the United States in order to draw them away from National Socialism” (Gansberg, p. 2). Smith (1988/1989) recounted the experience of a German POW held in America and the impact of the reeducation experience on his life. Although hard, the POW experience for this German left traces in his works—images of a humanistic doctor,

"tension between democratic tolerance and the radical need to change society" (p. 5), and a "beautiful, colorful fall in Rhode Island" (p. 6).

Wall (1988) also wrote of U. S. treatment of POWs kept in America. He used the camps in Virginia, where German POWs were kept, as a case study of United States' treatment of prisoners. The author used camp inspection reports, military documents and interviews, as well as other primary and secondary sources to investigate the daily life in and administration of these camps. Here also, the United States complied with the guidelines of the Geneva Convention and German POWs received good treatment.

Vrga (1974) told about the group experience of Yugoslavian anti-Communist fighters being held as POWs by the British in southern Italy. Under relaxed conditions the discipline decreased and antagonism within the group increased. The idleness that these once-rugged fighters experienced offered no meaningful purpose for their lives. When conditions became stricter, with little chance for escape, and screenings for extradition to even worse environments began, the old relationships of "cooperation, mutual help, cordiality and respect" (p. 211) returned.

Christiansen (1994), a YMCA representative during WWII, reported his experience as a "a prisoner in Russia," "among German prisoners of war in Great Britian," and "among German prisoners of war in Egypt." Of his experience as a prisoner held in Russia, Christiansen wrote, "The German POWs acted as our cleaning ladies and our servants....The food was nothing to write home about, but probably as good as the present circumstances allowed" (pp. 92-3). Daily life in the Russian camps "was boring and monotonous" (p. 94). They did get to watch a movie

once or twice a week, but soon learned that "the intention was not entertainment but propaganda—an attempt at reeducation and indoctrination" (p. 95).

Christiansen explained, "The never-ending attempt to put us off with talk and the uncertainty of the length of our stay in the camp were a continuous mental strain" (pp. 95-6). In the early stages, interrogations were calm and fairly easy. Later, they involved threats and "if you could not break a man and humiliate him by means of hunger, cold, filth, and loneliness, you could always resort to physical terror—torture—in the cellar" (p. 107).

Christiansen (1994) related that Germans held in Great Britain's POW camps experienced quite relaxed restrictions, yet had lower spirits than Allied prisoners held in Germany. While the Allied POWs believed that their side would win and that they would be released, the Germans "had lost both the war and, most of them, the belief that they could look forward to a happy future. They were plagued by just about all imaginable concerns and worries and often found it difficult,...to keep up their spirits" (p. 153).

In Egypt, the German POWs, held by the British, usually lived in camps of tents "surrounded by double fences of barbed wire, not so much for fear of attempts at escape as for protection from thieves and robbers who were on the loose in the desert" (Christensen, 1994, p. 175). Intense, overwhelming heat; little shade; sandstorms; and hot desert wind affected much of the POWs' experience. As with most POWs, they "worried about the future, they had difficulties keeping up their spirits, and they could not understand why their repatriation had to be delayed for

so long" (p. 177). They often compared themselves to and wondered why they could not be treated as the German POWs held in Britain.

Japanese

Urwin (1984) related the experience of "The Defenders of Wake Island," their POW experience at the hands of the Japanese. This group of POWs formed a close-knit, supportive, and life-saving community that sustained a death rate of 16.6% as opposed to 37.2% in other Japanese-controlled POW camps in the Pacific Theater. Their austere lifestyle and strict teamwork before capture held them in good stead for survival. They had also been a tightly organized and disciplined military unit. Part of a downfall of spirits when they were first captured came from officers and enlisted men being separated. "The Men" didn't have those officers that they trusted and knew cared for them. Once the officers reestablished lines of communication and chains of command, joking, laughter, and songs resumed (p. 296). For them, "unwavering adherence to a high code of military conduct transformed the mood of the men" (p. 296).

As well as tales of atrocities, ex-POWs from Wake Island related anecdotes of "how the Wake Islanders got the better of their captors" (p. 477). Some schemes failed; but those that succeeded, with the POWs never being caught, "inspired further efforts to get the enemy's goat. Sabotage and stealing food were popular pastimes....Most inmates, however, contented themselves with playing practical jokes on their guards" (p. 477). It thoroughly amused the POWs to make the Japanese look foolish; "The prisoners...employed humor as a weapon" (p. 478).

Anyone "who could find something to laugh at in a Japanese prison camp" was far from being broken (p. 478).

Tennant, Goulson, and Dent (1986, 1993) related general, pervasive components of the POW experience suffered by Australian, British, and American troops during WWII at the hands of the Japanese. The authors considered the POW experience as constituting "physical and psychological stress of the severest degree" (1986, p. 618). Most POWs in this environment experienced "marked physical privations including malnutrition, multiple infectious diseases, inadequate shelter and clothing, enforced work to the point of exhaustion, unpredictable and severe physical violence and punishments, and a high likelihood of one's own death" (p. 618). POWs "were separated from loved ones without any contact or communication throughout that period and most believed they would never return to their homes" (1993, p. 231).

Khan (1987/1989) also discussed life in the Japanese POW camp. POWs experienced malnutrition, starvation, severe illnesses, almost non-existent medical treatment, and beatings. Even in their resulting poor health the POWs were forced to do hard labor almost every day for many hours. They "suffered from both physical ill health as well as psychological trauma" (p. 7). Comparing results of the POW experience under Japanese control with the experience in other camps, Khan noted, "Although a much larger number of the members of Armed Forces of the United Kingdom were taken prisoner by the combined forces of Germany and Italy than those taken by Japan, a much higher proportion of prisoners died in captivity under the Japanese" (p. 7).

Khan's (1987/1989) interviewees reported that most camps were not large enough, there was gross overcrowding. Initial shock and bewilderment at capture faded into months of "uneventful, tedious days of wondering and waiting" (p. 20). Many POWs became ill from inadequate amounts of poor-quality food, a diet extremely deficient in vitamins (p. 20). Against Geneva Convention rules regarding treatment of prisoners, the Japanese government ordered prisoners to be used "as a labour force in order to achieve their aim" (p. 21). POWs became "exhausted and emaciated due to working long hours in spite of malnutrition and recurrent attacks of various tropical illnesses," and their housing afforded "no protection from the ravages of the tropical climate" (p. 21). Sanitary facilities were also primitive, usually consisting of trenches dug outside the ends of huts, and camps were normally swarming with mosquitoes and flies (p. 22). As a policy, the Imperial Japanese Army used many forms of torture to humiliate POWs or undermine their morale: "water treatment, burning, electric shock, suspension from a high bar, being compelled to stand in the sun for hours without food and drink, kneeling on sharp instruments, removal of nails,...and the 'cage treatment'" (p. 23).

One of the men telling his story in Bird (1992), John Emerick, former POW of the Japanese, told of surviving the Bataan Death March and being moved around to several camps. He related an instance in which "I was standing with a bamboo pole across my shoulders to get water from the one lone spigot in camp, and this goddamned Jap came and pushed me and then kicked my canteens away from me" (p. 4). Even though it was so bad, "You didn't want to try and escape after you surrendered because the Japs put you in these ten-men death squads. If one guy

escaped, they shot the other nine" (p. 9). Emerick admitted "we were such animals though. If you woke up and the guy next to you was dead, looking up at the sky, all you cared about was his shoes and pants. We weren't human anymore. None of us could cry anymore. With all the death and despair around us, still nothing would come out" (p. 10).

Ken Curley, another man who told his story in Bird (1992), recalled a punishment for something the Japanese thought he was doing. He recounted that they "took me back to camp and they hog-tied me, forcing me into a squatting position with a two-inch pole behind my knees. Every time the Nips thought I wasn't putting all my weight on the pole, they would sit on my shoulder and bounce up and down. I was left like that for days, and every time I fell over they would set me back up and knock the shit out of me, I really don't know how long I was like that because I lost consciousness of it" (p. 16). When three guys were caught after escaping, "They brought them back in camp they made these guys dig their own graves while the whole camp just stood by and watched. Then the Japs just shot them, one by one, which forced each to their knees. Then the Jap who was in charge of the firing squad went over and shot each in the head again so they'd fall straight into their graves" (p. 16). He told of working 15-16 hours a day, every day, with no time off except when the International Red Cross was coming to inspect. Then they were given time to clean up and a piece of bread, that they never had before" (p. 21).

Although John and Ken both voiced an opinion that hating helped them survive, Victor Mapes learned that hatred could also destroy you. Another man telling his story in Bird (1992), Victor, revealed, "They would shake you down and

torture you. They would come up and try to kick you in the testicles....They were always slapping at you. They would haul off and hit you for no reason at all" (p. 29). Victor volunteered to "to work on a sawmill detail....I always told the Filipinos I was hungry and I would fill my scrap lumber cart so loaded that the Jap guard would have to call some Filipinos in to push, and they'd sneak me some chow and I'd bury it in the sawdust to eat later. But the Japs started getting wise to what I was doing because I wasn't losing any weight like the other POWs" (p. 29). He told of how he thinks he survived and what bothered him the most: "I took religion pretty seriously....We were so close to death all the time, we couldn't worry about things....We didn't know whether the Japs were going to kill us or not. One thing that hurt me more than anything else, though, and that was watching my perfectly good body go to hell. I had sores all over me and I was all diseased up. I had rotten teeth and I couldn't see too well. My eyes were going. I did the best I could to keep myself clean and everything. But still, to see your body shrivel up and to see what is happening to the other people, that was hard to take....If I kept a strong mind, that would be the key to my survival" (p. 33).

Vance (1994) described first-person experiences of Canadians held in Japanese POW camps. One prisoner recounted that "it was as if we had known no other life, the daily routine, the inadequate food, the shabby clothes, the daily humiliations, seemed to be the real and only life we had known. All else seemed a dream and Canada just a name on some dimly remembered map" (p. 184). Vance related that "the isolation, not just from family and friends but from all normal modes of human existence, felt by these POWs was virtually complete" (p. 184).

From many collaborating accounts of the POWs, "Dozens of POWs had been bayoneted to death. Camp conditions were described as deplorable, the huts lacking doors, windows, light, or sanitation, and dysentery was rampant, with no medical supplies to check it. Rations were restricted to two bowls of rice and a few vegetables each day" (p. 186). Reports of poor rations and what POWs did to supplement their diet with meat were confirmed by many. One person who escaped brought back stories "that three-quarters of the prisoners...were suffering the effects of long-term malnutrition, including wet and dry beriberi, pellagra, skin diseases of all sorts, failing eyesight, dysentery, and weight loss; diphtheria...killed over a hundred prisoners....An average of four to five prisoners died each day" (p. 187). Vance disclosed that "weakened by disease and lack of food, many prisoners were simply unable to carry on the struggle; once they lost the will to live, they died in a matter of days" (p. 192). POWs experienced that "as months dragged on, the line between life and death became more indistinct; for many men, it was easier to die than to live" (p. 193).

Brown (1993b) interviewed a couple of members of the Smoky Mountain Branch of American Ex-Prisoners of War who were captured and held in Japanese POW camps. Both ex-POWs mentioned a special bond between former POWs. Charles Pruitt survived 2 1/2 years in the camp: "The fact that we were able to survive under such adverse conditions bonds us" (p. B1). This bond helped them survive and "ward off the threat of physical harm and death" (p. B1). He summarized, "What bonds us together is a brotherhood, a camaraderie. Many

people find it hard to believe that we could have survived the things that we did" (p. B1).

The second ex-POW interviewed, Roscoe C. "Piggy" Word, also worked in the coal mines of Japan for 10-12 hours every day. He spent 3 1/2 years in their POW camps and also "feels a strong bond to his former comrades" (p. B1). He remembered "having a handful of rice three times a day, if he was lucky, no meat of any kind, no potatoes and one orange a month. He went from 171 pounds down to 110" (pp. B1-2). Many diseases associated with their deficient diet also plagued Word. His parting thought was, "Very few people have gone through what we have, which is a common experience and a bond among POWs" (p. B2).

German

Hasselbring (1991) used interviews to gather information about the experience of "American Prisoners of War in the Third Reich." While the POWs' treatment varied by rank, branch of service, and the camp commandant's personality, their common POW experience included "anger, fear, depression, and physical and emotional exhaustion" (p. 284). Instability and interrogation were two factors that the Germans used to keep the POWs off guard. More emphasis was placed on security and tighter discipline later in the war. POWs rarely starved but were always hungry in German camps even though the living conditions of the local populace also was extremely meager. Being continuously hungry, POWs became obsessed with food. Hasselbring revealed that "elaborate recipes, special meals, calculated eating styles, and an obsession with the precise slicing of bread" as well as "painstaking cooking" offered some control for the POW over his life (p. 288). He

explained that "the men were inhumanely isolated—receiving no mail, relief goods, or visits from their man of confidence or the neutral camp inspectors" (p. 290). Nothing could cure the depression felt as POWs "awoke in a crowded, cold and often vermin-infested room, sleeping on a straw tick far from home" (p. 292).

Sutker, Allain, and Johnson (1993) reported another POW's experience of being held in a German camp that included "interrogations, intimidations, personal death threats, solitary confinement, forced marches, transportation in box cars, exposure to extreme cold without adequate protection, and inadequate diet and medical care. He reported weight loss of 20 pounds—13% of his precapture body weight of 160 pounds" (p. 5).

Henry (1991/1993) described German POW-camp experiences of the Canadians captured after the Dieppe Raid. All Allied POWs had their hands bound, first with rope, then with handcuffs, and finally with shackles having an 18-inch chain between them. Henry reports that the POWs "were shackled from eight o'clock in the morning until eight at night....The Allied prisoners of war were not unshackled until November 1943" (p. 123).

The POWs fooled the Germans sometimes and the Germans may not have enforced the shackling as strictly later in the war. From one of his sources, Henry offered some quotes by ex-POWs about the shackling experience as follows,

You'd pick the lock, put the cuffs in your pockets with the chaining across the front of you. So when you saw a German coming, you'd just slip your hands in your pockets, and it would look like you were still chained....Toward the end of the chaining, everybody had their own tag on their handcuffs. Two

German guards would bring down a big wooden box, and all the chains were laid in it, so the guys would just root through and pick out their chains and chain themselves up. This one day we had a new guard and, boy, was he a wiseguy, going right by the book. He was going to personally chain everybody up. So he'd chain one guy and away he'd go. They'd take off their chains and sneak them back into the box. He'd chain up fifty guys, and there's still be the same fifty guys in line waiting to be chained up! And we got lots of time, we could have been there all bloody day. So he gave up. And that kid cried. He actually cried. (Dancocks, *In Enemy Hands: Canadian Prisoners of War 1939-45*, 1983, p. 46)

Brown (1993a) interviewed Charles Mars, ex-POW, who was held for 14 months in a German POW camp. This member of the Smoky Mountain Branch of the American Ex-Prisoners of War organization related that "You ate what they gave you. We got a bowl of barley, but it had white worms in it. At first, you picked the worms out and then someone said the worms were the only meat we were going to get. So, we began eating the barley with the worms. For dinner we had rotten cabbage" (p. B2).

Christiansen (1994) described another part of the restrictive POW experience in Germany: "double rows of barbed-wire fences, usually eight to ten feet high with each single wire close to the next and lots of loosely coiled barbed wire lying between the two fences. Outside these fences, a number of guns and strong search lights, could survey the entire area" (p. 30).

Cummins (1995) reported her interview with Bill Tallent, an ex-POW captured and held in a POW camp by the Germans in WWII. As many others in the same situation, his memories are vivid of his experience, so much so that he still has nightmares. He remembered the guard towers in his first prison camp "complete with search lights and machine guns, ready to gun down anyone who crossed the line" (p. v7). The next camp was "even more atrocious" (p. v7). Being in bad shape medically and with no one treating him for a long time, "the pain was almost more than he could bear...and there was nothing for the pain" (p. v7). He exclaimed, "Die, I thought I would" (p. v7)! Cummins explained that there were times when Tallent "was afraid he was never going to make it. But he was determined" (p. v7). As heard by many others, he stated that "when you get captured it takes a little bit of your confidence away....But I think it matured me very quickly. I was a young man in years when I returned, but I was an old man in my mind" (p. v7).

Summary

Hunter (1988a) noted that "threads of commonality are woven through all captivity experiences" (p. 161) and that "discriminating between psychological and physiological etiologies may be presumptuous....The stress associated with physical torture has many psychological effects, and vice versa" (p. 161). She observed that "individuals in extreme situations sometimes appear to suddenly give up, curl up in the fetal position, and die" (p. 162) and that the Stockholm syndrome, in which the captives begin to manifest indications of bonding with or attachments to their captors (p. 163), are common in captive experience. "Survivor syndrome" and Post

Traumatic Stress Syndrome or Disorder provide other groups of associated emotions and behaviors commonly noticed with, or as long-term effects of, the captive or POW experience (p. 165).

Hunter (1988a) summarized "lessons learned" from her review of the literature and research about the POW experience. The POW experience involves, at least, both physical and psychological aspects. Because multiple factors influence an individual's experience, there is no "one" captivity experience. POWs of Asian captors show more residual effects and "to some extent, it is the captor and the captor's culture that predict both survival and long-term effects" (p. 167). Long, harsh imprisonments tend "to solidify basic personality traits" (p. 167). Support and communication within a group seem critical to coping. Hunter acknowledged that "although a 'code of conduct' cannot be strictly adhered to in an extreme situation, having such a code, either laid out for one (e.g., the Military Code of Conduct) or imposed by one's own set of values or religion, acts as a moral guideline and facilitates coping" (p. 167).

Specific coping strategies vary in effectiveness from one stage in the POW experience to another and can even become dysfunctional or detrimental to survival. The harshness of treatment often depends on the captives themselves; however, continual harsh treatment makes it easier to resist coercion or conversion. Hunter (1988a) reported that "based on investigations of POW/hostage and concentration camp survivors, the older, more mature captives, who were strongly committed to a cause or ideology were more likely to cope more adequately with the extreme stresses of the prison environment" (p. 167).

As could be predicted from Frankl's work, Hunter (1988a) wrote, "The 'will to survive' is a key variable in survival" (p. 167). Most individuals can survive extreme conditions and stress better than they expected. The decision to survive comes early in captivity. People with a positive outlook on life, who see alternatives and keep on going in spite of the odds, tend to make it through the POW or other captive experience.

Tennant, Goulston, and Dent (1993) offered another summary of the POW experience:

These captives were separated from loved ones without any contact or communication throughout that period and most believed they would never return to their homes....All troops...suffered a wide range of ongoing adverse stressors, including starvation, malnutrition, multiple infectious diseases, inadequate shelter and clothing, enforced prolonged marches, physical labor to the point of exhaustion, severe and often random physical violence, and punishments that were both brutal and unpredictable, and ultimately, because of these abuses, a high probability of dying. (p. 231)

Stenger (1992) described the overwhelming similarities in all "hostage" situations, portraying it as an almost universal experience. Although the sequence of events before and during capture may vary—civilians taken hostage while going about their daily life routines and military personnel captured and held as POWs while fighting within an extreme sense of danger—the experience and existential responses are the same. From a first-person perspective description of the POW experience, the situation is best revealed as suddenly finding oneself "under the

complete control of an individual or individuals acting ruthlessly either in their own self-interest or in the name of some cause....Your life is in jeopardy or your most private rights as a human being are violated" (p. xv). From the beginning of the experience, there is an "immediate sense of helplessness, passivity, and resignation...[and no] doubt for a second they would be killed if their captors believed it suited their purposes" (p. xvii). Captives react typically with "a strong feeling of unreality (this can't be really happening); an extreme sense of danger; a sense of total vulnerability; a deep feeling of helplessness; and an intense feeling of defenselessness and powerlessness to fight or flee" (p. xvii). Captives continue to view their captors as "powerful, hostile, threatening, and unpredictable" and they are constantly present for the POWs either physically or psychologically (p. xvii).

All "hostages" also experienced being used as pawns, serving their captors' purpose. They reported feeling danger, uncertainty, vulnerability, and a loss of individuality or self. Within the context of the camp, the people are now isolated from a world in which they performed their own particular roles, successfully and competently accomplishing tasks and effectively coping with life. This world constantly affirmed them as important, individual human beings and taught them from childhood that if they worked hard enough they could control their own lives. In that world they could hope for the future. Stenger explained that "the ability of the captive to retain hope, regardless of the inhumane conditions being experienced, can be the crucial factor in survival" (p. xix). As reported by numerous POWs, hope springs from many different sources such as "religious beliefs, being a part of a close family situation as a child or adult, feeling a strong sense of group with fellow

hostages, deep feelings of patriotism, and a 'righteous' cause" (p. xix). Hostages balance these external sources of hope against "their own diminished coping skills and eroding self-esteem" (p. xix). By continuing to perform roles, no matter how minute, to the best of their ability they "reduce hopelessness and a diminished sense of self" (p. xix).

One interesting activity found common in many of these experiences is "repeatedly and slowly folding objects of clothing as neatly and perfectly as possible" (p. xix). This helps the captive "prove to themselves they can meet a 'challenge'" (p. xix). Most POWs learned not to let themselves think about their separation from family and friends, an activity which only intensifies pain and hopelessness. They often pushed the limits of freedom set by their captors or humiliate them, not as a serious challenge to power and control, but to gain "greater individual attention and recognition" (p. xx).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

To understand the current meaning of their laughing in a POW camp for WWII ex-POWs, I employed a phenomenological approach to research. This approach offers a methodology that involves procedures appropriate for the experience being studied. Figure 1 (page 82) represents an overview of the process followed in this study—steps for doing phenomenological investigation (Pollio, Henley & Thompson, 1997, p. 60). Interviews were conducted to gather data, as suggested by phenomenologists Aanstoos (1983), Kvale (1983), and Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989). I analyzed data using procedures developed by phenomenologists van Kaam (1966), Giorgi (1975), and Colaizzi (1978), and performed data analysis within an interpretive research group similar to the one described by Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989).

In this study, subjects, or people who have endured the POW experience, are the experts and are considered participants. They met criteria as recommended by Polkinghorne (1989), van Kaam (1966), and Colaizzi (1978). Meeting these criteria strengthens reliability and validity in a phenomenological study. Polkinghorne (1989) stated that “the purpose of selecting subjects in phenomenological research is to generate a full range of variation in the set of descriptions to be used in analyzing a phenomenon, not to meet statistical requirements for making statements about distribution with a group of subjects” (p. 48). Researchers want subjects who can provide rich descriptions of the experience being investigated, i.e., subjects must have had and be able to articulate fully their awareness of the experience.

Steps for Doing a Phenomenological Research Project

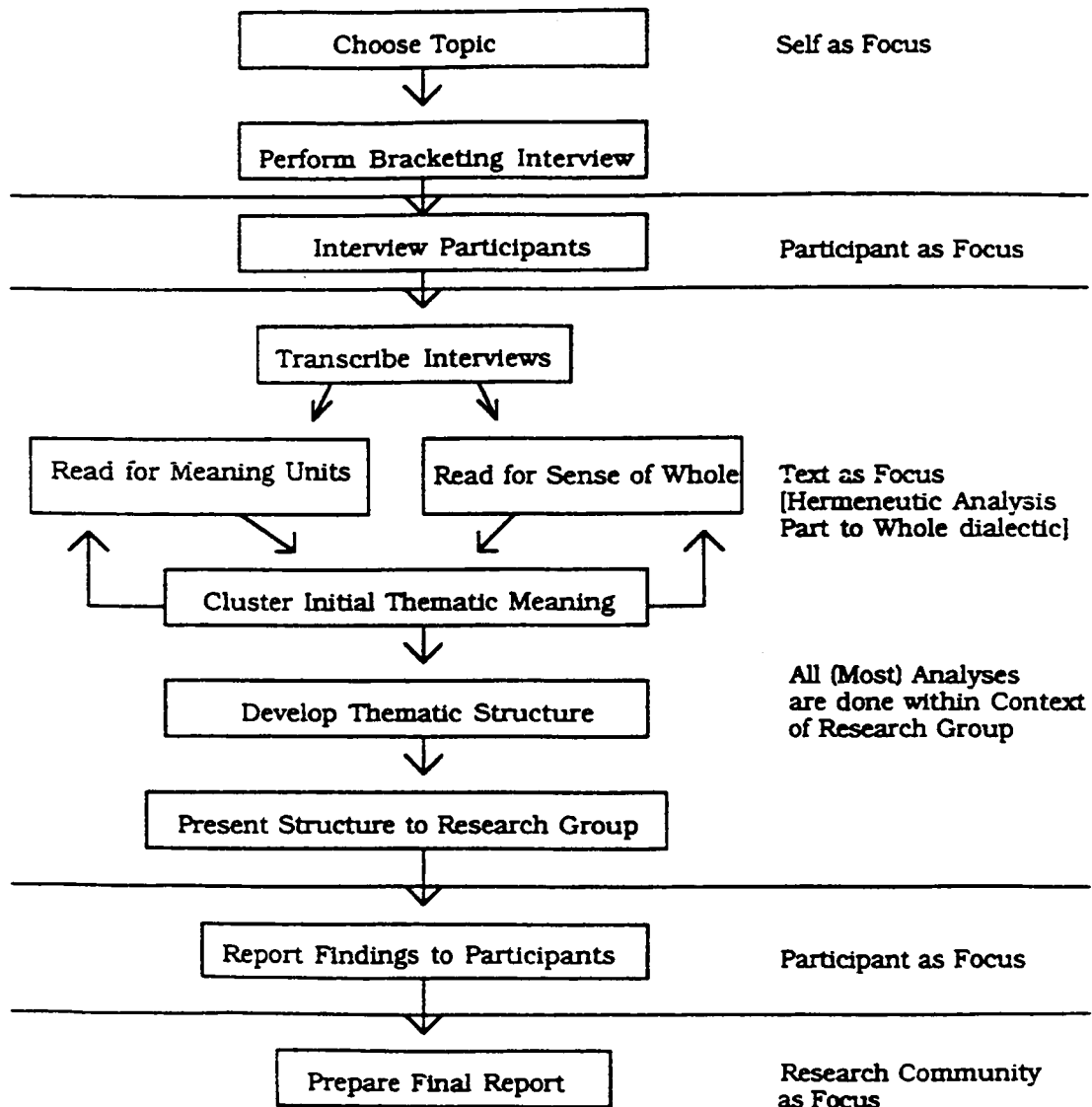


Figure 1. Steps for doing a phenomenological research project.

Van Kaam (1966) believed that participants in phenomenological research must possess six important skills to provide useful descriptions: (1) be able to easily express themselves verbally; (2) be able to sense and express emotions and inner feelings without shame and inhibition; (3) be able to sense and express the physical experiences accompanying their feelings; (4) have had the experience, preferably recently, of being fully understood; (5) have spontaneous interest in their experience; and (6) be able to report what was and is happening within themselves when provided sufficient time and relaxation (p. 317).

Polkinghorne (1989) noted that this last requirement depends greatly on an atmosphere conducive to relaxation and allowing sufficient time for orderly thinking and reporting. Colaizzi (1978) believed, "experience with the investigated topic and articulateness suffice as criteria for selecting subjects" (p. 58).

Overview

For this type of research, the opening steps require the researcher to focus on her or his self; or their reasons for choosing their specific topic. With this focus on the self, I chose a topic—laughing in a WWII POW camp, and was interviewed by another graduate student in a phase of this type of research often termed a "bracketing" interview. The second phase of the research shifts from the research to the participants, and interviews were conducted with WWII ex-POWs. After these interviews were transcribed into typed protocols, the focus shifted from participants to their texts. These protocols were read for a sense of the whole and for individual meaning units. This involved clustering words into initial themes. Much of this analysis was conducted in the context of the research group in which I participate. I

developed a thematic structure that describes the laughing-in-a-WWII-POW-camp experience and presented this structure to the group. The focus returned to the participants in this study when I reported my findings to them. The current meaning of their laughing in a POW camp for WWII ex-POWs was derived from descriptions of remembered instances of their experience. This research project concludes with a focus on the research community—the report you are now reading.

Conducting Interviews

Phenomenological interviews were used for collecting “naive” descriptions of the POW laughing experience. Previously, in a bracketing interview, data were collected from my description of my own laughing experience. I conducted the same kind of phenomenological interviews with ex-POWs, collecting descriptions from the participants, helping them to describe their experience of laughing in a POW camp.

These interviews allowed me close access to their first-person experience. To accomplish this task, I kept the interviews theme-oriented versus person-oriented; sought to describe and understand the meaning of central themes; sought descriptions of the laughing experience versus theoretical explanation or participants’ interpretations; kept myself open to new elements of the laughing experience; focused on specific situations and action sequences; clarified ambiguous statements; and remembered that this is a temporal process, and that richer, clearer descriptions of laughing may come later in any interview.

The bracketing interview heightened an awareness of my own views and presuppositions that are based on my own experience of laughing. In this interview, I was asked to describe instances of my laughing, using the same basic question

used with the ex-POWs. I was never POW, and never experienced laughing there, but this initial self-reflection on laughing helped to uncover key dimensions for exploration (Colaizzi, 1978). My description of laughing revealed the following experience.

Laughing is a spontaneous, uncontrolled, bubbling explosion—a naturally flowing rhythm “in-the-world.” It involves an escalating hierarchy of whole body involvement and movement. This unplanned and unthinking experience touches awareness through the body, in relationship with others. It attunes one to, and bonds one with, others through a pattern of tension, release, and relaxation. Laughing feels good and makes one feel better and happy. It offers the choice of losing control. Laughing brings pleasure or pain as well as an aftereffect involving happiness, glowing, relaxation, closeness, and a sense of wholeness and well-being or just relief from a “ticklish” situation. Elements found in my experience of laughing may be present in other interviews. Similarities are welcomed and accepted if the participants voice the thoughts. Leading questions or comments that might influence the participants to express similar descriptions were avoided.

This investigation emphasizes the “lived world” of American POWs. The experts in this experience, serving as participants with the present research, are WWII ex-POWs, survivors of German or Japanese WWII POW camps. Focusing on these participants, I interviewed them about their own laughing in the extreme context of a POW camp. These men helped me offer an answer to the question,

"What is the current meaning of their laughing in a POW camp for WWII ex-POWs?"

All participants were captured, held in WWII Japanese or German POW camps, survived to return home, and lived the fifty-some years between World War II and the present. A group of such ex-POWs, that meets monthly as a branch of an national ex-POW organization, was available to participate in this study. Thirteen men, regularly-attending members of this local group, volunteered to participate. Five more volunteers from another branch of the same organization also volunteered and were interviewed. All volunteers offered a timely opportunity to gain information and present their voice to a public currently receptive to WWII stories. Although no one was excluded on the basis of sex, in this group only men have had the experience of laughing in a POW camp. No one was excluded by age and no payment or other incentives were offered.

According to Polkinghorne (1989), the number of participants involved in phenomenological studies varies greatly. As cited in Polkinghorne, van Kaam (1969) used 325 written descriptions; Stevick (1971) conducted 30 interviews; de Konig (1979) only had 3 participants; and Fischer and Wertz (1979) interviewed 50 people with the help of 6 team members. In such studies, 10 interviews usually present essential themes and structure. Interviews with 18 ex-POWs seemed a sufficient number of protocols and enough data for a rigorous investigation of the experience of laughing in a POW camp.

I first contacted ex-POWs in the local group, all of whom had already completed an informed consent form and the pencil-and-paper questionnaire

described in Romer (1993). Then I contacted other members from the local group and sought their participation. I included other WWII ex-POW volunteers who had experienced laughing in a Japanese or German POW camp and were referred to me as members of the ex-POW group located in another city. These ex-POWs have kept physically and mentally active and healthy. In the interviews, I allowed sufficient time for them to respond orally in a comfortable environment.

There was some concern early in the planning of this project that these older men would hesitate to share their full experience with a younger female. The fact that I have over five years of military experience seemed to ameliorate this limiting factor to some degree. During initial contact with the ex-POW group, the men seemed enthusiastic and candid in their communications with me, and they seemed genuinely interested in sharing their experiences with me. Information gained during the interviews, even if slightly limited by these factors, was interesting and seemed valuable for answering the research question posed by this investigation.

For ease of scheduling and the ex-POWs' comfort, I conducted and audiotaped the interviews in the participants' homes or other familiar settings. Before conducting an interview, I obtained informed consent from each participant (see Appendix A, Informed-consent Form). Each volunteer kept one of the forms, because it contains information about the project and how to contact me in the future. After signing the consent form, the ex-POW was asked to complete a short paper-and-pencil questionnaire (see Appendix B, Paper-and-pencil Questionnaire). This questionnaire helped to focus the participant's attention on the topic and

provided a starting point for discussing particular instances of the participant's experience of laughing in a WWII POW camp.

Tape recordings include initial verbal verification of informed consent. Gathering natural language, or "naive," descriptions of their experience, I asked participants about instances or times in which they were aware of their laughing in a POW camp and requested that they describe, in as much detail as possible, examples of specific experiences.

Interviews proceeded from an initial question or request for information, asking the participant one basic question: "While you were a prisoner of war, were you ever aware of your laughing?" If they answered "Yes," I requested that the participant list at least three instances that he remembered in which he was aware of his laughing while being in a POW camp. For each instance, the participant was asked, "Of what were you aware?" and then was requested to, "Please describe the experience in as much detail as possible." Other questions asked in the interviews clarified and elaborated on the experience and the meaning of laughing in a POW camp for the participants.

A few of the ex-POWs initially found it difficult to remember and share information from this painful time (POW experience) in their lives. Most associated traumatic events from the POW camp context, and their POW experience with the experience in question. Accessing one set of memories sometimes reminded them of unpleasant emotions. Within dialogue, the freeing and opening qualities of making meaning of their laughing experience sometimes touched issues that they had not talked about before. The ex-POWs seemed to want to talk more when they

remembered more of their POW experience, rather than expressing a desire to forget or not remember. My training in reflective listening helped me "be with" the participant until he was comfortable with continuing the interview about his laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience. These same memory-within-dialogue dynamics also helped the participants to find meaning in those painful events. Also, either the researcher or participants could terminate an interview at any time; however, in every case, whole interviews were completed.

The ex-POWs' urgency to share their "war" stories sometimes almost overwhelmed the process of gathering information on the particular experience of laughing in a POW camp and concluding the interview. I saved all additional information imparted and recorded within the interview and kept the other materials that the ex-POWs gave me concerning their POW experience. Because access to this information also diminishes with the passage of time, it may be useful in further research. The information will be available even when these unique participants can no longer answer questions directly.

Immediately after each interview, I noted my first impressions of the participant and the interview, briefly examining these impressions to consider how they might have affected the interviews, i.e., what effect they may have had on data collection and results. An initial evaluation of each interview and all the interviews as a whole provided insight into the depth of disclosure and connectedness between researcher and participants. In considering my own first-person perspective of the interview experience, I noted that memory or differences in age and gender posed no

problems. The ex-POWs shared many rich descriptions filled with information about their laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience.

Collecting these first impressions captures what Merleau-Ponty (1962), Goffman (1974/1986), and Romanyshyn (1982) refer to as "direct knowing" and what Merleau-Ponty (1960/1964, 1964), Romanyshyn (1982), and Natsoulas (1990) identify as "reflective seeing." Aanstoos (1983) calls this initial step "to interrogate the phenomenon, in order to grasp its essential psychological meaning through a direct, eidetic intuiting" (p. 255). I will keep participants' identities strictly confidential. Others involved with the study also signed a confidentiality statement (see Appendix C, Confidentiality Statement), thereby declaring their intentions to keep strictly confidential anything involving this investigation. All names and direct references to people or places were removed or coded in the transcribed interviews. Only the investigator has access to original materials. Informed-consent forms will be kept separately, and all research materials will be kept in a secure area with access limited to the researcher.

Thematizing

After collection of phenomenological interviews, the thematizing process began. With a focus on text, I analyzed protocols for emergent themes and thematic structure of the experience of laughing in a POW camp, as experienced and reported by WWII ex-POWs. Common themes and their relationship within the experience constitute the findings of this research. I began by initially examining complete protocols, i.e., taking a look at the "big picture." Reading each one all the way through, I acquired a feeling for it and got a sense of the "whole." Continuing the

search, I delved deeper into and had additional reactions with repeated readings of the protocols.

Having listened for and discussed emerging themes during the interviews, I noted recurring and significant words during these readings. I clustered words, and identified meaning units by grouping the words that expressed similar ideas or meanings, and by filing separately phrases and sentences that seemed to relate directly to specific experiences of laughing in a WWII POW camp. In this endeavor, particular attention was paid to metaphors and other figurative language that the ex-POWs used to communicate their experience.

With further analysis, using words used by the participants to characterize the word clusters and meaning units, I began to thematize each of the protocols. Identifying common and essential elements, noting how they relate to one another, I attempted to develop an overall thematic structure of the various experiences. To describe these experiences and their meanings, I performed a structural analysis with the protocols. Continuing reductions to the most illuminating terms allowed these prototypical words, themes, and the relationships between them, to start forming a structure—an experiential description—a description of the experience of laughing in a WWII POW camp.

The research group helped with the interpretive thematizing of four protocols. Such team efforts were meant to assure that my analysis was appropriate and that I had uncovered essential elements from the protocols. "Independent observer analysis involves asking (and testing) whether another independent observer would have seen or heard the same things, events, or persons as the first

observer did and whether, having done so, he would have made conceptual discoveries that empirically or logically validated the researcher's own conclusions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 186).

I followed the guidance of Wertz (1982, 1983), Natanson (1985), Sokolowski (1985), Svensson (1986), and Giorgi (1986, 1992) concerning descriptive research in search of meaning. I assembled themes from individual protocols into general themes that involved essential elements common to all protocols. Returning to individual protocols again, I considered whether the meaning units supported these overarching themes. I continued this process until a general thematic structure included all necessary aspects to identify the experience of laughing in a POW camp for WWII ex-POWs. At this point, I developed a general structural definition.

The structural definition was then presented to the research group for discussion and the focus of investigation returned to the study participants in a follow-up interview with each participant. Guba and Lincoln (1981) offered a procedure: "Host verification or member checks involve checking the experiences the researcher has had against the experiences and understandings of members of the group. This may be accomplished either by using selected "facts" and involving several members of the group or by using the major propositions of the inquiry, along with all or nearly all the members" (p. 186). These authors suggest that "member checks" provide one means for establishing credibility.

In the second interview, I reported my results to the ex-POWs. I shared with them their protocols and summaries of their individual experiences, as well as the general structural definition and experiential description of laughing in a WWII

POW camp. Guba and Lincoln (1981) explain that "a final check, called phenomenon recognition, involves presenting the inquirer's "reality" to those who live it, and asking them whether it does, indeed, represent their common and shared experience" (p. 186). I attempted to verify information concerning the experience by asking for the ex-POWs' reaction to my description and asking them if they believed that these were accurate descriptions or depictions of their experience, and if they would like to contribute any additional information.

I assimilated any new information gained from research group scrutiny or from the participants into the experiential description. At this point, I had identified a structure for the experience of laughing in a POW camp, in which each WWII ex-POW participant was able to recognize his own experience and describe how it fits within the overall description.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Chapter Four presents the results of this study. The findings include initial observations, categorized stories, word clusters, and emergent themes. Also included are reflections of first impressions of the men, the interviews, and the protocols, as well as findings gleaned from the rereading of the protocols. Ex-POW stories are included to illustrate meaning units and themes. A structural analysis is offered to present a general, experiential description of the experience of laughing in a POW camp. In addition, a pictorial representation diagrammatically summarizes the thematic structure attained.

First Impressions

Immediately following conversations with the men, first impressions of the interviewees and the interviews were recorded. After interviews were transcribed into protocols, each one was read and then my perception of the data as a whole was noted. These initial findings and the reflections follow.

The Men

My first impressions of these men were that they were friendly and polite, and both they and their wives welcomed me into their homes. (I mention the wives, because they seem to be such a large part of these men's lives and because, as members of the "ex-POW" group, they are interested in hearing more about what happened to their husbands as POWs. Also, pleasant surprise overwhelmed me on being able to meet and speak with all available wives.) All participants were interviewed in their homes, except for one widower who met me at a convenient

location in Nashville. Two of the men, who ran their own businesses, invited me in to their offices for interviews.

Some of the men seemed shy, guarded, or reserved at first, but opened up a few minutes into our conversation. We shared laughs and exchanged smiles on many occasions. These men were in overall good health, with only a few having physical challenges, such as in balance during walking or shaky hands, and two reported uncooperative memory and a quick temper. Several wives commented on how difficult it is to live with ex-POWs, although all wives remained supportive of their spouses. Other than separation by death, all participants were with their first wife. Many couples insisted on sharing social conversations and some food after the interview. Most expressed the desire that I return so that they might share more of their stories and experiences, and to learn about the results of my study. Many requested copies of the original taped interviews to share with other family members.

Interviews

The first impressions of the interviews were that they went smoothly, better than expected, and contained vast amounts of information. The interviews seemed full of sincere meaning for these men. Many participants had prepared lists of phrases as cues to use in the interview for recalling specific instances that they remembered of their laughing in a POW camp. Some interviews were longer than others; length did not seem to correlate with richness or number of themes.

Wives were glad to be included in the explanation of the study and usually helped their husbands get settled for the interview before they excused themselves

to be "out of the way." Some did suggest particular instances of laughing, but many of those stories turned out to be of incidents that happened before their husbands' capture and POW experience. All descriptions were listened to, heard, and taped.

When necessary, with gentle urging, the men returned in conversation, back from additional POW stories, to the specific topic of laughing. They became assured of my interest in those other stories too, but also of the need to get information on particular instances of laughing in a POW camp. During the interviews, I listened for and we discussed emergent themes in their descriptions. Meanings of the experience for the ex-POWs also began to develop in the interview dialogue.

An initial evaluation of each interview, and all of the interviews as a whole, provided insight into the depth of disclosure and connectedness between researcher and participant. From my perspective, the interviews went well. Appropriate data were successfully collected and the ex-POWs and I worked well together. The ex-POWs shared many rich descriptions, filled with information about their laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience and the dialogue seemed to me to be a "discussion between friends."

Protocols

After quickly reading the transcribed interviews, my first impression was how much of the POW experience information that they contained matched what had been found in literature. Most of the interviews added information about the ground of the POW experience. The most salient factor in their POW experience for all of these ex-POWs was food, and the lack thereof. Stories of beatings, isolation, restriction, threats to life, lack of control, and other horrors crept in to the

discussion over and over again, repeatedly grounding experiences of laughing in the extreme context of POW camps.

The differences between how the Japanese and Germans treated POWs also stood out in my first readings of the protocols. The Japanese treated their prisoners more harshly than did the Germans. POWs in German camps were interrogated and lived under severe conditions, but they experienced the guards as treating them as human beings and as soldiers. Because of the austere conditions of war, the German people had little more food than the POWs at the time. POWs under control of Japanese guards had no contact with other citizens of Japan.

Even though the POW experience differed greatly between the Japanese and German camps, my first impression was that the laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience themes were the same for POWs in both German and Japanese camps. Particular instances of the experience varied, but some of the laughing-in-a-POW-camp incidents that the ex-POWs remembered occurred in similar contexts or settings, such as during camp skits or shows and while counting off at daily roll calls. The ex-POWs could remember that their laughing in a camp was in itself a positive experience. It often capped off "getting it over on" the enemy and frequently occurred on important dates such as Christmas. Laughing was experienced as relaxing and as a brief time in which to forget their many worries. These themes are discussed later in this chapter. POWs' laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience was grounded in and became figural from their POW experience.

Further Reading

Upon further reading of the protocols , I was able to make some observations about my friendly relationships with the participants and the grounds of experience that became evident within the protocols. The ex-POWs and their wives were becoming my friends and gave me so much more fascinating insight into the POW experience and so many more WWII materials than could possibly be used in this particular investigation. These men and women called me by my first name and most seemed delighted or to take pleasure in doing so. It was easy to call them by their first names after speaking with them on the phone to set up appointments and shortly into the interviews. They warmly welcomed me into their monthly meetings. They invited me to attend their annual picnic, their annual national convention, their Christmas party and other national conventions and reunions in which they had membership. We have laughed together and, I believe, that we are developing lasting friendships.

While rereading the protocols, I verified that the laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience became evident against the experience of being a POW and, more basically, that of a concern with personal being. This experience, an awareness of one's own existence, furnishes the most fundamental of human experiences. Existential themes of "body," "time," "others," and "world" form this experience of human being or Dasein. In Figure 2 (page 99), circles and the existential themes are meant to present the meaning of the experience visually. Each circle represents one of the themes. The intersection of all these circles represents the experience of "being" or of "being human." What I have called "existential experience" provides

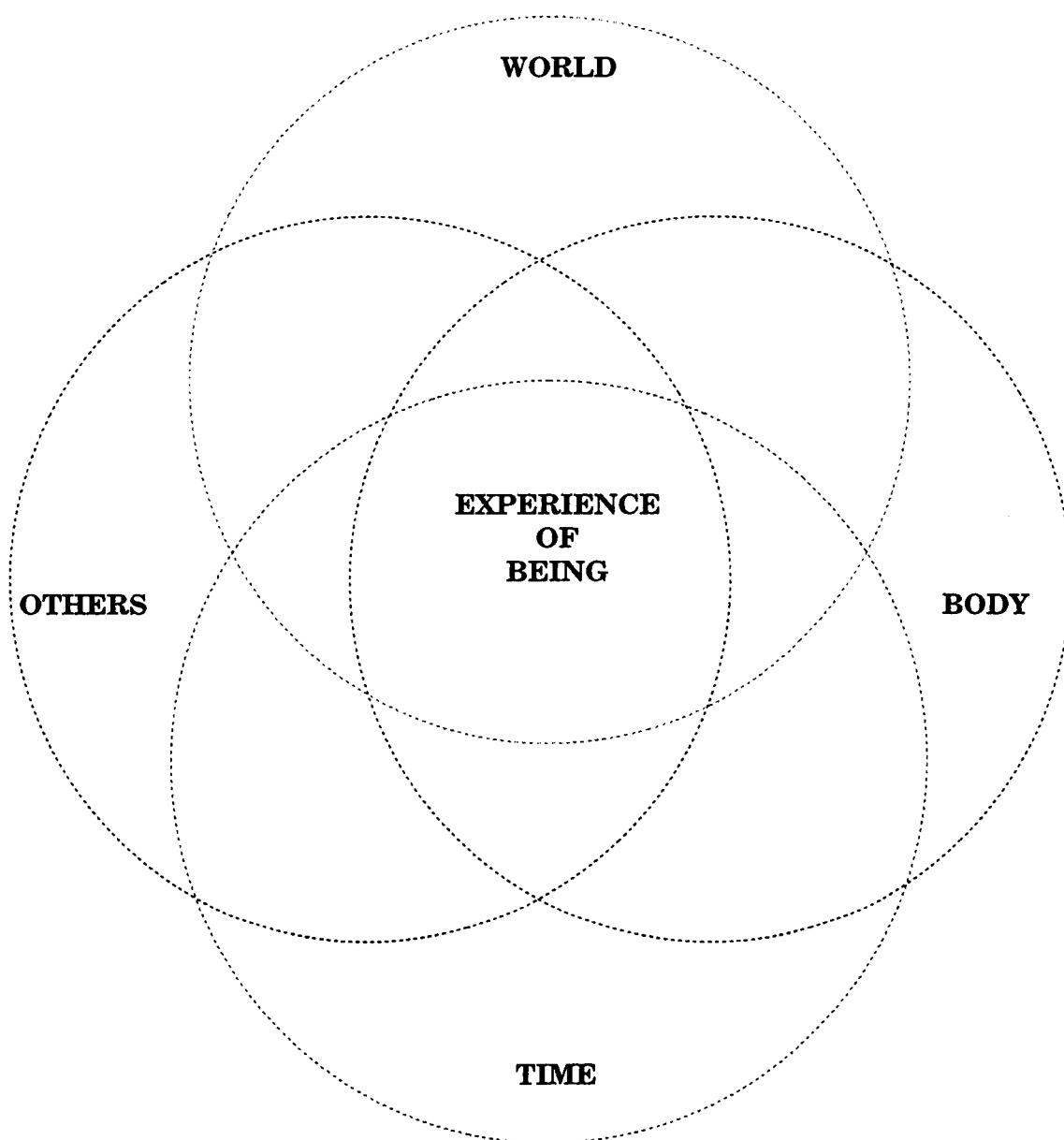


Figure 2. The experience of being human.

the most fundamental ground of all human experience, and, as such, the ground from which all other phenomena, such as laughing, become figural.

In this study, the POW experience became figural against the grounds of body, time, others, and world—all of which contextualize the POWs' experience of being. For this reason, in Figure 3 (page 101), the themes and structure of being a POW, the POW experience, are represented graphically within a bold circle and overlay the circular representation of the more general existential grounds. Against this ground, ex-POWs experienced being POWs and their descriptions of this experience confirmed information learned from the review of literature, namely, that the POW experience included: threat to life or danger; restriction and inability to escape; lack of control; boredom, and isolation or separation from others. Present participants made the experience more vivid, providing specific and personal instances of their experience of these aspects of being a POW. Some ex-POWs described the POW experience as, "We were all in the same boat."

The POW experience included horror and torture. It imposed extreme conditions. From their unique first-person perspectives, participants reported being very aware of the life-threatening lack of food, for example. They also reported feeling isolated from the world and those they loved. Restriction by barbed-wire fences and threats to life from machine gun towers and guards also weighed heavily in their awareness. Finally, all reported experiencing that there was nothing to do much of the time, precipitating boredom and depression.

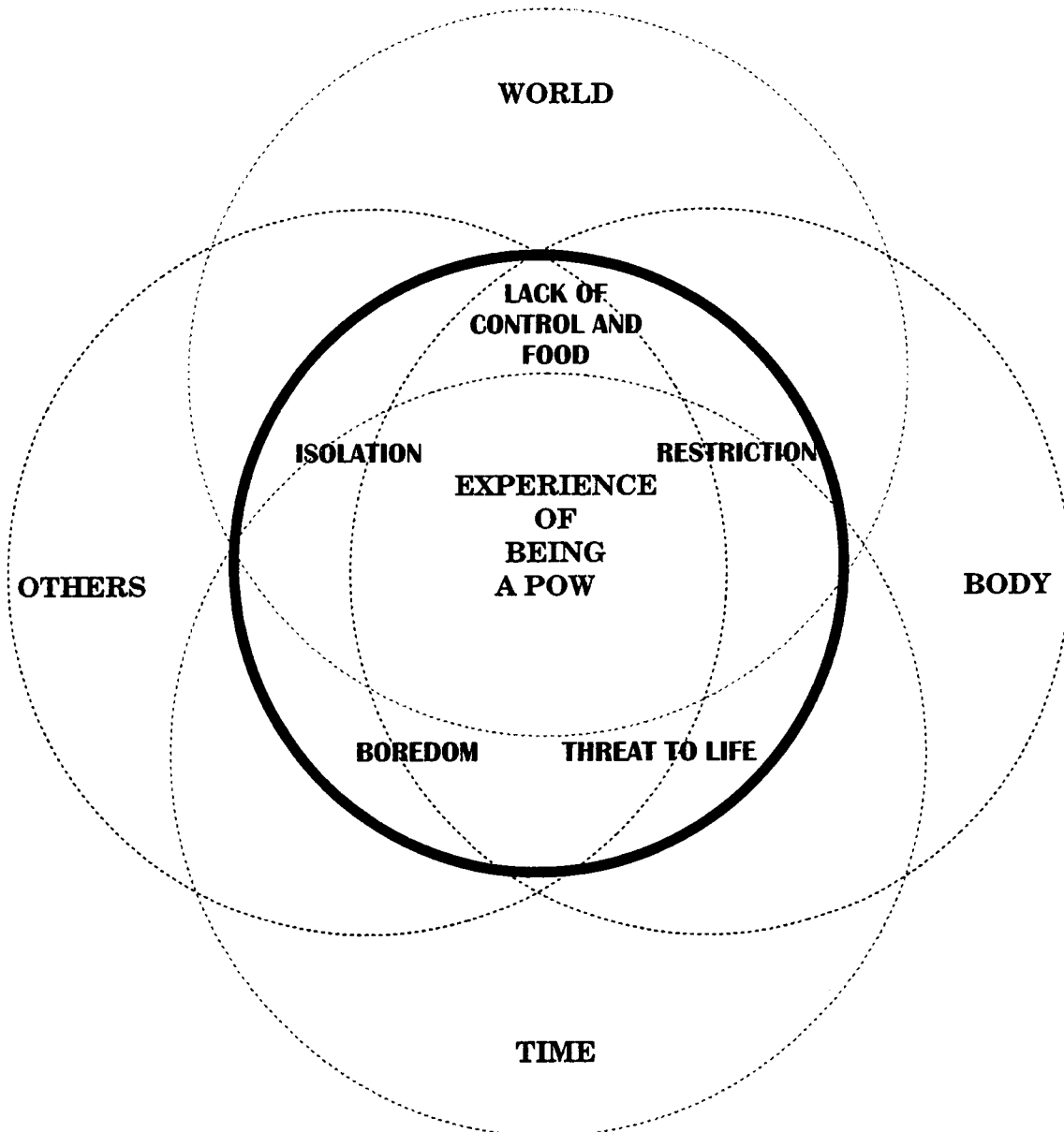


Figure 3. The POW experience.

Food and the lack thereof was frequently figural in the POWs' awareness. They lost a great deal of weight and experienced themselves as weak. They had to eat anything to survive. Planning elaborate menus for the future, but trading wisely "for" food in the present, also helped them "not give up," "pass time," and "hope for better days." "Playing cards," "gambling," "wagers," "debts," and "forgiveness of the debts" so that another could live was a part of daily life in the POW camp. All wanted "to get through" and "make it through" so they could "make it back home."

One POW said, "We had gone without food for so long." Another explained, "Some of 'em traded their life away, really, by tradin' food and maybe they'd go for a day or two without havin' anything to eat." One offered that "you had to make it last you. You could eat it all when you got it, but wouldn't have any to eat for another six days, so. You made it last a full week, you know." Still another asserted, "We'd of starved plum to death. I got out, I weighed a hundred and thirty seven pounds, maybe a hundred and forty pounds, I went down to a hundred pound. I thought we was gonna starve plum to death." One ex-POW reflected about "not knowing what it was to be hungry all the time until you have to be there a while. And that's one of the things that we'd all have problems about....We just about starved to death."

POWs always remained under a threat to life from guards and guns as well as lack of food. One POW told me that a guard "grabbed an ole man's...walkin' stick and he got the big end. He got the little end in his hand, and he hit me right there, busted two of my ribs." Another ex-POW related that "they had big machine guns....They had big towers up there and had those big machine guns in there and they'd have mowed every one of us down." One participant told me that "had it been

early in the war I don't think there's any question but what we would've all been shot right there....But that guard almost really shot that dude."

The POWs were restricted and often bored. One of them said, "We were confined to our barracks or where we were kept." Another one mused, "I don't know how they expected us to escape because they had big barbed wire fence oh, taller than that tree out there, twenty to twenty five feet in the air. And with that all that wire on top." And, matter of factly, another ex-POW added, "You were still a prisoner of war. You didn't know when you was gonna get out."

Expressing the boredom an ex-POW said, "But we had no books or nothing like that to read....The only thing we had to do at night was just talk and carry on between ourselves and each other. Nothin' else to do: no reading, no radio, no information of any kind." Still another ex-POW described both aspects in the following excerpt:

It wasn't a lot of things to do except just wait. And we would we had wooden the doors and windows all barred up about thirty minutes before sundown and then they wouldn't open 'em up till about thirty minutes before sunrise. So in the wintertime you just had about, you was in there about seventeen, eighteen hours, locked up. You'd have twenty, twenty five people in a room this size right here. You had...there'd be sixteen beds, double bunks which would be eight and eight be sixteen and the rest of 'em slept on the floor. If you got there early, you'd get a bunk.

Someone else controlled the POWs' lives. One POW explained, "Every time those guards come in there and see a group together they were 'Raus! Raus! Raus!'

whatever that meant. 'Get out of here!' I guess. And we got out. We did disperse. Couldn't argue with 'em. I mean, you know, they had the upper hand and we realized that. Tha's the way it was." Another POW explained of the Japanese, "They wanted us to be submissive and to...bow down to them...be humble to them....You might get a whack over the head with a saber or...bamboo pole...for any infraction of the rule....They want to beat you about the head and about the shoulders." Still another participant added, "So you stay in prison that long and you don't have anything to say in what you do, or anything then you can get down down in the dumps."

Protocol Analysis

The initial examination of the protocols revealed them as filled with laughing POW vignettes describing aspects of a total experience. As an introduction into the interviews and written protocols, samples of these stories, categorizing them by topic are presented. This section includes also the results of the initial analysis of the protocols—word clusters delineated meaning units and later developed into emergent themes. Labels for these findings are the most illuminating terms from the protocols. These prototypical word clusters, meaning units, emergent themes, and thematic labels all come from the natural language descriptions contributed by the ex-POWs.

Further analyzing the protocols, a thematic structure capable of encompassing the whole experience was developed. On this basis, this definition was used to describe the meaning of the experience and to answer the research

question: "What is the current meaning of their laughing in a POW camp for WWII ex-POWs?"

Categorizing: POWs' Stories of Laughter

The laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience became figural to present participants in terms of the ground of their POW experience. After transcribing all interviews, all stories were sorted by topic. The 61 stories, extracted from the protocols, settled into approximately 11 basic categories: *fun with words*; *laughing at myself*; *sabotage*; *program*; *meeting someone you knew*; *seeing American planes fly over*; *seeing people trying to move*; *don't know / didn't realize*; *fooled 'em / played a joke*; *food*; *liberation*. Here are examples of the stories representing each of the 11 categories.

Fun with Words

WWII ex-POWs remembered laughing when words were misunderstood or used incorrectly or when someone of another country unexpectedly used an American slang word correctly. Of the four in this category, one ex-POW told this "fun with words" story.

The Air Force had an expression called 'Hubba. Hubba'....'Get with it.' 'Pep you up.' 'Look smart.' 'Look sharp.' And of course, naturally that was used every now and then out in the prison yard....The Germans kept hearing prisoners hollering, 'Hubba! Hubba!' and they couldn't translate it. If you think it's easy to translate, just try it. It just didn't compute....Well, eventually the Germans called a senior American officer in and asked him

what was goin' on, what that word meant and he couldn't tell 'em. So after the conference, he put out the word to quit using that word 'Hubba. Hubba.' that it was makin' the Germans suspicious. And they'd had some escape activity goin' on they didn't want it discovered. They didn't want the Germans suspicious....Well, of course everybody got a big kick out of it when they heard it....Well it was somethin' everybody worked on, I think. You just like that 'Hubba. Hubba.' for instance. Nobody was gonna look very sharp in a prison camp, but if you saw somebody lookin' especially downcast, somebody'd holler 'Hubba! Hubba!' And I heard one German woman use it right one time on the march. She'd heard what it meant. And everybody got a laugh out of that, by the way.....Yeah, there was a young German woman standin' on the side of the road and she looked out at the prisoners marchin' down the road and she said 'Hubba! Hubba!'...Everybody laughed at it....Well, you was just sort of laughin' at yourself....And laughin' at the idea that a German knew the word, hubba-hubba....She used it correctly.

Laughing at Myself

I called another category, "laughing at myself." The men knew the importance to their survival of being able to laugh at themselves and that their captors could not understand them being able to laugh. An ex-POW voiced his belief: "You'd laugh at yourself. Laugh at yourself and the world laughs with you." Several other stories included this element, but were about different instances of laughing. One of at least three stories in this category went this way:

Well, this guy laughed at himself and I guess we laughed with him. We were out playing basketball and passin' around and everything. This guy, they threw it to him one day and hit 'im right in the face. He'd forgotten his arm was off and he reached up like that and I was shocked, you know. It hit him right in the face. And he said, he got to laughin' you know, he said, 'I just forgot that my arm was off.' and things like that....'Course when he laughed we laughed with him. Because he was laughin' at himself. He said, 'I just forgot that my arm was gone' you know. He just put it up like he was gonna catch it in both hands and he said, 'I just forgot!'...Made us laugh.

Sabotage

WWII ex-POWs remembered that as POWs they "got a big kick out of" and laughed when they could sabotage the enemy war effort. They told me three stories dealing with this topic. One ex-POW explained how POWs laughed on "work details."

We always tried to screw things up as best we could. You know, on a work detail loadin' aviation fuel which was in fifty five-gallon drums, steel drums, and three of us it'd take three of us you know, these are heavy....Now, we would try to crack the bung on these drums so that they'd leak. And we'd liked to think that we saw a ship blow up in Manila bay one time because of the drums that we had loaded on trucks and loosened the bung enough that there would be a little seepage and maybe maybe that same ship that these drums of aviation gasoline had been loaded aboard, exploded in Manila bay. We got a BIG laugh out of that, you know, now this is humor to us. We were

successful in this, you know, we figured that the leakage from these drums when they put 'em down in the hull of that ship, there was somethin' there that caused those fumes to be ignited....We like to think that maybe some guy threw a switch and that caused the explosion....Yeah!...We got a big laugh out of that. We cheered that!...Well,...of course we got a lot of slappin' and kickin' from the guards because we were just hilarious about it you know, we were successful. We had caused that ship to blow up and to sink. And not only did it catch fire, we saw it go down....Yeah! Nothin' would've kept us from....We couldn't help but cheer that, even though we did get slapped around a bit.

Program

At least three stories related instances of laughing POWs at planned shows or programs. Although these ex-POWs never told full stories about the spontaneous gatherings and shows on barracks porches, they were mentioned frequently. Whoever wanted to present or entertain just started doing it. Small crowds would form and laughing POWs joined in the fun until dispersed by the guards. One ex-POW told a story about a particular Christmas program that even drew the laughter of guards. He said:

I'll tell you one example. Christmas we had a Christmas program in this British camp. We didn't have these luxuries at Mooseburg. But in this British camp they put on a show and one thing I remember, a little skit, involved a cow. Two people in a dressed up some way to roughly resemble a cow. And instead of an udder they had these powdered milk cans....You've

heard about *Klim*. But it was really a pretty good powdered milk....Well, we just laughed....It was satire, of course. Most of the humor, I guess was satire....They'd come out on the stage and you saw the *klim* cans and it was hilarious to us. Everybody roared. That was the whole crowd....Well, you know, feelin' pretty good and laughin' about the program in general. Laughin', talkin', jokin'....And 'course there were no women so the men had to dress up as women, and so forth. And some of them were hilarious, too....And I remember the Germans, some of the guards that were in there, laughin' at the program....The guards laughed at the *klim* cans, too....They caught that.

Meeting Someone You Knew

Meeting someone the POW knew sometimes provoked laughter. The three stories told in this category included making connections with other POWs who knew the same person that the POW knew from back home. An element of being like young boys came out in all of them. One story about meeting instructors in particular went this way:

We'd laugh whenever we'd gather at the gate. Whenever they'd bring POWs in and a lot of 'em we'd know 'em. We all gather around the gate when they would bring new people in and a lot of 'em, we knew. So whenever we'd see an instructor come in, why we'd all laugh about him and kid him about he should have stayed an instructor. And things like that, so we had. There was quite a bit of laughter, it wasn't all sittin' around humped up and sayin' nothin'. Everybody tried to keep a good sense of humor, if they could....So

that was one of the things we'd kid about when we'd see an instructor, that had been a gunner trainer. And he'd been an instructor and he'd decided to volunteer to fly then he got in the same trouble we'd got into....Well, we would all gather, not everybody, but a lot of us would gather up at the gate when they marched 'em in. They brought in maybe ten, twenty or thirty at a time. And we'd always watch to see if there was anybody we knew 'cause we went through training together all about the same time; gunner training and light engineer training and all that. So, you didn't see somebody every time but occasionally, there'd be somebody you knew, you know. Maybe you got shot down and they got shot down later. But the biggest laugh we'd get, like I said earlier, the instructor when they showed up, everybody was kiddin' 'em and laughin' 'bout, 'You should've stayed where you was at,' and all that. You wouldn't have wound up here.' So that was a lot of fun....Well, it was just probably somethin' that we'd young kids'll do. We were from 18-20 years old and it was just somethin' to laugh about. It wasn't really that funny or anything like that it was just that we could get a chance to kid the instructors, you know. That they should've stayed where they were at and they wouldn't have been here, you know. 'Course the instructors knew all of us. When they'd come in, they'd had us in school, you know. So I remembered that very distinctly and that was one. How we'd stand up there at the gate and watch 'em bring in several and then it might be a day or two wouldn't bring any. And then after that, there'd be twenty five or thirty....Yeah, laughin' about it. Yeah, they'd laugh, too. Everybody would laugh. Pretty

good sense of humor 'cause that's the way you done, it'd keep up your morale and just about anything would come up and you'd make fun of it, laugh about it, you know....No it wasn't the same [laughing]. Over the gas deal it would be loud laughter. And then, of course, when the instructors would come in, they'd just wanted to kid 'im, kidding the instructors, you know, laughin', huggin' 'im, shakin' hands with 'im. But the other, previous what we was talkin' about, the gas deal, it was huge laughter....We just wanted to kid 'em, the ones that we knew personally. A lot of 'em had been through class. I went through gunner school and went through flight school and it was, you didn't see many, you knew the instructors but we had, you know, they we had, using round numbers, we had probably six to ten is the most we ever had come in. 'Cause a lot of the guys that come in, we'd know 'em. We'd either been through training with 'em or they'd been in our outfit....Somebody if you knew 'em, why you'd have some kind of sense of humor to talk about. 'How's everything back at the base?' And this and that.

Seeing American Planes Fly Over

Seeing American airplanes flying over gave the POWs courage and hope. These men knew then that the USA was still in the war and that their liberation day might come soon, or that American planes were damaging enemy territory. These three stories revealed strong emotions in laughter. One ex-POW enthusiastically recounted:

Well, that was when the planes come over and I laughed when that guard was standin' there and I laughed 'cause the planes come over and I know

they was knocked out, they'd lost control, like I said and they went down and the guard got mad, you know, 'cause you're laughin'....Yeah. I laughed but what I laughed at was they was tearin' Germany up and I knew somethin' was gonna happen and you could hear 'em and all them bombs was going off. And that's when I laughed, you know. He had a pistol, it's a wonder he hadn't shot me. But I didn't think nothin' of it, you know, just laughed....Oh, I just laughed out, you know, just like we was talkin' and somethin' funny and I just laughed out right quick, like that. I wasn't thinkin', you know, I didn't know. I knew the guard would get mad, I thought it would. But we was laughin', you know, 'cause the planes'd gone over and we knowed they'd done some damage somewhere.

Watching Others Try to Move

At least seven stories of laughing POWs involved watching others try to physically move. Seeing others trying to move while weakened, diseased, or otherwise under adverse conditions sometimes elicited spontaneous laughter. Ex-POWs described these scenes as comical, but not funny. Laughing at others was really laughing with them, because everyone was "in the same boat" or might be in that condition soon. An ex-POW described one common situation this way:

We sort of laughed about a lot of things that weren't funny. You know, you take a guy that's got what we call 'Guam Blisters.' Now, we're in the Philippines, but these were called 'Guam Blisters.' Some reason or another, you get sores under your arms, you know, and everybody got 'em. You walked around with your arms, you know, you're holdin' your elbows up because

that's painful, really quite painful. And some guys just the way they walked, it was funny. It was comical to see 'em walkin' that way. So we sort of you know, 'Look at Joe over there, you know, he's got his wings spread today. He's not even in the Air Corps and here he's not a flyer but he's tryin' to fly.'...You try to find humor in things which were certainly not humorous....You know, you sort of, it made life easier, more bearable.

Don't Know/Didn't Realize

POW laughing occurred when either the POW himself or others did not realize what was going on or did not know a particular something. Those in the know laughed at the person or persons who did not know. This included the POW himself at times and the POWs all laughed together when no one knew. Nine stories related instances of laughing at people who did not realize where cities and states were in the United States and how far apart they were or that a radio was kept secretly in pieces and only assembled at certain times. Laughing came when someone had never seen something before, or did not know what to do with it. Some topics that provided fertile ground for laughing included: POWs not knowing that cooking rice expanded; Germans not knowing about condoms; German officers did not realize that "the finger" was not a salute and that our political system provided for the smooth transfer of power at the death of a U. S. president. The enemy not knowing English formed a special case in this category and seemed particularly potent in terms of the potential for creating a reversal of power. Chuckling at himself about a situation that provided a great deal of laughter, one ex-POW told this story:

We'd get food parcels from home, you know....My wife had sent me a I don't know, package of rice or whatever. And they had one of these milk cans, you know, they called it *klim* back then. I don't know whether you know, it was powdered milk. But it's milk spelled backwards. That's where they got the name. And so, so I put some of this rice in one of these cans and I started to cook it. Well, it started swellin' up. I got another can and put it in. I think I ended up with five cans on there 'cause I've never cooked rice before in my life and everybody was laughin' at me. They didn't know anything about it either. It just kept swellin' and swellin' and swellin', you know. And we all got a bang out of that....I didn't, I mean I wasn't a cook. I wasn't familiar with cookin' rice. Never had cooked it in my life. And I didn't know that it was gonna swell up or anything. You know how it swells when you cook rice. But I just kept getting another can and another can and I don't know but what I had four or five cans on there. I guess I'd filled it full and put a little water on it and it just kept growin' and growin' and growin'. It was hilarious, you know after you'd get another can, get another can, get another can and put it on there. 'Course everybody was laughin' at ya....Well, I felt kinda stupid but I mean, really I didn't know any better, and nobody else did, either so what the heck? You'd laugh at yourself. Laugh at yourself and the world laughs with you, they say, huh? I guess that's what they were doin'....I couldn't believe it. It just kept goin' and goin' and goin'.

Fooled 'em/Played a Joke

Many of the stories of laughing in a POW camp involved fooling or playing a joke on others. This proved a somewhat safer way to poke fun at the enemy than attempts at sabotage. The ten stories included in this category almost always included pretending or faking and a loss or waste of enemy time. Kidding brought the men closer and they often mentioned special bonds between each other as a result. One man said, "I guess some of the guys laughed at me....You form a bond with people in there that you don't out here." Faked air raids or insanity, mock incoming artillery, thrice-cooked coffee, roll call antics, and oxen artwork—something painted on an ox, all needled the enemy. The POWs "pulled it over on them" again! As an example, one ex-POW's story went like this:

The whole time I was in there, the Germans...they had a roll call every morning, quite early by the way, regardless of the weather and the conditions. We had to go outside, not to hear our name called, we had to stand outside to be counted. I can still hear it today, 'Ein, zwei, drei, fihr, fumf.' Well, when he's doing this, this little guy, he's doing it so he runs to the opposite end, so now he says, 'Got vid danvich!' which is a cuss word. And he's got an extra man. Then he goes back down to the other end and as he's doing it again, I can hear it now, 'Ein! Zwei! Drei!...' A little scrawny elf you know, not good for the front-line combat, he's got to count that American prisoners. So he's doing it again. Now in the meantime, this little fellow runs back and now he's a man short. See, or maybe two ran back. And that, in spite of the conditions or surroundings, that was kind of funny. I thought but

he's gonna keep on now and get real mad now, and shoot us all. I remember a fellow that was...a good soldier, I guess but he was mean. And he was one of those that did that....I always thought that was funny, as I say, and I want to emphasize regardless of the conditions: you're hungry, you're lonesome you get to thinkin' sometimes, 'I'll NEVER get outta here! This thing is gonna go on and on and on!'...We were keeping our hopes up....Just laughing on the inside. Well, you can't laugh out loud 'cause if you do, that'll give him a clue and the German sentry could say, 'Hey, they're just making a jerk outta me.' and that would give it away. You just stand and you're just laughing in your gut. You're just standin' there shakin', you know? Here he comes again, you know, 'Ein, zwei, drei, fahr...' Now he's short three men and boy, and then he'd start cussin' and here'd come his superior, probably a Captain or a Major. And boy he got real mad. And he put some guards behind and said, 'I'll shoot any man that gets outta his place.'

Food

Nine of the ex-POWs' stories were about food, mainly about stealing food and feeling delighted when the POWs could get more food than usual or a variety. One ex-POW told about a code the POWs used to let each other know about an "extra" they had gotten in the food rations. This is an example:

They'd bring it (food) into the barracks and dish it out, about eight ounces of rice and barley each meal. Somethin' like that. And maybe the greens and somebody would yell, 'Fresh Meat!!' Well, fresh meat fresh meat meant a worm in the rice....That was all the way up and down the line in the

barracks. Somebody maybe more than one would yell out, 'Fresh Meat!!' So we all knew what it was, either a bug or or a worm. Worms gets in rice so we knew what that was all about....Laughed at that. Well you had to laugh at that. Yeah...Well, I don't know as you had to laugh, but you felt like laughin' when somebody would holler, because you knew what it was....They didn't they didn't discard 'em, they ate 'em all.

Liberation

The ex-POWs told five stories about their liberation, or Liberation Day. They told me about this special experience with enthusiasm and strong emotion. One ex-POW described his experience this way:

The real good laugh was when we were freed out from the camp....We woke up one morning....Every morning we'd have roll call....Every morning got to have a roll call. Well one mornin' we woke up and no roll call, no roll call, and thought, 'What in the world goes on here?' And we knew that the Russians were coming by listening to that radio it'd been couple days since we heard anything but we knew they were closing in and that's what had happened. The Russians had closed in and the German guards had disappeared. So that was a real laugh. And we knew at last when the Russians came in even though we couldn't understand them they couldn't understand us much, but we knew that they were on our side and we were free....We were really laughin' 'cause we were FREE....But that was a big laugh when we knew once again, that we were free to do whatever we wanted to do....Oh, you shoulda you shoulda heard it! People were jumping up and hollering and

yelling and said, 'This is it!! This is the day we've been lookin' forward to. This is it!!' and We'd run and....'Course men, 25 years old 20 or 25 would run to each other and grab 'em and grab and hug and kiss and like we'd lost our minds, and we were so happy. But if that could've been recorded, it would've been a wonderful thing to play back sometime! But...unless you were there, you couldn't imagine all the yelling and screaming and 'Hurray! Hurray! Hurray for the Russians!' even and 'cause they were the first ones to get us....And then just....'Oh, this is it!! Today is it!!'....It was just Oh, it was just a good feeling, good feeling. 'Cause we knew....All we were thinking about just bein' free and do what we wanna do and eat what we wanted to eat....As I said, the main one and when the Ger....when the Russians released us but then when they ran the German guards away. But then after that is when we really got a big laugh when our troops came in. In fact General Eisenhower himself came in about three or four days after we were released and that was....Everybody got a big kick out of that, big cheer....But yeah we were....That was a another happy day when....And I 'course we never expected to see....He came in about a week after the Ger....other American soldiers....A Colonel K. came in and told us we were free. But then when General Eisenhower came in and I knew I never will forget that. That was so pleased....I was so glad to see him come in there and tell us.

Word Clustering: Meaning Units

During word clustering, I recorded and grouped recurring and significant words, phrases and sentences from the protocols. These word clusters formed

meaning units and these meaning units, in turn, seemed to express similar ideas directly relating to and offering information about the men's experience of laughing. Eight meaning groups evolved. Characterizing them in the words of the ex-POWs, they may be labeled as entertainment; comical; relaxation and relief; getting it over on/kidding; communication; the sunny side; know; and something tragic happened. One or two of the ex-POWs' stories are included as representative of each meaning unit.

"Entertainment"

Their word entertainment seems to sum up a meaningful unit used by the ex-POWs in their descriptions. The cluster of words that defined this meaning unit includes such words as planned, breaking the boredom, passing time, out of the ordinary, hear, words, funny. These words referred to instances of laughing in situations such as while observing skits or shows or planning for them. These particular instances of laughing were closely associated in time with mention of other experiences such as learning new skills, listening to someone read a book, playing cards, or discussing each other's religious beliefs, travels, and expertise. Laughing mentioned in close relation to these other experiences suggests that laughter was associated with POWs' attempts to pass time or break the boredom they were experiencing. Entertainment involved body and mind and seemed to involve hearing and listening as well as seeing.

One ex-POW expressed laughing as entertainment this way: "Oh, you remember it. There weren't many good times as a prisoner of war and you remember that particular kind of entertainment that at least you were amused and

entertained and you laughed and had an hour or so of frivolity.” Another ex-POW said:

Well, just real loud. You just laughed and that was probably somethin' probably one of the entertainments you'd have, you know....You can entertain yourself and you can just for awhile and keep the morale up. That's the whole secret to it....They have to do somethin' to keep from goin' crazy themselves, I'm sure. Same situation we was in, I guess....Well, we'd have little programs we'd put on and somebody'd have a little skit or something like that and it would be entertainment, you know.

Still another WWII ex-POW said,

So in order to entertain each other, we had amateur groups. We put on little programs plays. People who had no previous acting experience would get up and they would entertain....We had a guy....We found his manner of speech was rather entertaining. Just that alone was entertaining....He'd pick up words...‘If you expect to rate’ using the word to mean something other than what it does....‘If you expectorate, you’ve got to brown nose H.’...Everybody got a big laugh out of this. It's not funny to some people but it was to us....It was entertainment to us and it's primarily because of this guy's manner of speech and his inappropriate use of the words that he had chosen....It was entertainment....We had such little entertainment that we we'd try to find humor in anything that we could....And it was just comical to hear him talk anyway. And then get up there and try and entertain us by using words which were not familiar to him, it was obvious that he didn't even know the

meanings of 'em....He managed to work it into the story that he was telling and we got a big laugh out of that....He wanted to make sure that he was entertaining the troops, which he was.

"Comical"

Clusters of the ex-POWs words, that delineated the *comical* meaning, included: spontaneous, in the eye of the beholder, absurd, and seeing someone trying to move, whether it was funny or not. Participants often confessed to laughing even though something was not funny. Their explanations included such expressions as, "This may not seem funny now." or "This wasn't funny, but I laughed." This meaning unit was usually associated with a more visual and spontaneous experience, or observation of, rather than direct participation in, a laughter-provoking incident.

One ex-POW related how funny it was to watch people trying to physically move in a serious situation. He expressed experiencing the comical situation and laughing even when it was not funny:

Some things that were not funny, but we laughed at anyway....We had a lot of disease there. And sometimes some of this was kind of funny....We used to get some laughs out of him out there tryin' to hobble along. Now this is not funny but it was comical to see him in action....And it was funny to watch some people, you know, it was comical, I guess it wasn't funny, but we thought it was, watch these poor guys with that wet beri-beri tryin' to walk....It could be comical you know. If he had dysentery and he's trying to get to the benjo to relieve himself, it was funny, to us it was funny, seeing

that poor guy trying to walk out there to a toilet with beri-beri. And he's tryin' to run or tryin' to rush. And it was just somethin' to laugh about. You know, we found humor in just about everything, tried to.

Another ex-POW told me, "I got a laugh out of that they had sent skis.

Apparently they thought it was some kind of resort or something....Well, it was just so absurd and you laugh at things that are absurd." In a poignant discussion, one ex-POW explained, "We were laughin' with each other instead of....But it was real comical to see us start to run and then just fall and because we were we were weak." In another description, an ex-POW stated, "I knew that he was out of his mind. But I thought he was really brave, and really comical, come to think of it. It was just somethin' that I know I wouldn't try it. I can still laugh about it, anybody that'd walk up boldly, right there through the gates just tryin' to go through the fence....I think we all got a big kick out of that."

"Getting It Over On" / "Kidding"

Another word group, *getting it over on / kidding*, was delineated by word clusters—accomplish something for our war effort, or against the enemy's; meaning; usefulness; trick; sabotage; outsmart; pulling the wool over their eyes; needling; or fooling—in association with the enemy. This meaning unit was delineated by word clusters—kidding; teasing; razzing; or hazing—their own "buddies" that they liked "for a laugh." *Getting it over on / kidding* indicated large amounts of laughing in the POW camps as related by the ex-POWs.

Getting it over on the enemy resulted in control and a reversal of power, especially when associated with successful sabotage attempts. Even a forced reversal of power brought POWs together with kidding and laughing.

Kidding those the POWs knew and liked also evoked lots of laughing. This kidding and their subsequent laughing together resulted in bonding among "buddies." One ex-POW explained, "We teased him about being a Polack, but he was proud of being a Polack....He took the ribbing quite good naturedly. He was a nice fellow. And everybody liked him, otherwise they wouldn't have kidded him so much."

The ex-POWs reported emotions of being *proud*, and *pleased* with these experiences. It projected a picture of more personal physical involvement, an action-oriented and a playful experience. One ex-POW related an incident that facilitated laughing about outsmarting the enemy:

The British had put together a radio. Worked on a little crystal. I never saw it together completely, but I saw a little pieces of it and probably the size of your thumbnail. And at a given time we'd meet and assemble and they's different ones had different parts of it. And we would meet and assemble and get that thing together to listen to the BBC, British Broadcasting Company news. And we pretty well kept up with how the war was coming. And our laugh was the fact that the German guard knew that that radio they could tell somehow that we were getting that in there. But they didn't realize that that thing was torn apart and that each person had just one little part. And they'd come in there and tear up the bed and they were lookin' for that radio.

And we course, we....the laugh was on...them....After they'd left we'd laugh 'cause they were so desperate desperate to find that radio and couldn't find it 'cause....we'd post a guard on either door and if we saw them comin', we'd disassemble it....They never found that thing....We were laughin' at them because they had they were so desperate to find that and never did find it.

Knowing their enemies' fears helped POWs "get it over on" them, as another ex-POW explained,

They [the Japanese] were afraid of a person who was crazy and berserk....They would sew up a red collar on the shirt of the person that was supposed to be crazy. Put another person in charge to see that that person did not either hurt himself or did not attempt to attack the Japanese....We laughed at that one because we knew that a lot of 'em were fak'n it....And you could hear them laugh'n and talk'n and everything else even though they had a red collar on....Took two people, an able-bodied one that was supposed to be sane and looking after the other person. You knew that there was a lot of them that was fak'n it and the Japanese was not getting their full day's work out of these POWs....This is where that you pull the wool over the eyes of the Japanese. This is where that you fool them. Knowing that they were deathly afraid of a person that was crazy....We got more laughs I think out of it because...knowing that this guy who is pretending to be crazy...after we were released...they came out and they were just as sane as ever.

In a story that another ex-POW told me, there occurred an odd turn of events, a forced reversal of power. Although not of their own choosing, this brought

POWs together in kidding and laughing together. This ex-POW explained that he was an enlisted POW having to take charge and march a group of men that included officers. His story went this way:

Another time, we had officers workin'. They made them which they let us both do on that farm....This Japanese was marchin' 'em in and they had this lieutenant makin' 'em keep step and everything....And they got to staggerin' along, wasn't keepin' step and this Japanese started cussin' 'em and they come up there and grabbed him and stomped him in the teeth and knocked some of his teeth out. And of all crazy things, that Jap came over to me and said, 'You march 'em in.' And I was just a sergeant and some of 'em colonels, captains and everything. But that was funny. Still, it wasn't funny then, but I was just firm and got up there and acted very firm and made 'em keep in step, got on 'em all the way in....They got a kick out of it. They'd kid me about it, you know. They'd act like I was their superior when they'd say, 'Sir, what can we do for you today?'...Well, it was comical at the fact the part wasn't funny that the man got stomped, but it was comical the fact that me, just a little ole small soldier had to march a bunch that was about fifteen officers, from a colonel on down to a lieutenant, I had to march 'em from the farm on into the camp. That distance and I had to take complete charge of them. And that guard seen that I did, right along side me. And I had to watch that every one of 'em was keeping step. They got out of it, I had to shout at 'em just like the Japanese. Cause I knew if I hadn't of done that, they'd have banged me....Oh, everybody I told about it laughed. It was

naturally, you could imagine, an enlisted man marchin' a bunch of officers around. That was really somethin' else....And kid me. They were friends, they knew I had to do it, they told me that. But they would kid me about it....Oh, yes. And they would say, 'Sir, what do you want today? What's your orders for today?' And they'd just laugh. I knew all of 'em and they were just....Then I could laugh, too. They would laugh with me. They got a kick out of it, said, 'This is the first time I ever had a sergeant to march me in.' You can imagine what that would be like, being in the service yourself, what that would be like. And some people, it would be unbelievable, almost. If I was to go out and say I'd marched a bunch of officers out there and not sayin' under what circumstances, they say, 'That guy's nuts! He's the one that should be...' Yeah, that really happened....We all laughed together, after we got in, we all laughed. They kidded me for a month after that, some of 'em would try and kid me about marchin' em in.

"Relaxation" and "Relief"

In the above units, the ex-POWs expressed the results of laughing in word clusters including: relaxing of the mind; forget worries; relief; release of tension; stress relief; relaxation; and decrease amount of stress. These clusters of words delineate the *relaxation and relief* meaning group. Laughing was like taking a break. It was both mental and physical relaxation:

We laughed at each other primarily and different incidents that might take place....We laughed at ourselves. I think I mean that that was good because when you can laugh at your own self I mean that's something that kindly

relieves a lot of tension....So that was some laughter there....It felt good. It really did....With laughter it seems to be a relief valve. And tension and all of this I mean stress and which that you have it seems to go away....Either laughing at yourself or I mean if you were laughing to me laugh laughter and a chuckle in other words I mean is something that as I say opens up the relief valve and as a result of your tensions and stress that you have seems to go away....It was a relief....It's a It felt like a relief....It was a physical relief also a mental relief.

Another ex-POW gave a similar description when I asked him, "How did that feel to laugh at something like that?" He replied, "Well, it's just a moment of relaxin' your mind." Explaining further, another ex-POW said, "We tried to put that out of our minds as much as we could and let the things that we could laugh about take over....We'd laugh to just have a silly giggle over it just to keep from keep from our mind off of the bad part of it." Still another participant commented, "We all enjoyed the day and laughed...and had a good time that day. It just you know you put everything out of your mind for a few days or a day at a time....So it was just a way I guess of relieving a little of our tension and a little of our hatred." Summing up, another ex-POW commented that "anything that you could laugh about made you feel good."

"The Sunny Side"

Several words clustered to describe laughing as light, positive, and emotion-filled. This meaning unit was labeled as *the sunny side*. The ex-POWs felt laughing as an *overwhelming, spontaneous emotion* showing *happiness*, that they were *happy*

or *enjoying*. They described laughing as being full of *joy* and *elation*, or extreme *happiness*, and *real* laughing erupted on Liberation Day, in *freedom*, and briefly on Christmas Day when it connected them with the rest of the world. This word cluster, delineating *the sunny side* meaning unit, was filled with "light" words such as: lightened; delight; enlighten; brighter; and the sunny side.

In describing one instance of laughing, an ex-POW noted: "But seein' this bread and havin' an opportunity to toast it on the stove was really a privilege to us. And we delighted in the fact that we could do that....Anything that could help....to enlighten you any was worth while. And so when we could see the humor in the events that were happening why of course that helped us to a great extent."

Speaking of those who helped the POWs keep going and laughing, one POW explained,

And there were others, too, that would always look on the bright side. A boy that lived out here in west N. that would come in...He came in and every morning wake up after that roll call and he'd say sing a little song, 'On the sunny side of life,' he'd sing....'The Sunny Side of Life' song and He'd sing a little tune of that and of course, that kept us in pretty good spirits....But he kept....He always had that sunny side of the street, sunny side of life.

"Communication"

The words defining this meaning unit included units about *communication* and expression. Laughing *communicated* happy feelings or "mood" to others. People *understand* laughing with no translation and it therefore often aroused suspicion in the guards. According to one ex-POW,

When you laugh, laughn' is...a means of an expression of a mood....It's you express a mood at the time....So you can laugh about something. You can smile about something. And all that does is to tell the person that you're really doin' body communication with someone when you laugh....Laughing is just simply a means of communication.

"Know"

Another cluster of words used frequently during our interviews about laughing indicated, what I labeled as, the to *know* unit. Clustered words such as—knew, realized, understood, learned, believed, thought, wondered, and hoped—were associated with POWs' awareness or experience of laughing. These words seemed to be the glue that connected many of the other clusters together, and seemed to form a meaningful whole for understanding experiences of laughing.

The ex-POWs held by Germans often spoke of getting to know their guards and local German people. The ex-POWs mentioned that the Germans were a bright and God-fearing people. Some ex-POWs felt that the German people did not like the war any more than they did. They knew that most of their guards were elderly and not fit for front-line duty, and furthermore the ex-POWs knew that these older guards knew that the war was about over and that they were losing. Several ex-POWs mentioned getting to know of the skill and caring of some German physicians, of course not any of the concentration camp "doctors."

An ex-POW described the good treatment German doctors gave him:

They took me to a Luftwaffe General Hospital. They had about a half a dozen Allied prisoners in there besides me. I was supposed to have had my left eye

removed and the German doctor there, he was a very ethical doctor....I was sort of a zombie at the time....He [the doctor] went to the highest ranking American officer, who was a first lieutenant, and asked him if he would give him permission to experiment with my eyes. He thought he might could save it. 'Course there was nothing to lose, so he told him to go ahead. But he did ask permission and I don't know what all he did. But I do know one thing he did toward the end. My eye had healed up and I still couldn't see and he decided the optic nerve was paralyzed so he put me on what they called Kirtzvala (sic) treatments. And that was running short wave radio waves through my head to stimulate the optic nerve. Now I don't know whether it was a coincidence or what, but I was seein' as soon as they started the treatments. And they would never have done that if I'd gotten back to England....I think the German medical corps, most of 'em were heroes. They did a great job and they treated Allied patients just like anybody else. Now these I'm not sayin' that these concentration camp quacks or the stories about them, I'm not sayin' they're not true, but I'm sayin' they're not true of the great bulk of the American doctors—I mean the German doctors.

The situation was very different for POWs in Japanese camps. They did not know anything about the progress of the war unless U.S. planes flew over or a Japanese ship blew up in the harbor that had been mined by U.S. troops, for example. The POWs received no mail or regular packages. And they had no way of letting family and friends back home know what was happening to them. These POWs also never really learned to communicate with or understand the Japanese.

They saw no Japanese civilians the entire length of their POW experience. One ex-POW described the lack of communication this way:

We'd given up hope, lot of us, just about. We couldn't get anything in the mail. We couldn't get any news. They had communications cut off. I didn't get mail from home but one time in all the three years I was a prisoner of war. I didn't know but what my mother was dead or if my girlfriend had married somebody else, and all that. And she wrote. I got one letter from her, when they let mail in, and one from my mother that whole three years. And because I didn't answer that letter, she said she felt I didn't want to write her anymore. And my mother she worried about all the time 'til I got back.

"Something Tragic Happened"

After reading the protocols several times, I realized that another cluster of phrases or words related to stories of their laughing when *something tragic happened*, or almost happened. When *something tragic happened*, laughing expressed *believing* that it *could have been worse*. Instead of disrespect for seriousness, laughing was a symbol of their *belief* and *hopes* that *tomorrow will be better*, and that they *wanted to*, or *willed to*, *live through it*, *survive*, and *make it back home*. They also laughed when they did *make it through* the tragedy and things came out "OK"—"We come out okay."

Within this meaning unit, ex-POWs also related instances when *something tragic could have happened* and didn't. Then laughing expressed being *thankful*. Words like—pretend, apparently, fool, and attempt—became a part of this cluster. POWs laughed when someone *pretended* and *fooled others* in an attempt at the

tragic that was apparently not meant to be accomplished. An ex-POW related: "He apparently did not intend to commit suicide or else, I mean, or would have tied it up very short...and then jumped...But he was his feet were just touching the floor. He was dangling.....We laughed about that....We sure did!...It was an incident that you know it could have been tragic but, I mean, it wasn't.....And he apparently fooled....the other people....So we laughed at that see."

POWs laughed when the guards could surely have killed someone, but didn't. As they acknowledged horror, terror, and death, POWs laughed, affirming life in the face of death. One ex-POW gave me an example:

That guard just whammed me right in the back and for no reason at all that I could ever think of....I waited 'til he left....'Course we started. Some of the others came up there and I we just started laughin' about it. 'Course it was killin' me....He hit me twice, I think....And I said, 'Well, we can't do anything about it.' I said, 'Just, there's gonna be a better day.' So we just sorta got a chuckle out of that. I said, 'It could've been worse. He could've killed me.' 'He could've shot me.' We never found out why he hit me....They would just do those things like that. So we made a laughin' matter out of that when it really could have when I was hurting. And I was hurting....He hit me with that rifle butt a couple times but we laughed about it and I said, 'Well, I'm thankful that he didn't stick that gun to my head.'...All laugh together and that's what we did. Of course, they knew I was hurting and but yet we got a pretty good chuckle out of the fact that it wasn't as bad as it could've been....So we have a lot to be thankful for, too, we really did. And that's what

one thing that kept us going. We just I said, 'No matter what happened to us, it could've been worse.' And we thought, 'Maybe well tomorrow's gonna be better.'...Had hopes! We sure did! and 'Course we had several boys that were pretty religious and I was always involved and still am involved in church....I'm glad I do. I felt like that we had our daily prayers and I think that helped some....It made us feel better when we did. So we all just hoped 'Well, we'll see better days.' and 'Course the ones that lived through it are seeing better days.

Emergent Themes

While reading and rereading the protocols, emergent themes in the laughing POW stories and the word clusters used by the ex-POWs to describe their laughing experiences were noted. At this time it was possible to discern more common and essential elements of the experience, and from all available data, five themes were identified: *surviving*; *passing time*; *reaching*; *freedom*; and *happiness*. As representative of each theme, one or two ex-POWs' stories are included with each explanation.

"Surviving"

A theme of *surviving*, affirming life in the face of death, emerged during protocol analysis. After examining the *something tragic happened* meaning unit, I went back to the protocols to see if they contained other words and phrases that related laughing to tragedy and survival. Ex-POWs described the *life* side of this theme, or aspect of their awareness of laughing as a POW, with words and phrases

like *making it through, living through it, kept us going, surviving, hopes, sunny side of life, and hoped we'll see better days.*

Bringing its mental and physical benefits to this theme, the previously identified meaning unit relating *relaxation and relief* to laughing was joined to the *something tragic happened* meaning unit, that brings positive mental attitude and spiritual hope, to form the more general theme of *surviving. The sunny side* meaning unit, with all its positive, *light* emotion expressing *happiness* and *joy* through laughing, fits well within this life affirming theme. On the opposite side of this theme were, what I call, death phrases, such as "could have killed us," "wouldn't have been here," "gave their all," "gave up and died."

The POWs had to and wanted to laugh physically, mentally, and emotionally reducing stress, relieving tension, forgetting worries, and keeping a positive attitude. They knew that they had to stay on the sunny side of life to survive as a whole being. Laughing was not giving up hope—a key element of *making it through*.

One POW said: "Don't give up hope....Laughter and humor I mean if it were not for that I mean we would have never survived." Ex-POWs gave laughing high marks for its contribution to their *survival*. Many of them reiterated several times that there were many sad things to think about and that death was all around. One man explained the situation to me:

We tried to put that out of our minds as much as we could and let the things that we could laugh about take over....Yeah, that's what we had to do.

Otherwise, we would have lost our minds, I guess....[I: Do you think laughing helped you keep your mind?] Oh! I think it did. Oh! I don't think there's any

doubt but what laughter. I mean, that can cure a lot a lot of ills. and I don't I think if we had taken everything so serious and just brooded over it and worried over it and that we might not be here today. But I think that laughing actually kept us going.

Another ex-POW noted that "you had to have some laughs. If you didn't you'd go crazy....And that's what brought the Americans through was laughter and takin' things, you know, like that and makin' jokes about it. It it really helps you to laugh."

It helped keep up morale. As one ex-POW noted: "There was quite a bit of laughter....Everybody would laugh....It'd keep up your morale. And just about anything would come up and you'd make fun of it, laugh about it, you know."

The phrase *making it through* referred to surviving physically. Another aspect of surviving, that seemed particularly important to the POWs, was surviving as a human being. The ex-POWs also spoke of wanting to *live through it* and *make it back home* as the person they were before. One participant said that laughing helped him and others know that they were human, even under conditions in which the Japanese treated them as less than human. He described that aspect of the experience by saying,

It felt....It was a relief. It was relief that you felt that 'Hey.' you know I mean 'I'm human.' I mean 'I can goof up.' and as a result I mean you felt good over it too....To be a human...and being able to laugh. This is something the Japanese did not understand. They could not understand why that we would laugh at ourselves. Even though that the torture which that they would

impose upon us that we would never never give in. They wanted us to be submissive and to so to speak I mean bow down to them and all this and be humble to them.

POWs got so conditioned to death that they could laugh and joke in the most gruesome of circumstances. They knew that they had to think "positive" and not get morbid or they wouldn't make it through. They had to stay on the life side or die. As one ex-POW explained,

So we would laugh at this see....Laughing at death itself....You laugh at you laugh at the situation see because we were going along talking and telling jokes and all of this....So that was I think a lot why a lot of the laughter that went on. When we were digging those graves see....We laughed we laugh at situations and we laugh at ourselves....If you become morbid and withdrawn then I think I mean that I know I mean I know this to be a fact....eventually you give up.

"Passing Time"

A theme of *passing time* emerged. The *entertainment* and *comical* meaning units condensed into a theme relating to *time*—*passing* or *marking* it, and breaking the *boredom* when there was nothing to do. *Good times* and *feeling good* resulted from observing planned entertainment or something comical and laughing. The previously mentioned meaning unit, *getting it over on / kidding*, also provided a basis for this theme. WWII ex-POWs remembered laughing with and at others when they *got it over on* the enemy others, i.e., the guards, and *teased* each other, their

buddies. Experiencing control and reversal of power from *getting it over on* the enemy, POWs found their *meaning* in successful sabotage.

Upon my further reading and analysis of the protocols, *planning together* became more figural within the *passing time* theme of the ex-POWs' laughing experience. POWs planned for and brought laughing into their lives, and they actively looked for things to laugh at spontaneously. *Entertainment was planned* to elicit laughing and spontaneous laughing erupted at the *comical, absurd, or something out of the ordinary*. Laughing offered a break in *time* and *boredom*. However, laughing often had to be held until later because it was "dangerous to laugh in front of the guards," the enemy.

One of the ex-POWs shared his belief that you had to, you know, get together and tell jokes and talk about something back home or somethin' like that to keep you occupied. Because you didn't have anything inside the camp to keep you occupied. So on the job outside, that's where you worked....You got a few laughs at night. Somebody would repeat somethin' to you that they had experienced with that day, or something that some Japanese had said....Lot of 'em (POWs) would come up with other things that happened that day that would bring on a laugh. Like I say, you had to get together and talk and pass the time off because if you didn't you'd go crazy....You had to do something in camp because there wasn't anything to do.

Another ex-POW explained, "You just done somethin' all day to keep yourself entertained, you know....Anything to help pass the time....It would just be somethin'

funny, you'd just laugh, you know. And that's the kind of one thing that just kept everybody goin', you know....Pass the time and we might have a little laughter over it."

Planning for the future also proved to be a beneficial pass time activity. A participant explained the importance of planning together. Time could be well spent against the enemy and for laughter if the POWs decided together what to do. He said,

What one don't know the other'n' knows....It ain't one man thinkn' it up.

When we thought anythings like that it went around in circles decidn' what kind of decision was funny. Or how we could beat the Germans at their own game is funny....When you can beat an interpreter, intelligence....You can beat 'em if four or five men get together an four or five brains even though they're not trained intelligence can still come up with somethn'. We didn't win 'em all. But most a lot of 'em we won....You could laugh and be hungry at the same time. As long as you come out fine. And we decided they could have our bodies. They wunn't get our mind. You've got ta work it. You got ta plan and it takes more than one. Now if they'd just take one person they could crack him....We always laughed.

These men worked together, planning to sabotage or slow down the enemy war effort. *Getting it over on* or *pulling it over on* the enemy, and especially, successful sabotage efforts brought laughing to the POWs and gave them *meaning* and purpose. They found *meaning* in their lives and had a purpose even while they were POWs. Laughing POWs projected being pleased and proud to be one of the

group and a productive part of *our* war effort, realizing a sense of meaning for their lives and struggles. When they successfully sabotaged or slowed the enemy, POWs laughed. Each could laugh about being a POW and still being part of *our* winning the war.

Reversal of power facilitated laughing behind the enemy's back and even in their faces when "they didn't know what was going on" or "They didn't understand the English language." The POWs took advantage of the enemy and stalled the enemy war effort. In success the POWs laughed, relieving tension and breaking their boredom all in one instance. One ex-POW told this story:

Bringn' back their war 'materel,' anything they would that could be used as a war material. So they brought into our confines.....So we all got together and decided that we were goina to sabotage these parts so that they would be unusable. So we decided that we were going to take off the same part off of every piece that came up there. And there was a big pond out front where they watered the livestock and we would throw these out in that pond. So we take the same thing off of every piece that came up. And we would laugh about it. If the guard was on the first floor or up on the second floor we'd be takin' it off and laughn' about it. Or if he was up on the second floor the people on the first floor were takn' it off and laughn' about it. So it was just a way I guess of relieving a little of our tension and a little of our hatred....The German didn't understand much English and so we could talk up and down in front of him and get by with most of it....So this was another instance of....Puttn' it over on 'em and then laughing about it....Releases tensions and

breaks the boredom and gives you a little sense of doin' something to stall their efforts.

"Reaching Out"

The *communication* meaning unit emerged as the *reaching out* theme.

Laughing was and symbolized POWs *reaching out* and others. It *connected* POWs with and *communicated* to others. Laughing as *reaching* exemplified both the act and a successful result. It also represented their *reaching out* across time and space to past and future times and to their world of the past and their hoped for one to come. Ex-POWs were aware of other POWs—their *buddies*, the guards, and family or friends, i.e., *others* at home. Laughing heightened awareness of *reaching out* to *others* in particular ways. As one ex-POW put it, laughing indicated that "You're reachn' that person." He explained:

If I am talking with someone and he's solemn and sour and grumpy lookn', I think 'Well I'm not gettin' through to this dude very well.' But if he smiles and he answers in the positive you're reachn' that person. You can tell that you're reachn' that person....Try to assess a person's mood.

With laughing, POWs became aware of reaching each other. They often planned to kid their *buddies* because *we* liked them and "we are all in the same pickle" together. Laughing facilitated bonding with those *we* liked, communicating and connecting with them in an extreme environment that endeavored to impose isolation. The bonding that occurred while kidding and laughing with buddies lasts to the present. One participant expressed the laughing connection with others when he commented about a special bond formed with his buddies saying,

Well, I guess some of the guys laughed at me, too, when I found it, you know.

They were....You form a bond with people in there that you don't out here.

When I talked to you the other night, I called my buddy up in Indiana. You know how we were, compound buddies, and I asked him if he thought of anything funny.

Laughing helped the POWs resist attempts to interrogate them and control their minds. It projected control and a reversal of power versus a lack of control. Laughing inherently communicated this message. For the POWs, laughing as reaching the guards meant *getting it over on them*—the guards understood and did not like being mocked or aggressed against. Then, they often hit the POWs and made them disperse or return to their barracks. Several ex-POWs explained that it was dangerous to laugh in front of the guards. One participant said, “I’ve seen a few people get hit by laughing a little bit too quick....Naturally, it made them mad.” And another ex-POW told me:

On one occasion, at Loehman, when the Americans shot down a plane, the Japanese picked up a board and started hittin' us for laughin' so hard. We were so happy to see the Japanese plane shot down. And they couldn't stand us to laugh at their planes bein' shot down.

Sometimes laughing came after projecting a “go to hell attitude,” reaching out to an interrogator and “dragging him off” a military subject. POWs laughed when they successfully escaped constant threats to life posed by guards and other representatives of the enemy. One ex-POW said, “I find something to laugh about. I know one time I was I got interrogated....He says, ‘I wonder who’s going to pay for

my house that got bombed?'...I says, 'Well, hell Colonel, I'll pay you for it!'...I couldn't hardly laugh. But I laughed when I got out of there....So you had to stop it somewhere....I had to end it.

Ex-POWs expressed a strong belief in the support that they felt from family and friends and enjoyed telling stories and laughing about those at home. One participant told about joking with his buddies about marrying one of their relatives. Ex-POWs reached each other and across time and world to those at home.

An ex-POW mentioned talking about things that happened in school, wanting to reach back to the world at home:

Anything that we that normally probably wouldn't seem so funny to us, would give us something to laugh about.....We talked about things that happened in school. Really wouldn't that funny, but to us it was....Well, it felt like that someday we knew that or we were hoping that we we'd be back out of that thing so we could be back in reality where things like that did happen.

At Christmas, laughing expressed a known or believed connection with *others* at home through traditions, songs, food, and togetherness. With laughing, POWs believed that they were successfully reaching all the *others* in the *world*, past and present, who were celebrating Christmas. Laughing occurred because of and in this special time. As well as hearing from home, it was especially joyful because they got more to eat. They felt the support from home through receiving Red Cross packages. One man related,

'Bout Christmas time, we got a fourth of a Red Cross parcel in my camp....Each one got a fourth of 'em...We were cookn' dinner and making jokes and started laughn'. That's the first time we had enough food to eat in a long long time. We heard from home and everything. And the next time....That was when the Russians came in and freed us....Joy! It all comes out.

"Freedom"

The theme of *freedom* became evident in the ex-POWs' descriptions of laughing in a POW camp. Words and phrases such as *free*, *freedom*, *home free*, *liberated*, and *Liberation Day* so vividly and precisely focused on this aspect of their experience that I easily identified it as a theme. *Freedom* was "This is it....I'm gonna get outta here." Another ex-POW said, "Just think freedom....Forget about scrounging." Still another admitted, "All we were thinkin' about just bein' free and do what we wanna do and eat what we wanted to eat." For one ex-POW, "When we was released from prison...we was free to do anything that you wanted to do....With doin' everything they said do...you knew you didn't have any freedom." Another ex-POW said, "When I got out in this barn where they was freedom....It was just like a horse stall, it didn't have really no fence around it so we didn't have no problem much there....A little more than it was back in those barracks where they had the German officer." As a result of being free, "You get a big laugh."

Describing Liberation Day one ex-POW said, "Everybody was shouting as much as they could....Just to see this crowd again is like a big parade." And another revealed that "the real good laugh was when we were freed out from the camp....So that was a real laugh...We were really laughin' 'cause we were FREE." Another ex-

POW said, "We all laughed. We was all laughin' there, we was free, see....It was all happy. They was laughin' cause they was free, see. We'd been under guards all that time....When they freed us there....When the Americans liberated us, they all laughed and we all laughed, a whole bunch of us....We knew we was free. It was all happy." The same ex-POW said this laughing in freedom was different from laughing at jokes in the barracks. He asserted, "No, it wasn't like liberation....Well, it wasn't a real happy laugh....You'd just laugh, or I'd laugh a little....But it wasn't like you know if you'd be free." Another ex-POW said, "Laughing during the liberation....a little more different. It was a little more joy than anything. And laughing on the gas deal was more funny." Still another fellow said, "Everybody was laughin'....They were entirely different. One was amusement [a show] and one [liberation] was elation."

On Liberation Day the POWs experienced *real laughing*, laughing in freedom and freely laughing. Laughing expressed extreme happiness, or *joy*, that was realized in freedom. It signified that they had *made it through*, survived, and *would be going back home*. "You know'd you was free and know'd you was going to make it back home. "It was all over then. We knew we were home free....It was all over! We made it!" We's all happy then, you know. We thought at least we was gonna get to go home."

Laughing created certain freedom, freedom from negatives and freedom to be whole, connected, productive, and human. But *real* laughing accompanied extreme happiness or joy and elation when the men realized freedom on *Liberation Day*. *Laughing*, *real* or *realized*, and *free* or freedom became one and the same in many

senses for the POWs, as remembered by surviving WWII ex-POWs. Laughing realized freedom and freedom realized POWs with laughing.

"Happiness"

The sunny side meaning unit suggested the theme of happiness. It was closely associated with the phrase *being pleased* or with the words *happy*, *exhilarate*, *joy*, and *elation*. Laughing provided the prototypical expression of happiness and happiness furnished the fertile ground for laughing. Happiness was equated with laughing or laughing symbolized happiness in several word meaning units. Laughing indicated that the POWs chose to continue "keeping on" going with hope, positive emotion, and life. This positive attitude was a special part of helping the POWs survive.

In special cases and in extreme happiness, laughing also expressed *joy*. Happiness also had some relationship to the freedom theme, but seemed strong enough to form a theme of its own. At Christmas, happiness and laughing reached across time and space to connect POWs with each other and those who celebrated at home and around the world. On Liberation Day—freedom—bubbled out or exploded in joyful laughing.

Phrases expressing the ex-POWs' feelings of laughing as happiness or *joy* in freedom included: "Free from....That would make you grin all over....When we were liberated....You had a big feeling in your chest." "Freed...was like being in heaven." Another ex-POW explained that "one of the happiest times in our lives was when the tank pushed through the wall, when an American tank came in....We was so

happy. We were so happy." They knew that "it was good to be free." "When we was freed...I felt, boy, like I was on top of the world, then....Yeah, that's what it was."

One ex-POW explained, "Laughing as far as I'm concerned is something that's done when you're happy at times....I associate laughing you know with pleasurable things not negative things....Just somethin' to pass the time....We were really just markn' time."

Another ex-POW described his experience of laughing when happy and jumping with joy. He enthusiastically told me,

We had been at the camp at this time for about two years and we hadn't witnessed any American planes fly over the Philippines. And in fact, we didn't expect any. But this morning I was goin' to the barracks to tell the sick to come over for sick call. As I came out the door, I looked over the mountain, and there were so many planes comin' like mosquitoes, looked like a thousand of 'em, to us. 'Course they were flyin', they were beautiful. So I ran back up a good little distance and went down and told my captain that there was a bunch of planes comin' in and he ran out and said, 'Lord, God! I don't believe it!!' Said, 'They couldn't be American pilots 'cause we don't have that many! It has to be Russians.' Anyway, the planes were goin' to Clark Airbase, goin' to Clark Field at that time so they passed right over the top of our camp. And there was a small airbase where they had two Japanese planes parked there near the camp and they took off for the air....They had the dogfight over the mountain there near us. We could see the dogfight....And I thought that was very funny at the what I was thinkin'

about the captain sayin' so much about planes and we were all excited, that's one time we were happy. Just to know that we were still in the war, because we had been told that the Japanese were in California. We didn't get no news or anything while we were gone. So anything that cheerful, was really something to pray about....When that plane was shot down, we were all would jump with joy because that was somethin' happy....We were still happy to see that the Americans were comin' in, now.....Oh, every time we saw a Japanese plane get shot down it was somethin' to be happy about. It was a little sad, we did see a few American planes, one large American plane shot down, but we did see the parachutes come out. That made us feel good, too. We'd just holler and scream and jump. But they the Japanese couldn't stand it at all. They'd make us go back inside of the old prison buildings if they saw us out there, jumpin' and shoutin', 'cause they couldn't stand that we were so happy....To know that there were Americans.

Structural Analysis

Common and essential elements of the experience of laughing in a POW camp emerged during protocol analysis and these themes took on a particular structure. When combined, these themes form the thematic structure of the laughing experience.

A thematic structure is meant to convey how the themes operate together to form a whole—the total meaning of the experience. This includes how individual themes are located within the structure and how they relate to the major existential and experiential grounds of body, time, others, and world. For these ex-POWs,

surviving, passing time, reaching out, freedom, and happiness define the experience of laughing in a POW camp. This experience became figural to them out of their experience of being a POW in WWII and an awareness of being human.

In order to bring all these considerations into a single representation, I developed Figure 4 (page 149). The themes fit into a visually, circular structure, and seem best located around the inside circumference of the circle. The laughing experience is mapped on to the existential-experience and POW-experience grounds which also are represented by circles. (See Figures 2 and 3, pages 99 and 101.)

For example, the theme of surviving associates closely with the existential theme of *body*. For these ex-POWs, *body* represents their whole being : physical body, mind, and spirit. Laughing meant not only survival of the body, but also making it through as a person—a human being. Against the ground of the POW experience, laughing was experienced as helping the present set of participants make it through the POW ordeal and survive “as themselves” in the face of a constant *threat to life*. So many times the ex-POWs said: “They had my body, but they never got my mind.” These men often chuckled when telling me that an outsider observing their laughing might think they had gone “crazy.” They looked like they had “lost their minds,” but I was assured that laughing helped them “keep” their minds and “have hopes.”

Laughing and joking with buddies offered the POWs a way of coping with their present situation. Memories of laughing often led participants to relate other stories of spiritual coping and surviving, such as sharing faith and prayers and talking about each other’s religion and beliefs. The spiritual aspect of making it

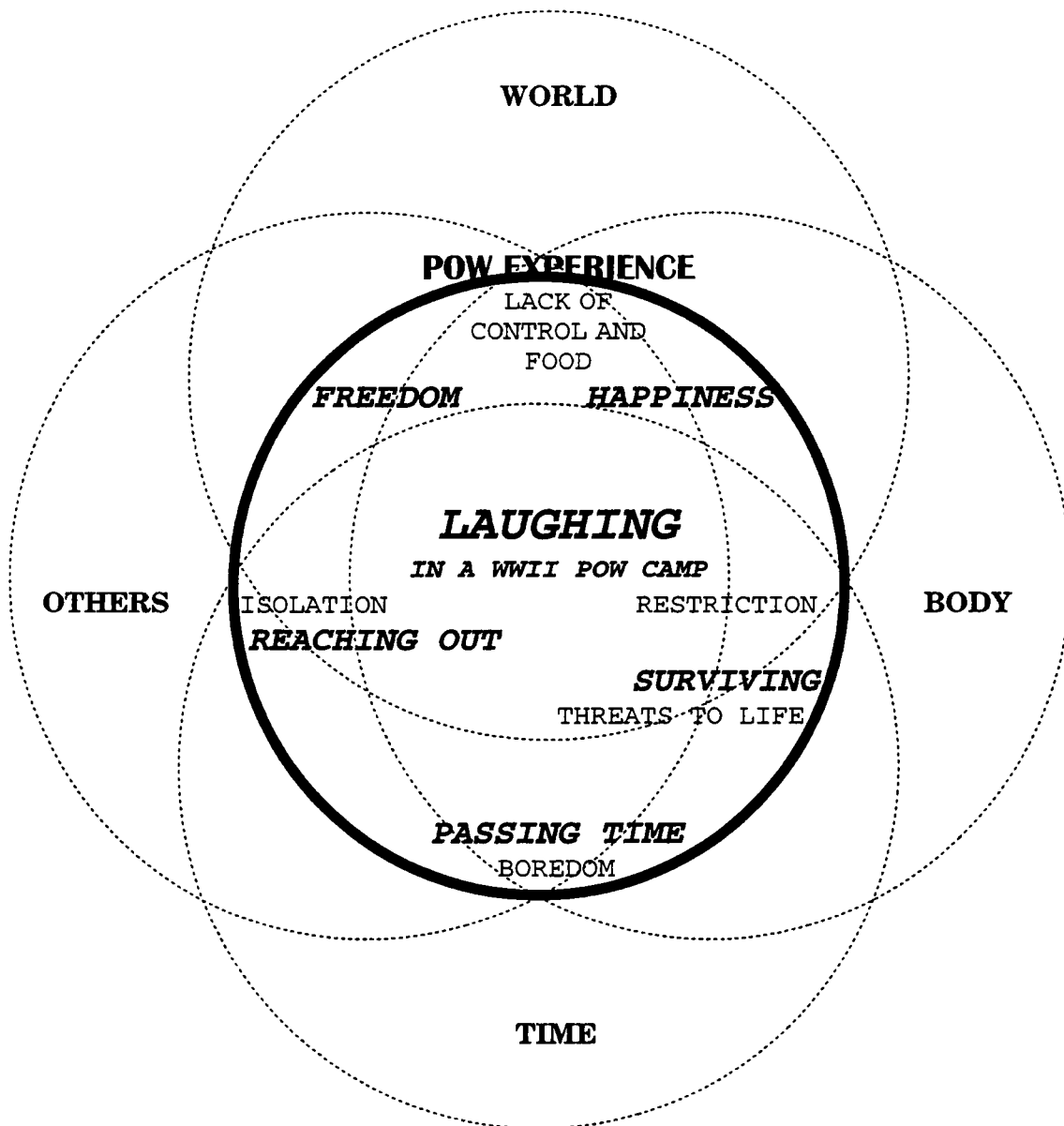


Figure 4. The experience of laughing in a WWII POW camp.

through and surviving—“hope” for a “better tomorrow”—connects with the existential theme of *time*. Keeping their minds involved and sharp over *time*, these POWs “planned menus” for their “future meals.”

The ex-POWs were aware of wanting to make it through and survive despite the *threats to life* forced on them by the POW experience. The theme of surviving seems to connect the themes of *body* and *time* within the overall structure. This theme directly contrasts with the POW experience of *threat to life*, represented by lack of food, beatings, and guards with guns—affronts to the *body*. Surviving should be placed very near the *threat to life* theme of the POW-experience structure.

The laughing theme of passing time relates relatively directly to surviving. What POWs did to pass time helped them “make it through” and survive. The theme of passing time obviously relates to the more global existential theme of *time*. It was, for the POWs, a way of marking time and of counteracting *boredom*. For this reason, this theme is placed close to the theme of *boredom*. Many of the POWs’ passing time activities involved observing others, doing something with others, or doing something to others. The theme passing time relates most closely to the existential theme of *time*, and to the POW-experience of *boredom*.

Laughing often involved passing time with and or being aware of *others*. The theme of reaching out concerns expressions of communication and connection and relates to the passing time theme and the existential theme of *others*. Reaching out defines the opposite experience of *isolation*; for this reason the theme is placed near the theme of *isolation* in the overall structure.

Whether bonding with those the POWs liked, or putting down those they disliked or hated, other people grounded the POWs in the reality of their day to day experience. Guards, *buddies*, and family and friends back home were associated in one way or another with memories of laughing in a POW camp. *Reaching out* also involved the ex-POWs wanting to reconnect, on special days and in the future, with the *world* of American control, the *world* of their past and of *others* involved at home. *Reaching out* relates to the more global existential theme of *time*; although it also would seem to relate much more strongly to *others*.

The theme of *freedom* relates to both of the more global themes of *others* and *world*. POWs experienced *freedom* from *others* and their present *world*, and a return to a *world* and *others* of the past and future, if only in their minds. On Liberation Day, POWs regained control to do and eat what they want, thereby negating the theme of *lack of control*. The *freedom* that they experienced and reconnecting with *others* places this theme between themes of *isolation* and *lack of control*. We might say that *freedom* breaks through the POW experience of *restriction*; an experience graphically represented by high, barbed-wire fences and crowded barracks. The *world* of the POW camp placed *restriction* around the POW's *body*. In breaking free from this *restriction*, *freedom* and laughing are powerfully and pervasively intertwined with the theme of *happiness*. In *freedom*, POWs experienced laughing as *happiness* and joy and *happiness* and joy as laughing.

The theme of *happiness* resulted from being free and from the realization that they had made it through and survived. Coming full circle, laughing is also the *happiness* resulting from being free of *restriction* and of having control and food

again. Laughing is the way the “body is happy” in the *world*, and “happy” is the way the *body* feels laughing. For this reason, happiness and laughing were placed at the intersection of *body* and *world*. The happy are free and the free, happy. Laughing exploded the restrictions of the extreme context and kept POWs in contact with the ground of their normal modes of being human.

A thematic, structural definition is meant to answer the general question motivating the present study: “What is the current meaning of their laughing in a POW camp for WWII ex-POWs?” The following comments describe laughing in a POW camp and define its meaning for those who lived through the experience.

1. Laughing allowed POWs to take a brief break from their present constraining conditions. Together, they know how to and plan to survive: “reaching through the fence”—the POW camp restriction—to each other, to the world and to others at home whom they believe still love and support them. POWs want to return home, get it over on the enemy, reverse the power and grab control, laughing, and happiness, whenever and wherever they can, in an extreme environment developed to depress and oppress. Passing time with laughing, planning, and sabotage, they are neither alone nor controlled or restricted. They are free in their minds until, in freedom, they “holler,” hug, and jump with joy on Liberation Day.

2. Laughing furnishes a way for POWs to make it through and to survive as a human being similar to the one who left for war. It provides a means of being optimistic. Laughing POWs *keep* their sanity with laughing; it frees them from the negatives. Their bodies relax in laughing as a way to cope with the stress and

tensions of their then present life. To the POWs, laughing represents "the sunny side" of life in the face of threat to life.

3. Laughing communicates—reaching, revealing and connecting the "happy and free" POWs to and with others. POWs laugh together with their buddies—"us"—the ones "we" like—those who are in this world of a POW camp, or POW experience, with "us." Teasing and kidding their buddies for a laugh, passing time together with laughing, bonds them and helps them work together as a team to survive and remain a valuable part of the U.S. endeavor.

4. Laughing is universally understood with no translation. It signals happiness in the POWs and a reversal of power against those "we" hate. It says, "I am in control and have reversed the power." To know and understand their enemy helps the POWs predict and control behavior. They have to be careful not to laugh in front of the guards, because POWs laughing together often engenders suspicion among the enemy and makes the guards mad. They want to know what is happening: "Are the POWs laughing at us, plotting against us, or planning an escape?!"

5. POWs laugh when they get information from the outside world; a world they hope and believe they will return to and be a part of again. This other world remains important to their survival, especially the support they feel from home—wives, family, friends, and the Red Cross. For POWs, laughing represents social connection and support and offers them the well-established benefits of such feelings in their struggle to survive.

6. Laughing POWs experience being free—at least at the moment. They find meaning in expressing freedom through laughing. They realize and are realized in freedom. Freedom facilitates “real,” “good” laughing. Laughing POWs are free and free POWs laugh.

7. Laughing POWs possess the power of knowledge and happiness. They know that they must stay on “the sunny side of life” and never give up in order to live through the POW experience. They choose to remain hopeful, happy, and positive by laughing. It expresses being in control of the spiritual, mental, and emotional self, even though they can only marginally control their physical being. *Knowing* helps the POWs hold mind and soul together with laughing even when the enemy has their bodies. Laughing POWs become happy, making it through and surviving knowing, by their laughter, that they will make it through.

8. Laughing in a POW camp projects the hope for and will to survive and make it back home to the more “normal” worlds of body, time, and others that POWs know still loves and supports them. Knowing laughing, POWs affirm life in the face of death. Laughing helps them remain grounded in, while reaching out to and pursuing, the fundamental aspects of being human. While passing time for POWs in their present, laughing offers them, a future with others in a world where they are free and full of meaning.

If we take each of these parts into consideration at one and the same time, we are led to the conclusion that these ex-POWs perceived their experience of laughing in a POW camp as a coherent whole that is defined by the following elements and their intersections:

- 1) Laughing means surviving in body, mind, and spirit—being human, keeping on going, and living. This meaning is opposite to that of giving up and dying.

Laughing also provides a means of “making it through.”

- Laughing offers relaxation and relief in place of tension and stress. It is a break, and allows for a time to forget your worries and relax both mind and body.
- Laughing presents a positive attitude and emotion—choosing the sunny side of life—even when something tragic happens.
- Laughing encourages hope for the future and better days. It offers a way of coping and is often closely associated with religion, faith, and prayers.
- Laughing offers a way to hold mind and soul together even, when the enemy has your body.

- 2) Laughing means happiness. It means being or becoming happy; or it means joy in extreme cases of happiness. Laughing is the ultimate expression of positive emotion.
- 3) Laughing means freedom, feeling free and realizing freedom.
- 4) Laughing means passing time. It provides a break and something to do when “there’s nothing to do.” Laughing is a way to mark and fill time until liberation.
- 5) Laughing means reaching out to others—getting through to them. Laughing comes when you get information. Laughing provides connection with others, or offers and communicates control and a reversal of power.
- 6) Surviving, passing time, reaching, freedom, and happiness, both singly and in combination, represent the meaning WWII ex-POWs currently

derive from their laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience. Laughing also communicated these human qualities to other POWs and helped them connect to one another. As such, it provided a reasonable way of being in the world for humans in an unreasonable context, WWII POW camps.

Participant Feedback

Each participant owned his particular first-person perspective of this experience. Themes of the overall experience, as uncovered in 18 ex-POW interviews, join and operate together to give meaning to the whole experience; however, each theme appeared more or less figural in specific instances of laughing and in the experience of each participant.

In a follow-up interview with each participant, it was important to ensure that I had come as close as possible to understanding their first-person perspective of laughing in an extreme context. From the initial interview and the resulting protocol, each ex-POW's experience of laughing in the POW camp was summarized. Each participant was given a copy of his protocol, summary, a copy of the overall definition, and a description of the experience, thereby serving as a report of the findings to them.

To get their reaction and feedback, each participant was asked about his reactions to the ways in which his personal experience from our individual interviews was summarized. Each participant was also asked whether the overall structural definition and experiential description portrayed his laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience and if he would like to change it in any way.

Initially, the ex-POW was asked if he had any corrections, such as on typographical errors or factual material, to make to the transcribed interview or the summary of his own experience. Most of the men commented that they were amazed at the number of "uhs," "ahs," long pauses, and words spoken twice in the interviews. They did not add or correct much in these protocols. For better word flow and ease of reading, they wanted to make a few grammatical changes, even to their own words, in the summaries. Overall, they felt that the summary reflected our conversation.

When the findings of the study were reported to the participants, they understood the definition and description and noted how their own summaries fit within the overall description. Each recognized "that I [the ex-POW] was in there in several places." Their feedback and questions reflected agreement and interest. Any reservations they may have had about the study seemed to have been dealt with within a few minutes into the discussion. The ex-POWs offered few additional particular instances of the experience from their memory. These additions easily incorporated into the work, although none significantly altered the results. Their suggested changes strengthened and improved the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

The goal of this study was to gain information from the first-person perspective about laughing in an extreme context, POW camps. WWII ex-POWs described specific instances they remembered of their laughing as a POW. From their individual descriptions, an experiential description emerged depicting how they currently experience their laughing in a POW camp and how they now remember it as figural against their POW experience. This existential description helped me answer the question, "What is the current meaning of their laughing in a POW camp for WWII ex-POWs?"

Existential phenomenology provided an effective approach for gathering the first-person perspective. WWII ex-POWs' experiences confirmed prior research results relating to a connection between laughing and health. Their POW experiences verified information gained from a literature review. For participants in this study, the experience of being a POW involves *restriction, lack of control, threat to life, boredom* and *isolation*. The experience of laughing in a POW camp means *surviving, passing time, reaching out, freedom, and happiness* to the participants in this present study. The experience of laughing seemed to counteract the former, negative experiences.

In this concluding chapter, the results of this study and how it related to the assertions of several authors and findings in prior research are discussed. This discussion is followed by conclusions drawn from the findings. Finally, implications for educational practice and recommendations for the health field were cited.

Discussion

Cousins (1979, 1989) described laughing as a metaphor for all positive emotions and attitudes as they relate to health. For him, laughing means being healthy. He voiced a concern that person perception, the first-person perspective, be included in the discussion of laughing's connection to health. For WWII ex-POWs, their laughing in a POW camp means *the sunny side of life*, and contributed greatly to their survival. Laughing provided a means for and a realization of their continuity. It kept them going until they could make it through. These men are survivors. They said that laughing *enlightened* them and helped them *make it back home*. Laughing provided a *mental break* from negative thinking that was so prevalent in the POW camp. Laughing felt good and *delighted* them, *enlightening* their minds and *brightening* their emotions. From their first-person perspective, the ex-POWs participating in this study emphasized the importance to their humanity, health, and survival of looking on the bright side, "staying on the sunny side of the street."

Antonovsky (1979, 1987) would probably have answered his question, "Why did these men remain healthy?" by suggesting that a sense of coherence helped the POWs. He would say that they comprehended their situation, found it manageable, and derived meaning for their lives within it. With their laughing, these ex-POWs maintained a coherent self even under the most extreme conditions.

Being in the world with laughing, these POWs could focus in the present, *passing time*, and also on projecting *hope* for the future. They were committed to *making it through* and to *making it back home*. They understood laughing, its

benefits for them, and understood what they had to do to laugh. They actively managed and *planned together* for *kidding* their *buddies* or *getting it over on the enemy* and laughing. Within taking up this challenge for their own *survival*, they bonded and *slowed down the enemy war effort*. From the first-person perspective of WWII ex-POWs, laughing was a significant aspect of a coherent, sensible, and meaningful way of being-in-the-world in a POW camp.

Frankl (1959/1962) projected a will for meaning as an extremely powerful means of coping with extreme conditions and surviving. For POWs, laughing came within this quest. *Planning* revealed that. POWs looked for meaningful relationships with others, and planned for laughing together with those they liked. It also meant planning for getting out of relationships they felt detrimental to themselves, such as in interrogations conducted by the enemy. They laughed about their success later, after the guards had gone or when the POWs were alone again in the barracks. Along these same lines, ex-POWs found meaning in being able to plan for and sabotage the enemy war effort. They got a big laugh out of being POWs and yet playing a role in the American endeavor to win the war. Their life had purpose and meaning. Even in planning menus for the future, they projected themselves as meaningful human beings who would survive. In freedom, they would share meals with each other, ones successfully prepared and presented from these imagined menus. They would make it back home to share meals also with their loved ones once again. From a first-person perspective, the will to survive and continue as humans gave their day-to-day existence meaning. They adapted,

adjusted, planned, and carried out whatever was in their power to promote their physical, mental, and spiritual survival, including laughing.

Meaning and purpose became realized for these ex-POWs in *making it through* their POW experience. They *survived* as humans and as an important part of the U.S. war effort. Even though their bodies may have deteriorated, the POWs *sabotaged* the enemy war effort, and/or in *getting it over on* the enemy, slowed them down and wasted their precious time. This experience supports what Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Frankl (1959/1962) claimed about the vital and ultimate unity of body, behavior, world, and meaning. POWs suffered, but found a reason for being, and chose to stay *on the sunny side of life*, laughing while *making it through* and *surviving*. They were motivated to survive and knew the importance of laughing to realizing that goal, confirming Frankl's beliefs about how survivors exist in the world with suffering.

As acknowledged by Giorgi (1986), the ex-POWs' experience belongs to them. Its current meaning for them evolved in their descriptions. Whereas they experienced laughing in a POW camp prereflectively, in dialogue we discovered its meaning for them within a reflective mode. The ex-POWs, *detected* their current meaning of laughing in a POW camp while sharing descriptions of their experience.

Supporting Other Perspectives of Laughing

Supporting the historical perspective of laughing, ex-POWs' first-person perspective affirmed what the Bible says about a merry heart doing good like a medicine; what Kimmins (1928) said about laughing's joyous nature being favorable to a person's well-being; Kahn's (1975) assertion about comedians and their role in

our health; and Chapman and Sheehy (1987) describing laughing as a sign of health and well-being.

Particular instances of laughing in a POW camp offered particular support for certain theories of laughing. Many incidents contained an aspect of superiority, specifically targeting the enemy and guards. At other times, laughing POWs were aware of the incongruity, irony, or absurdity of a situation, particularly when initially encountering the social, eating, or sanitary habits of another culture. Relief or release from constraint often became figural as the ex-POWs described relaxing their bodies and minds and relieving stress and tension with laughter. The freeing effect of laughing, and laughing when free, formed one of the main themes of the laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience, *freedom*. If only temporarily and only in their minds, laughing provided a relief from the constraints of their very restrictive POW experience.

Examining the language that the participants used to describe their experience, I found that they mentioned laughing as an emotional expression of happiness and joy. A few times the term *poking fun at* entered the conversation; *giggling*, *chuckling*, and *sniggering* were employed to express levels of laughter. Some of the quotable definitions that I mentioned earlier, seemed particularly salient for laughing POWs, such as *universal bond*, *instrument of happiness*, *medicine to weary bones*, *the innocent, youthful side of...understanding*, *by laughter only can you destroy evil without malice*, and *affirm good fellowship without mawkishness*, and *instant vacation*.

Not many metaphors of laughter were apparent in these descriptions of laughing, but the one about reaching through the fence to get a guard's duck for Christmas dinner and the one about the Liberation Day scene seemed appropriate for describing laughing POWs reaching through the constraints of their POW experience to grab control (and thus survival), to sabotage the enemy efforts, and to maintain a connection with their other world and the tremendous joy, celebration, and freedom realized with laughing.

This study's first-person perspective supports many assertions made about laughter from the behavioral perspective. Lorenz (1963/1966) correctly identified several aspects of the laughing experience in his descriptions. Ex-POWs confirmed that laughing facilitates social bonding, producing "a strong fellow feeling among participants and joint aggressiveness against outsiders" (p. 293). He also predicted the increased optimism and hope that laughing POWs experienced. Lorenz and Morris (1967) both agreed on the idea that the ex-POWs also mentioned: They described laughing as a social weapon. Here again, as in the POW laughing experience, the role of comedians seemed relevant to group formation and coherence.

Darwin (1969) seemed to well understand the laughing POW experience, including "laughter" in his chapter on expressing joy, high spirits, and love. Ex-POWs described their laughing experience in almost these same words. They remembered expressing joy and happiness with laughing. Plessner (1970) also described the laughing experience as expressive behavior.

Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1972) described the bonding into a team for opposing the enemy as experienced by laughing POWs. Laughing, with its innate cohesive effect, helped the men "feel themselves bound together as a fighting community" (p. 166) and the outsiders, the POWs' enemies, experienced "the laughter as aggressive" (p. 166).

The Laughing Experience

Certain aspects of laughing as experienced by the general population (Romer, 1992) also seemed relevant to laughing POWs in WWII. Ex-POWs were aware of laughing in relationship with and to others. It connects or separates others, depending on the relationship. The participants in the 1992 study experienced it as an enjoyable action, enhanced with friends. It offered an experience of either sharing with or comparing themselves to others. As seemingly with all humans, participants noted that laughing relieves or releases stress and tension, allowing the person to relax and not worry. It provided a reality break and a chance to escape, if only, as for POWs, in their minds.

In 1993, Romer gathered initial information from WWII ex-POWs with a paper-and-pencil questionnaire about their laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience. She identified key elements of power, or control, and relationships. These elements again appeared as salient in phenomenological interviews concerning the meaning of laughing in a POW camp. Other emergent themes revealed in the paper-and-pencil questionnaire, which later developed within the unstructured interviews, included laughing as providing contrast between "them" (guards and/or the enemy) and "us," bonding buddies and distancing enemies. In the 1993 study, laughing

communicated and was understood as survival and reversal of power. As within the present study, all these themes of laughing became figural against the extreme context of the POW experience or the WWII POW camp.

Support of others and communication with them are seen as critical to survival of the POW experience. Ex-POWs often mentioned knowing that their families were praying for them and that their wives were faithful to them and would be there upon their return. How wonderful it was when they got a telegram or letters or how devastating not to get any news from home for years. A strong mind, the will to survive, having a purpose, and maintaining hope were also reported as key elements. A large part of the laughing POWs' experience included: never giving up; continuing to sabotage and get it over on the enemy; keeping hope for a better day and the future; and liberation. Having a sense of self-continuity, or identity, was another factor mentioned as important to survival.

To the ex-POWs in this study, *making it through* means at least physical *survival*. *Survival* also meant *their* continuing and surviving as a human being. They often expressed a knowing that, despite their best efforts, their bodies were "had" by their captors, malnourished, starved, and ravaged by disease. But the POWs worked hard to keep their minds. Laughing helped *enlighten* their emotions so that they could stay on *the sunny side of life*, a factor that they frequently expressed as being critical for their survival.

Many of their stories included *passing time* activities in which they acted almost as young adolescents again. An ex-POWs explained, "It's kind of like you would play a joke on your best friend in college or your best friend as you grew up as

a boy,...somethin' that a bunch of crazy guys would try." And another one said, "It was just probably somethin' that we'd, young kids'll do....It was just that we could get a chance to kid the instructors." Erikson (1950/1963) might suggest that they were searching for "a new sense of continuity and sameness...refight[ing] many of the battles of earlier years" (p. 261).

"Learned Helplessness" and "Learned Optimism"

The concept of *learned helplessness* seemed relevant to the POW experience, as revealed in the literature review and supported by the WWII ex-POW interviews of this study. By definition, learned helplessness occurs "when experience with uncontrollable events leads to the expectation that future events will elude control" (Peterson, Maier & Seligman, 1993, Preface, p. vii).

Elements of the learned helplessness experience mesh well with those of the POW experience: lack of control, threat to life, boredom, and isolation. In theory, learned helplessness involves the three essential components of contingency, cognition, and behavior (Peterson, Maier & Seligman, 1993, p. 8). The active components include: "uncontrollability: a random relationship between an individual's actions and outcomes"; a person's perception and explanation of failure to control forming an expectation of the same for the future; and "observable consequences of (non)contingency and the person's cognitions about it," such as "passivity" or "failure to initiate any actions that might allow her to control this situation" (p. 8).

Seligman and colleagues (1993) discussed how learned helplessness affects human behavior and their research supported the view that "disruptions in

motivation, emotion, and learning may occur" (p. vii). The authors believed that "other consequences may follow as well from the individual's expectation of future helplessness: cognitive retardation, low self-esteem, sadness, loss of aggression, immune changes and physical illness" (p. 8). Seligman (1991) offered a practical definition, observing that "learned helplessness is the giving-up reaction, the quitting response that follows from the belief that whatever you do doesn't matter" (p. 15). According to this study's participants, when POWs lost hope, they lost their will to live—they gave up and died.

Within this context of ex-POW interviews, another psychological concept gained support from the first-person perspective and contributed additional insight into the investigated experience. Seligman (1991) discussed a way of dealing with the world that opposes learned helplessness—optimism. Optimism provided a relevant aspect to the laughing POW experience. Seligman's 1993 book asserted that this way of being in the world can be and is also learned—hence the concept of *learned optimism*. Basic characteristics of optimism—believing that when bad things happen they are "temporary and surmountable, challenges to be overcome" (p. 4)—fit well with the experience of laughing in a POW camp, i.e., the meaning for WWII ex-POWs of their laughing in a POW camp: *freedom*, *happiness*, *surviving*, *passing time*, and *reaching*. Seligman believed that, "What is crucial is what you think when you fail, using the power of 'non-negative thinking.' Changing the destructive things you say to yourself when you experience the setbacks that life deals all of us is the central skill of optimism" (p. 15). Laughing provides the conditions and elements necessary for being optimistic and hoping for a brighter

future. It negates or shifts the negative elements of constraint and helplessness, even in the most extreme of contexts.

In the extreme context of a POW camp, those in charge try to condition, enforce, and reinforce "learned helplessness." For WWII ex-POWs, this is the hard ground from which laughing in a POW camp forced its way through. One of my ex-POWs told me, "The POW camp learned you to laugh, cry, and ta love". Laughing means being optimistic, consciously trying to stay "on the sunny side of life," or "learned optimism." It provides "a new set of cognitive skills" (Seligman, 1991, p. 5).

Comedians

Several ex-POWs mentioned the men they remembered who kept them laughing, kept them going. Some facilitated passing time with laughter by what they said, but often, as laughing POWs, they contagiously elicited others' laughing. These leaders in laughter often earned the label of comedian. One ex-POW explained, "I think that laughing actually kept us going....This one comedian, he'd always think of somethin' to to tell....He kept us laughing....He was quite a comedian....We were just looking for something to laugh at....He'd have it all planned out....He usually would start it....Sometimes we'd laugh at him....He'd get tickled and then we'd got tickled because he got tickled....He'd get so tickled he'd just laugh just wiggle and deep down....We'd laugh because he got such a kick out of out of things." After commenting that laughing helped POWs mark time, another ex-POW mentioned that "the perfect example is stand-up comics in today's TV. People will laugh at him if he is funny. If he isn't they will throw tomatoes at him."

These results seem to relate nicely to the work of Daniels and Daniels (1964) in their discussion of *The Social Function of the Career Fool*. The fool is only one of many legitimate social roles chosen or forced upon group members because of particular characteristics or experience. A "fool" probably proves beneficial to the group, where others of these socially directed roles may exacerbate bad situations. As Daniels and Daniels wrote, the development of the career fool as a social type often appears "in small, rather tightly knit social worlds bearing some resemblance...to 'primitive'...societies....The men involved were forced into one another's experience with little more power of choice than one has in choosing his own family; they were required to live wholly in the others' presence for a relatively extended period of time and, thus, to elaborate and maintain a stable set of relationships" (p. 226). Daniels and Daniels suggest that "some of the strains and conflicts inherent within closely organized small groups of clearly interdependent persons may be contained through the development of social roles....The role itself, rather than the actor filling it, serves to integrate the group when conflicts arise or tensions are great" (p. 225).

In environments similar to POW camps, "Stabilized career fools may be found in total institutions such as boarding schools, convents, and prisons" (p. 227). Within these extremely restrictive and rigid environments, "The pressures of this kind of collective responsibility, and the ambivalent feelings which these pressures arouse, may be partially alleviated by one who can offer the group the catharsis" (p. 227).

While arising from a similar extreme context and obviously providing laughter, and thus some catharsis, the POW camp comedians who were remembered and mentioned in descriptions of laughing in a POW camp did not seem to play the physically clumsy or irresponsible parts of the described career fool role. Much of their foolery emerged verbally, or as they themselves laughed. The comic relief they provided tended to be of a more intellectual type. The restrictive settings and lack of control in a close personal environment and their contributions to or role in "getting them through" appeared similar.

As Daniels and Daniels (1964) and a few ex-POWs explained, "Everyone made...mistakes....Everyone had to play the fool; usually one escaped his discomfort easily because soon someone else would commit a foolish error" (p. 220). POW comedians usually with their "remarks, often rather silly, would initiate a giggling in the ranks" (p. 222). The authors explain that "the effect of his levity was to turn situations of tension, which potentially could result in punishment for the whole group, into cathartic situations in which the conflict...was reduced through comic relief" (p. 223).

POW comedians emerge "from the ranks rather than being introduced from above. They...help to sustain the interaction among members of the group and...minimize the conflicts between the group and the powers above it" (p. 225). The POW comedian's role, as is the career fool's, is "to maintain cohesion...help define the range and levels of group performance, they help define the boundaries of the group itself" (pp. 228-229). As Daniels and Daniels conclude, among other

contributions, "in society's interest...[they have] value as a form of boundary maintenance or cautionary tale for the less audacious" (p. 229).

POW comedians and career fools show by their "mere existence...the vulnerability of the system that was supposed to be confining for all within it....Showed that an individual could survive without being automatically responsive to every whim of the institution and its authorities" (p. 223). As POW comedians facilitated laughing in a POW camp, Daniels and Daniels suggest that "perhaps in all extremely inflexible situations, the career fool can play a useful role as outlet and mediator...vicarious satisfaction that not everyone is broken or 'processed' by the system, no matter how efficient or monolithic it may be. The fool can be the embodiment of each man's wish to escape from the full burden of responsibility which he carries" (p. 227).

Fisher and Fisher (1981) in *Pretend the World is Funny and Forever* discuss why society cultivates and so easily accepts comedians. These authors speculate that people view these leaders of laughter as possessing some supernatural or magical power. Noting that people find "that it helps to interpret events by coding them in funny metaphors" the authors assert, "There is no question that seeing life as funny has protective value...[and] it softens trauma" (p. xi). The POWs looked to their "comedian" buddies to help them view life differently and to get them to laugh. Fisher and Fisher took Cousins' lead in investigating the connection between "one's health and one's ability to express feelings by saying and doing funny things. Is it possible that the person who freely shifts into humorous behavior is less likely to build up tensions that have a negative physiological impact?" (p. 147). If so, then

both the POW comedian and his buddies would benefit from his antics, he in performing and they in the resulting laughing behavior. The research by Fisher and Fisher offers some evidence that

being funny is intended to soothe and 'heal' people....The comical is a means of attacking existing standards, exciting anarchy, and creating an ambiance in which the difference between good and bad is blurred....The comic approach permits the simultaneous exposure and integration of contradictions....Being funny probably serves to vent hostility, but in a fashion that conceals its intent. (pp. 216-217)

Fisher and Fisher summarize their findings by presenting the profile of a comic. Ex-POWs in this study seem to have known this comic and appreciated his ability to help them laugh and survive. This comic is concerned

with continuity and intergenerational stability....[He] seems to carry the burden of maintaining life and vitality over time. He is concerned with the stability of the group and is motivated to commit himself to forces greater than himself....We see the comic...as committed to life assignments which help to protect the fabric of the culture...that helps people to cope with catastrophe and the discontinuities resulting from death. (p. 218)

Pollio (1983) explains that "comedians and other purveyors of laughter...highlight the specific, and sometimes arbitrary, social forces that constrain our world....He frees us from them for the moment" (p. 218).

Liberation

The ex-POWs associated laughing with freedom. It freed them from the negative and helped them live freely in the present. Laughing kept them going and kept them hoping that tomorrow would be better. It was part of passing their time until they were freed on Liberation Day. The real, big laugh came from and for them on that day and in laughing they experienced joy and liberation. Over the years, a number of different authors have discussed this saving and liberating effect of laughing: Fairbanks (1917) in his book *Laugh and Live*; Mindess (1971) in his *Laughter and Liberation*; and Pollio (1983) in his "Field Theory of Humor."

Fairbanks (1917) offered a description of his experience of laughing and its benefits. He extended a personal invitation to join him in healthy living and laughing and welcomed us to have a laugh on him. He enthusiastically encouraged us with this conversation:

Happiness is for all who strive to be happy—and those who laugh are happy....Happiness is fundamentally a state of mind—not a state of body. And mind controls....Laugh right out—spontaneously....Start off the morning with a laugh and you needn't worry about the rest of the day....Laugh. It is a tonic. It braces me up—makes me feel fine!—and keeps me in prime mental condition. Laughter is a physiological necessity. The nerve system requires it. The deep, forceful chest movement in itself sets the blood to racing thereby livening up the circulation—which is good for us....Laughing automatically re-oxygenates the blood—your blood....It does all of that, and besides, it relieves the tension from your brain....Automatically and

inevitably a laugh cheers us up. If we are bored—nothing to do—just laugh—that's something to do, for laughter is synonymous with action, and action dispels gloom, care, trouble, worry and all else of the same ilk. Real laughter is spontaneous. Like water from the spring it bubbles forth a creation of mingled action and spontaneity...the very essence of laughter—the unrestrained emotion within us!...Then laugh loud and long, for you're on the road to happiness. (pp. 9-13)

Mindess (1971) believed that we as humans are beset with personal and societal constraints of conformity, inferiority, morality, reason, language, naiveté, redundancy, seriousness, and egotism. While we depend on these to support us in our everyday social lives, he asserted that we need to develop our ability to occasionally break free of these constraints. Laughter liberates us from the constraints of everyday living and its often boring pattern. The development that he recommended would come from effort and a certain sacrifice of security and stability over time and should be considered like we consider the development of intellect or compassion—a long-term commitment and process and not some quick fix. The powerful knowledge that ex-POWs gained about laughing, from their laughing in a POW camp, and shared in this study, Mindess presented as:

Thinkers simple and profound agree that the ability to see the funny side of thing, to savor the ridiculous in life, and to laugh at ourselves and our troubles is an asset of the greatest magnitude...because it is indispensable to our welfare. Like love, courage, and understanding, it is one of the attributes that can sustain us through the worst....It can lighten the load of our daily

cares; at its peaks it can enable us to live joyous lives in the midst of all our suffering. A flourishing sense of humor is fundamental to mental health. It represents a source of vitality and a means of transcendence second to none. (pp. 13-15)

The ex-POWs described how important laughing was to them in keeping positive thinking and maintaining a hopeful attitude—choosing *the sunny side* of life in order to survive. Mindess refers to humor as “a frame of mind, a manner of perceiving and experiencing life. It is a kind of outlook, a peculiar point of view, and one which has great therapeutic power. It can enable us to survive both failure and success, to transcend both reality and fantasy, to thrive on nothing more than the simplicity of being” (p. 21). For him “the comic spirit is an embodiment of the spirit of disruption. It breaks us free from the ruts of our minds, inviting us to enjoy the exhilaration of escape” (p. 22). More pertinent for the POWs, laughing helped them keep their sanity and to enjoy liberation or freedom. They broke free of the POW experience and its restriction, if only in their minds, with laughing. Mindess said that laughing “offers us release from our stabilizing systems, escape from our self-imposed prisons. Every instance of laughter is an instance of liberation from our control” (p. 23). As well as providing a brief break in time and the possibility of giving up control, laughing offered freedom, stability, and enough personal control for each POW to choose to give up control to his laughing body.

Reflecting on their laughing experience, the POWs mentioned that it allowed them to realize they were still human. It was good to know they could still laugh at themselves. Mindess agreed that attaining this ability to look at oneself with a

different perspective provides a key to survival. He presented a philosophy that could easily be espoused by the ex-POWs sharing in this study:

At times of personal distress and, equally, at times of national tragedy and international horror...this attainment is invaluable. It may not enable us to change reality, but it enables us to endure it. It may not allow us to discard our egos, but it allows us to transcend them....It is this frame of mind that can, with some conviction, be called our ultimate hope, for the ability to evoke it represents an ability to take whatever comes with a shrug if not a smile. (p. 30)

In his article, Pollio (1983) discussed the qualities of laughing, as described by Mindess (1971), Plessner (1970), and Koestler (1964), that give it its characteristic liberation effect. He discussed this issue within the context of Lewin's field theory, which itself is grounded in Gestalt psychology of figure/ground. Pollio's comments about Lewin's field theory seem relevant to the POWs' laughing experience in the psychological field developed by the WWII POW camps. Connecting Lewin's work with humor, Pollio said that it is "quite sensitive to the structure of the psychological field at the time of the specific event considered....Lewin's approach suggests that comic events only appear against the more extensive background defined by society, other people, and the specific person in the specific situation now doing the joking, laughing, and/or smiling" (p. 214). Many times in this study's interviews, the ex-POWs would reground their laughing experience and me in the sad, negative, or horrible events of their POW experience.

Pollio noted that Bergson restored laughter to its social ground and that Plessner restored it to its bodily ground (p. 214). Pollio believed that Plessner provides a good place to start "because it focuses attention on the person as he or she laughs or smiles in the context of a full, rich social setting....It does encourage us to look at the phenomenal experience of the person as he or she laughs or smiles and, in so doing, directs us to the meaning of these two very human events for the person producing them....Plessner directs us to the laugher's body as a major nexus connecting the world of the person with that of others and society" (p. 214). Although POW bodies were beaten, they offered the central point from which all other aspects of the experience connected and around which the experience revolved.

Pollio mentioned Koestler's diagram and verbal description that depict a human laugh and agreed that "laughter does indeed seem as if it were an explosion both from the point of view of the laugher and from that of some other person(s)" (p. 215). Results of this present study support the outwardly projected energy of laughing. Laughing for these ex-POWs means reaching out to connect with and communicate with others and their world.

The figurative language concerning laughing that Pollio mentions also emerged in participant descriptions. Other POWs thought their buddy had "lost his marbles," or an outsider might think that laughing POWs were cracking up or going crazy. One of the ex-POWs put it this way: "And it just...looked like I guess people that some outsider or something would've thought we'd lost our mind about laughing over some of the silly things and sittn' there and laughin.'" Their clichés or

metaphors sometimes expressed the more cognitive or mental aspects of laughing. These ex-POWs often said that the enemy had their bodies but “they never got my mind.”

Discussing Plessner’s experiential description of laughing, Pollio noted that “laughter provides a continuing body metaphor for freedom in which the person experiences himself as free of the constraints imposed by others, society, time, and even his own body” (p. 215). This statement closely reflected the ex-POWs’ current experience of their laughing in a POW camp. These men often referred to the negatives of their POW experience. Some explained the briefness, infrequency, or the “very very little laughter [that] went on in the POW camp.” This connects well with Pollio’s further discussion when he said, “Like the more general concept of freedom, however, the experience of freedom afforded by laughing is fleeting for the person must always return ‘to this body, in this situation, in this society, in this era’ once the episode of laughter has run its course. The experience of laughter is neither a strictly intellectual nor emotional one; rather it is a total person response to the specifics of a particular contemporary situation” (p. 215). This also reflects remarkably well the ex-POWs’ experience. Laughing both affected and effected their whole person—body, mind, and spirit.

Pollio continued his discussion stating that Mindess views humans as “beset by a number of personal and social constraints...that serve to limit his or her freedom. These constraints are adhered to largely because the person has little choice in the matter....‘The moment of choice is a moment of heightened self-awareness, but that moment is, and will always be, fleeting....Its joy is the joy of

release, and release is exciting only as reaction to the constricting conditions out of which it is born” (pp. 215-216). The interviewed ex-POWs experience laughing as release and in the extreme, joy. Because of the extreme context, the severity of constraint, or restriction, for WWII ex-POWs, laughing in a POW camp represented tremendous energy and an extremely powerful reaction to their conditions.

One of the most powerful themes involved POWs reaching others, connecting and communicating with them, or reaching out beyond their restrictive POW experience for their survival. Pollio predicted this experience when he said, “Laughter would seem best described as a type of centrifugal behavior that ‘reaches out’ from the person to others in the immediate situation. Such reaching out beyond the self, however, can be perceived either as a vigorous social act or as a type of attack” (p. 219). And certainly the enemy often understood the laughing POWs as reversing the power and taking control. Guards often retaliated with beatings. However, laughing POW buddies laughed together with each other, at themselves, and kidded those they liked. In so doing, they formed strong bonds with each other that the ex-POWs admit last through the present. Pollio concludes that “laughing, joking people are...moving out to meet and respond to their situation and thereby to involve themselves communally with others in that situation” (p. 219). As supported by the results of this study, even in an extreme context of human existence, “the laughing person experiences momentary freedom from his/her embodied situation...and [laughing] is preeminently a bodily gesture of freedom” (p. 228-229).

Conclusions

An existential-phenomenological approach with its unstructured interviews provided suitable information about the meaning of laughing and its connection with health, from the first-person perspective in an extreme context. My results supported the notion that laughing provides a healthy experience for human beings. The ex-POWs confirmed the connection between laughing and health—laughing positively affects the whole human being in ways considered to be healthy. In the experience of these ex-POWs, laughing opposed the severe conditions of *restriction*, *lack of control*, *boredom*, *isolation*, and *threat to life* characteristic of the POW experience. In this study, these ex-POWs shared an aspect of laughing that might benefit others who experience extreme contexts of existence. Laughing breaks boundaries and counteracts constraints.

From the perspective of wellness research, present participants experienced many healthy effects of laughing. First off laughing means *surviving* as a human being. It means making it through by *passing time* with *happiness* and hope—keeping their minds and a positive attitude. It means knowing what was going on, what to do, how to remain human and make it back home for a better future, as well as coping with the present and remembering the good past. Laughing kept POWs properly oriented and integrated. *Reaching out* to others with laughing, allowed the men to form and take advantage of a social support system, helping them cope with their situation and heal whenever possible. Laughing allowed POWs a sense of *freedom* and control, a means of finding meaning and being productive.

Concerning its physiological aspect, the ex-POWs often mentioned that laughing provided stress and tension relief and physical relaxation. They learned that even though the enemy had their bodies, laughing meant a brief respite from their worries. Laughing provided physical *release of tension or relief*, and *decreased* their *stresses*. It offered them what Benson (1975) labeled the *relaxation response* and a way to manage their response to stress. It provided a means to adapt, increasing their adaptive capacity and allowing them to survive the detrimental effects of stress. It also may have allowed them to feel less pain. Some ex-POWs mentioned trying to make a laughing affair out of beatings because "it could have been worse. He could have shot me." Even though they may not have been what the health field considers healthy as POWs, these men survived and lived to tell about, laughing as POWs, they are *ex-POWs*.

From a psychological point of view, ex-POWs experienced the benefit of laughing as a break, a time to forget worries, a relaxing of the mind as well as a creative and productive influence. It had a *liberating effect* on their ideas and helped them confront their troubles. They confirmed what Klein (1989) asserted, that laughter helps transcend predicaments and helps people feel "uplifted, encouraged, and empowered" (p. 4).

Parse's (1993) early description of the experience of laughing for people over 65 years old seems more relevant to the laughing-POWs experience than the formal structural definition of the experience that she developed later. Laughing's *uplifting* quality, sometimes experienced in a particular instance of incongruity, prompted feelings of happiness and called up remembered connectedness. Ex-POWs, who now

themselves are over 65, confirmed parts of her description of the laughing experience as healthy.

Pasquali's (1990) comments about one's ability to laugh at one's own imperfections and troubles as an indicator of mental health and coping seemed especially relevant in the experience of laughing POWs. Many of the laughing POW stories mentioned earlier could also provide examples for preventive mental health programs. Laughing's healthy benefits proved particularly figural to the ex-POWs in the emotional/social/spiritual realm. They emphasized its importance to their survival as it kept them on the *sunny side of life*, looking at the positive, keeping them going, enlightening and delighting them, lightening their emotions, and keeping their hopes up for a better tomorrow and a brighter future.

The theme of *reaching out* and meaning unit *getting it over on / kidding* highlighted laughing's influence on the social aspect of being. They meant connecting and communicating with others, offering either the reversal of power from their guards and a sense of control over their own lives, or the intensely strong bonding with their buddies. Laughing aided in establishing and maintaining social support so important to human health.

Plessner (1970) characterized the laughing experience as being at the limits of human behavior; so too did POWs. They set laughing at the limits of their coping with physical degradation and boredom, or as Plessner described, "the ambiguity in our fundamental situation breaks forth in such a way that we can't control it" (p. xiii). Laughing offered the POWs pleasure as "the release of tension...[and] health as a reaction of letting oneself go in a physical automatism, as a surrender of the

controlled unity of man and body" (p. 113). Ex-POWs experienced this choice for letting go often as giving control back to the POW. They also experienced laughing, this "surrender of the controlled unity man and body," as reintegrating the POW as a whole human being. Plessner's contention was proved out in the extreme context of the POW camps by laughing POWs. From their experience, ex-POWs confirmed a connection between laughing and health.

After talking with the present set of participants about their description of laughing in WWII POW camps, I conclude that, for these ex-POWs, laughing "exploded" the boundaries imposed by the POW experience. For these ex-POWs, themes of the laughing-in-a-POW-camp experience opposed those of the POW experience. What this means is that laughing affirmed and projected being human in a dehumanizing setting. It also encouraged communication and connection with others in a context of isolation, knowledge and control in the face of ignorance or nothing more to do; in short, it affirmed life in the face of a constant threat of death. Laughing in the world of the POW camp broke the restrictions imposed by the camp and the POW experience. Remembering their laughing in a POW camp meant staying connected with and affirming life for these ex-POWs. Laughing represented being human, as well as health and happiness in the face of an extreme context of existence, body, mind, and spirit.

Laughing in a POW camp thus helped to counteract the horror of the POW experience. It broke the boundaries of the POW world and allowed the POW to reach through the constraints imposed by the POW camp and remain as a coherent self. With laughing, POWs remained moored to the basic foundations of all human

being—body, time, others, and world. Laughing POWs *kept on going, made it through*, and *survived*. Laughing together they were no longer isolated. Laughing provided and communicated a sense of control and afforded a reversal of power where the POW camp enforced a lack of control. The POWs experienced freedom instead of restriction. Laughing provided something to do, a break in the oppressive boredom so prevalent in the POWs' experience. Laughing POWs freely and happily passed the time in the face of boredom, threat to life, restriction, isolation, and lack of control until they made it through, survived, and reached home as coherent human beings.

Using two of the ex-POWs' stories as metaphors, laughing POWs reached through the fence of the POW experience, its restrictions, threats to life, isolation, and boredom. They reached out for and to others and another world to grab control, survival, and happiness, bringing them inside. They knew how to make it through by staying on the side of life. They accomplished this even under the cover of and the darkness of war. These men willed to survive, even though others looked at them as fools, crazy, having "lost their marbles." And then, as at a big parade, they "hollered," hugged, and jumped with joy on Liberation Day. In freedom they laughed and freely laughed when they were freed.

Reflecting on the work of Cousins, Antonovsky, Frankl, Allport, and Plessner concerning a *laughing human being* in an extreme context—at the limits of coping, a quote by Plessner (1970) came to mind:

When a man laughs, he gives way to his own body and thus foregoes unity with it and control over it. With this capitulation as a unity of ensouled body

and mind, he asserts himself as a person....In the loss of control over his body, in disorganization, man still gives evidence of his sovereignty in an impossible situation. In this situation, he is disrupted as an ordered unity of mind, soul, and body, but this disruption is the last card he plays. In sinking below his level of controlled, or at least articulated, corporeality, he directly demonstrates his humanity: to be able to deal with something at the point where nothing further can be done. (p. 142)

Laughing opposed the POW experience. Themes of the laughing experience mitigate, if not negate, those of the POW experience. Laughing breaks the barriers set up to constrain prisoners of war. It can just as easily break the boundaries and counteract the constraints of our everyday life. Laughing provides the face of positive affirmation in spite of a world of constraints or the constraints of the world.

Implications

From the first-person perspective of those who have been there and experienced it, laughing affords a brief break from constraint, even in extreme life contexts. Ex-POWs knew the importance of thinking positively. Although POWs had to learn its value in an extreme situation, educators can practice and encourage laughing for optimism, thereby, decreasing depression and meaninglessness in their educational environments. Education can prepare students to live happy and healthy lives, persevering with hope as well as realism. As laughing counteracted the POW experience, educators can create educational environments—laughing

classrooms to encourage and reinforce success and achievement with happiness.

Laughing is already being taught in the Air Force Survival School.

The ex-POWs shared with me what they learned from coping with the most extreme context of human existence, thereby encouraging us to locate their experience within the context of "preventive mental health." Within this context, Johnston (1990) discussed humor as a preventive health strategy. He mentioned the positive benefits of laughing several times and highlighted "preventive health issues." As the ex-POWs confirmed, Johnston explained that "laughter is a universal language and a vehicle for communication capable of transcending our differences and highlighting our similarities" (p. 257). Laughing's ability to connect and communicate provides an important social function and mental health benefit. It is valuable in "promoting psychological health or human adjustment" (p. 258). As also revealed in ex-POWs' first-person perspective on laughing, Johnston explained the importance to mental health of developing relationships, understanding others, maintaining rapport, and encouraging insight. Ex-POWs also confirmed laughing's contagious quality and its tendency to form bonds between people. Johnston said, "Laughter is contagious and the pleasure of shared amusements and insights can bridge the gap between personalities" (p. 259). He explained that group cohesion and common perspective enhanced social support, thereby, facilitating preventive health.

Many ex-POWs told me about realizing the importance of being able to laugh and laughing at themselves, knowing they were still humans. Johnston discussed other mental health issues like attaining self-knowledge, expanding one's

perspectives, and realizing alternative points of view. He underscored the fact that "depressed mood states can be lifted when encountering indifference and discouragement" (p. 259). Over and over again the ex-POWs' provided testimony to the uplifting quality of laughter that proved vital to their survival. Johnston considered further in his article the two preventive health objectives "promoting coping and facilitating the development and maintenance of social support" (p. 259).

From their first-person perspective and in their own words, ex-POWs related many preventive mental health benefits that they received with laughing. If canvassed, their protocols could produce examples of how laughing in the extreme supported each of preventive health issues that Johnston highlighted such as: easing mental tension; augmenting physical health; reducing physical stress; expanding one's outlook, placing future prospective in a more positive light; instilling hope; liberating from maladaptive seriousness; overcoming negative stress; adapting to challenges of life; integrating reality; and enhancing interpersonal interactions. Ex-POWs recommended laughing as a means to achieve a sense of well being and over-all health.

Johnston recommends a "proactive mental health strategy" that I suggest educators put into practice: "Model an adaptive life philosophy characterized by flexibility, spontaneity, and...appropriate use of...an essential aspect of a more joyous life perspective" (p. 261), laughing. Educational practice can be designed to "directly instruct individuals to make better use of humor" (p. 262) and laughing. The benefits of laughing as good preventive mental health can and should be modeled and learned within an educational environment.

Optimism

I believe that the findings of this study imply that educational practice should include the cultivating of one of laughing's benefits that proved most valuable to POWs—optimism—as ex-POWs described it, thinking positively and staying on the sunny side of life. Educators at all levels and in all walks of life should pass along basic information about this beneficial attitude, encourage it, and “practice what they preach.” Laughing provides an excellent tool or strategy for implementation, as confirmed in the POWs' experience. Seligman (1991) recently reminded us of what has been known for years in the field of education: “Habits of thinking need not be forever....Individuals can choose the way they think” (p. 8). His research supports what surviving ex-POWs had learned as laughing POWs under severe conditions: “Learning how to think more optimistically when we fail gives us a permanent skill for warding off depression. It also can help us achieve more and have better health” (p. 290). Explaining one of the concepts that he has found useful in his “learned optimism” research, Seligman says,

An optimistic explanatory style stops helplessness, whereas a pessimistic explanatory style spreads helplessness. Your way of explaining events to yourself determines how helpless you can become, or how energized, when you encounter the everyday setbacks as well as momentous defeats. (pp. 15-16)

Laughing POWs remained optimistic, made it through, and survived the POW experience. Pessimistic POWs gave up hope and died. Seligman admits, however, that “Optimism is just a useful adjunct to wisdom. By itself it cannot

provide meaning. Optimism is a tool to help the individual achieve the goals he has set for himself. It is in the choice of the goals themselves that meaning—or emptiness—resides” (p. 291). He hopes that, “When learned optimism is coupled with a renewed commitment to the commons, our epidemic of depression and meaninglessness may end” (p. 291). He recommends, “What we want is not blind optimism but flexible optimism—optimism with its eyes open. We must be able to use pessimism’s keen sense of reality when we need it, but without having to dwell in its dark shadows” (p. 292). POWs had to learn this quickly to survive their POW experience. In a call to action, Peterson, Maier, and Seligman (1993) write,

We have learned something from this research, and we think it is time to apply what we have learned....We call for a reinvigoration of the stagnant community mental health movement. We need more than bumper stickers and pamphlets. Psychology has taught us that information per se does not suffice to change well-established habits. People need the contingencies of the world to change. They need to be taught cognitive and behavioral skill for changing themselves, for thwarting demoralization and listlessness. (pp. 309-310)

Laughing Classroom

Some educators already employ laughter in their classrooms. They know the power of laughing and take advantage of its benefits. Smart, healthy teachers pass on this information and value. They offer themselves as good models for the appropriate use of positive, optimistic, and inclusive laughter and present the laughing facts. Pollio (Fall, 1985/Winter, 1986) poses appropriate questions about

humor and laughter in the classroom. Each of us must decide whether we believe it an "unwelcome intrusion" or a "liberating tonic" (p. 18). We must decide "what we value as uniquely human in our students and in ourselves" (p. 18). We must decide what we feel is the role of laughter and humor in human life" (p. 18). Pollio asks us to decide whether we agree with Hobbes, who sees it as derision, or with Koestler, who sees as a creative response to the situations of our life and work.

Once each person involved with an educational setting decides on the importance of laughing, realizing its benefits for themselves and others, they can realize freedom, happiness, and reaching others in laughing. In *The Laughing Classroom* (1993), Loomans and Kolberg present the benefits of laughing and offer many practical, hands-on activities for establishing a "laughing classroom" to eager and willing, or even harassed and burned out, teachers. Each of these authors possesses an impressive record as a professional educator, accomplished speaker, prolific writer, and role model for laughing and creating an efficient educational environment with and for laughter. They are passing along vital information by being in the world with laughing and by teaching its valuable lessons.

Laughing classrooms put into educational practice encourage and reinforce perseverance, hope, coping, and happiness. Educators must be chosen who can, will, and enjoy modeling, teaching, learning—experiencing the value and benefits of laughing. If laughing can help POWs make it through and survive, how much more might be achieved in a less extreme environment, one set up for success and achievement rather than lack of control and learned helplessness?

Laughing in Survival School

A military school to train personnel for survival as POWs already teaches the benefits of laughing. According to an article written by the Chief of Psychology for the Air Force Survival School, humor and laughter help military personnel and others, "such as survivors of POW camps," survive extreme situations (Mitchell, 1996, p. 1). The school incorporates humor and laughter in their academic program and field exercises that were developed to train Air Force personnel "how to survive anywhere in the world" (p. 7). Mitchell notes,

The survival school doesn't deliberately set out to make survival material funny. But our best instructors, the ones who receive the most positive critiques, are those who have learned to incorporate good spirited humor....We discuss psychological qualities associated with survival success. Included is the role of humor....We discuss the importance of optimism and suggest adopting a philosophy of adaptation. After the classroom training, we put the students in the wilderness with instructors who have been trained to maintain morale and motivation to persist in a good-spirited way in the face of difficulty....The instructors, especially in the field training phase, are very adept at using humor to motivate people when the going gets tough....We talk about the importance of humor in the academic portion of training and model its use in the instructional phase and we have people with students in the field who are actively using humor as a coping strategy and who reinforce the use of humor....Laughter will probably give the same immune system boost regardless of who generates it....If people can generate

humor they have a greater chance of influencing their own moods by changing their appraisal of the situation. My experience teaches me that it is our capacity to laugh at ourselves and the situation which significantly affects the appraisal process. I think it is the ability to appreciate irony and generate humor while looking at oneself and one's situation that is important—not the cynical or bitter kind of attacking humor....We are very concerned about not inducing learned helplessness....Humor affects our perception of our ability to predict and influence what happens to us....Humor helps us manage our emotions. It boosts our sense of self-efficacy by making threatening situations more manageable....It shifts what we monitor and attend to away from potential threats and reasons to be fearful or miserable and focuses our attention on ironic or amusing aspects of the situation. (p. 7-8)

Stockdale (1984) and Alvarez, the American POW held longest in Vietnam, (1992 interview in Bottom Line/Personal), and at least one of my ex-POWs expressed their belief that their training helped them survive. Knowing what to expect and what to do in certain situations prepared them to cope with their POW experiences. The Air Force Survival School could include information from this present study in briefing military personnel on the ways in which laughing opposes or counteracts the critical themes of a POW experience.

Both Stockdale (1984) and Alvarez voiced the wish to pass on this information to others who might some day be POWs. Stockdale said, "We hope our experience will help to guide them (others who become POWs) and will give them

the heart and hope they will need" (p. 11). Alvarez adds, "It helps to hear stories of people who have gone through trying times" (p. 14). The Survival School already employs humor and laughter in their teaching and training strategies and asserts the benefits in their academic curriculum. They could provide a model for other adult education environments.

The same recommendations given to educators become more critical for professionals in the health field. These professionals regularly provide care and support for individuals living under severe conditions. Their patients' experiences may be similar to those of POWs, even if not as extreme. The health care providers take on responsibility for the health and lives of those who face a threat to life. Their patients experience isolation from family, friends, and their normal activities. They lack control over their bodies, time, and world, and often have to do what others tell them to or to endure what others do to them. A patient's existence lacks the normal markers for the passage of time. It is often empty, yet full of boredom. Patients face many forms of restriction, often from their own bodies. They can't do this or can't do that and are often confined to bed and a strict diet and medicinal regime. What might this experience mean to them? Cousins told us in some detail in *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient* (1979). Here he mentions how important laughing became to him. In this present study we found out what laughing meant to others living in one of the most extreme contexts of human existence. Lessons learned from this research and the advice for or applications in education, formulated as a result, might prove as relevant or more pressing in the health field.

Seligman (1991) voiced similar concerns to those of Cousins (1979, 1982), Antonovsky (1979, 1982), and Frankl (1959/1962). Seligman observed that the “conventional view [of health] omits a major determinant of health—our own cognitions” (p. 14). The first-person perspective, our perception, greatly affects our health. He continued: “Our physical health is something over which we can have far greater personal control than we probably suspect” (p. 14). Many researchers working in the mind/body and psychoneuroimmunology specialties agree and mirror the conclusions and advice offered by Cousins (1989) in *Head First: The Biology of Hope*. From his own observations and research, Seligman (1991) offered: “For example: The way we think, especially about health, changes our health. Optimists catch fewer infectious diseases than pessimists do. Optimists have better health habits than pessimists do. Our immune system may work better when we are optimistic. Evidence suggests that optimists live longer than pessimists”(p. 14). Although laughing and its resultant optimism are not panaceas, they play important roles in our lives and Seligman asserted that optimism “can protect you against depression; it can raise your level of achievement; it can enhance your physical well-being; it is a far more pleasant mental state to be in” (p. 16). Having come full circle back to a state of health and well-being Fairbanks (1917) returns us to the importance of laughter for healthy living:

We glance about us to see that we are in the pink of condition....Out of energy and enthusiasm comes something else that must not be neglected...in fact it must be cultivated and guarded from the very beginning...laughter. The mere possession of energy and enthusiasm makes us feel like laughing.

We want to leap and jump and dance and sing....And when we rise in the morning let us be determined that we will start the day with a hearty laugh anyhow. Laugh because you are alive, laugh with everything. Let yourself go. That is the secret—the ability to let one's self go! (pp. 46-47)

Robinson (1991) urges the health professional of today to learn to understand humor and its usefulness to the health field. She admits that her enthusiastic support comes from a strong personal belief in the value of humor and that her field has neglected its benefits for so long. She also explains that a balance is in order, that just because something is good does not mean three times that dosage is better. Her concern is that each health professional be sensitive to and be with each person he or she cares for, remembering the whole human being and that person's perspective. She agrees with Mindess that "laughter is indispensable" and ardently explains her beliefs:

This phenomenon of humor and laughter with which we as human beings have been endowed is more than just fun and trivia! It is a healthy, therapeutic tool that we must learn to develop, to cultivate and to use in a more forceful way. It helps us to survive. It gives us a perspective on life and helps us to achieve that balance, that equilibrium that is healthy and healing. (p. 211)

WWII ex-POWs learned inherently what they had to do to *make it through* and *survive*. They instinctively brought laughing into their lives, and also determined to laugh spontaneously at everything or whatever they could. For them, the laughing often had to come first. Enthusiasm and energy were in short supply.

The reciprocal effect kicked in—when they laughed, they gained both. As well as laughing because they were thankful to be alive, they laughed to live and remain human. Also, as they jumped, sang, *hollered*, and hugged on Liberation Day, they felt like laughing and laughed. In laughing, they let themselves go and were let go, in freedom.

Robinson (1991) voices a concern that the health field is quickly becoming dehumanizing. The context or conditions that she warns against may not be as extreme as those experienced by POWs, but the experience of being a patient may offer many of the same themes and the meanings of a POW experience. For ex-POWs, laughing counteracted the negative constraints of their extreme context. Robinson holds hope for the health field's future, especially if health care professionals learn to use humor and laughter appropriately and with balance. She admits:

In this age of rapid medical and technological advances, when the fears and threats of being replaced and controlled by machines are a reality, humor can be the means for retaining the humanness in the health professions.

Humor is exclusively a human condition. Adlai Stevenson once paraphrased Socrates' famous statement, "The unexamined life is not worth living," with "Life without laughter is not worth examining" (p. 212).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY IS TO DESCRIBE AND UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCE OF LAUGHTER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PRISONERS OF WAR. ASKING THE PERSON WHO HAS THE EXPERIENCE IS THE ONLY WAY TO REALLY UNDERSTAND THAT EXPERIENCE. IN THIS TYPE OF RESEARCH THE PARTICIPANT AND THE EXPERIENCES ARE THE IMPORTANT FACTORS. RESEARCHERS RESPECT THE PERSON AND ARE INTERESTED IN THE EXPERIENCES.

THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. REQUESTED ARE YOUR HONEST AND DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF YOUR EXPERIENCES OF LAUGHTER WHILE YOU WERE A POW. THE SURVEY WILL TAKE APPROXIMATELY 20 MINUTES.

WHILE YOU MAY NOT EXPERIENCE DIRECT BENEFITS FROM PARTICIPATING IN THIS RESEARCH, IT IS BELIEVED THAT YOUR SURVEY RESPONSES MAY BE OF VALUE TO OTHERS EXPERIENCING EXTREME OR RESTRICTIVE CONDITIONS, EITHER REAL OR PERCEIVED. YOU MAY COME TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF LAUGHTER FOR YOURSELF.

YOUR IDENTITY WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AT ALL TIMES. THIS FORM WILL BE FILED SEPARATELY FROM THE SURVEY FORM. YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE TYPED BEFORE THEY ARE ANALYZED. PERSONAL OR PARTICULAR PLACE REFERENCES WILL BE DELETED OR CODED. ANALYSIS WILL BE CONDUCTED TO DISCOVER THEMES OF THE EXPERIENCE WHICH EMERGE AND TO DEVELOP A THEMATIC STRUCTURE.

IF A RESEARCH GROUP HELPS WITH THE SURVEY ANALYSIS, A STATEMENT TO KEEP INFORMATION IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE WILL BE SIGNED BY PARTICIPATING GROUP MEMBERS. THIS SIGNED STATEMENT WILL BE KEPT ON FILE WITH THE INFORMED CONSENT FORMS AND THE SURVEYS IN A LOCKED OFFICE. ACCESS TO ORIGINAL SURVEYS AND INFORMED CONSENT FORMS IS RESTRICTED TO THE RESEARCHER. THE RESEARCH GROUP WILL NOT HAVE ACCESS TO YOUR IDENTITY.

THERE ARE NO KNOWN RISKS TO THIS SURVEY METHOD; HOWEVER, IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY FEELINGS OF BEING UNCOMFORTABLE YOU MAY CHOSE NOT TO RETURN THE SURVEY TO THE RESEARCHER EVEN AFTER IT IS COMPLETED. IF FOR ANY REASON YOU EXPERIENCE EXTREME DISTURBANCE DUE TO THIS SURVEY, A TRAINED COUNSELOR WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR FURTHER CONSULTATION. YOU MAY DISCONTINUE YOUR PARTICIPATION AT ANY TIME WITHOUT LOSS OF PRIVILEGES OR BENEFITS.

YOUR HELP WITH THIS PROJECT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED! YOU ARE UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO PARTICIPATE. YOU MAY CHOSE TO NOT FILL OUT THE SURVEY OR NOT RETURN IT AFTER ITS COMPLETION. THE RESEARCHERS RESPECT YOU AS A PERSON AND YOUR EXPERIENCES. YOU ARE CONSIDERED A VALUED CO-PARTICIPANT IN THIS PROJECT.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH EITHER NOW OR IN THE FUTURE, PLEASE CONTACT: GAIL ROMER, P.O. BOX 8130, KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE, 37996 OR LEAVE A MESSAGE AT 974-8145. (PLEASE BE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER IN ANY CORRESPONDENCE OR MESSAGE.)

I HAVE READ THIS EXPLANATION OF THE STUDY AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE BY SIGNING THIS FORM. I GIVE MY CONSENT FOR MY SURVEY TO BE ANALYZED.

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME _____

PLEASE SIGN HERE _____

IF YOU ARE WILLING TO DISCUSS YOUR SURVEY AND EXPERIENCES WITH THE RESEARCHER IN A RECORDED INTERVIEW, PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER. YOUR IDENTITY WILL BE KEPT IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE! THANK YOU!

ADDRESS _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

IF YOU INCLUDED YOUR ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER, YOU MAY OR MAY NOT BE CONTACTED FURTHER.

APPENDIX B

PAPER-AND-PENCIL QUESTIONNAIRE

LAUGHTER AND PRISONERS OF WAR (POWs)

WHICH WAR _____ AGE _____

PLEASE GIVE ME A LIST OF THREE TIMES (INSTANCES) WHEN YOU WERE AWARE OF LAUGHING WHILE YOU WERE A POW.

1.

2.

3.

NOW, PLEASE DESCRIBE ONE OF THE ABOVE INSTANCES IN AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE. OF WHAT WERE YOU AWARE? (YOU MAY CONTINUE ON THE BACK IF NECESSARY TO GIVE YOUR FULLEST DESCRIPTION OF YOUR EXPERIENCE.)

APPENDIX C

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY TO BE SIGNED BY RESEARCH TEAM
MEMBERS

I (print your name)_____

UNDERSTAND THAT I AM TO KEEP ANY INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION
OF THIS LAUGHTER AND POW EXPERIENCE INVESTIGATION IN
STRICTEST CONFIDENCE. I FULLY INTEND AND PLEDGE TO DO SO.

SIGNATURE_____

DATE_____

APPENDIX D

PROTOCOL

This is a transcribed interview or an original protocol. It contains the entire recorded conversation between the interviewer/researcher (I) and a participant/WWII ex-POW (CP), except for one section at the end that contains personal, family information not pertaining to POW camps or laughing.

I: All right, I want to thank you for coming and doing an interview with me about your experience of laughing in a POW camp. Is there anything you'd like to ask about the study?

CP: I think I'll let you ask the questions first and then you'll probably cover everything that I...

I: Okay. Do you feel comfortable that you understand what we're going to do?

CP: Yes, I have, I've read that thoroughly and I think it just spells out just exactly what's involved and I'm certainly willing to do what I can to to for it to be a success. (I: Good) Surely am.

I: And it's okay if we tape record it?

CP: Certainly, certainly.

I: Very good. All right, you listed down three things to start us out. If you'll describe for me one of your experiences of laughing in a POW camp.

CP: 'Course anytime we laughed, I guess we laughed to keep from cryin'. Way back there used to be a song out, you know. I'm laughin' to keep from cryin'. That's about the way we felt. We were laughin' outside and yet we were almost cryin' inside. So many, many reasons, 'cause we didn't know if we were gonna be there a month or ten years. Had no idea, but the We were in the camp with some British and they put together a radio. Worked on a little crystal. I never saw it together completely, but I saw a little pieces of it and probably the size of your thumbnail. And at a given time we'd meet and assemble and they's different ones had different parts of it. And we would meet and assemble and get that thing together to listen to the BBC, British Broadcasting Company news. And we pretty well kept up with how the war was coming. And our our laugh was the fact that the German guard knew that that radio They could tell somehow that we were

getting that in there. But they didn't realize that that thing was torn apart and that each person had just one little part. And they'd come in there and tear up the bed and they were lookin' for that radio. And we course, we the laugh was on us on them because we after they'd left we'd laugh 'cause they they were so desperate desperate to find that radio and couldn't find it 'Cause at that time 'Course we'd post a guard on either door and if we saw them comin', we'd disassemble it. And they had one little piece and But they'd they'd think they well some of the beds They'd tear up the beds the little 'ole bunks, I mean, on the floor and they never found that thing. That went on the whole time we were there. So we knew that within reason that we were making pretty good progress on the war. Otherwise and 'course that laugh as I say, we we were laughin' at them because they had they were so desperate to find that and never did find it.

I: So you had several laughs then, (CP: Yes.) on them.

CP: On them. We sure did. And I had I think I listed the second one there. (I: Alright.) The Red Cross brought in some baseball equipment and we were part of a company, well, actually a division baseball team back there in the states when we were stationed at Camp Aterberry, Indiana and Fort Jackson, South Carolina. and And we, 'Course they brought that in But in the meantime, we had gone sometimes days and days without anything to eat. And at that time I had I guess I had lost fifty pounds or more. But it was real comical to see us out there trying to play ball and we'd would try to run and we were so weak, we'd fall down. We'd laugh at each other because and no matter who got up next to hit that ball. They'd take a run, take a few steps and fall down. Just because we were so weak that we couldn't stand up. but I I said that's one thing that helped pass the time away. We just did that because we knew that all of us enjoyed baseball and even though we were weak, that was to help help us. And we began to appreciate the Red Cross for bringing us those things in like that.

I: 'Cause it was something that (CP: yeah) could help pass your time, and even if you laughed at each other, (CP: Yeah.) you were all together. (CP: Laughing with each other.)

CP: Yeah. We were laughin' with each other instead of But it was real comical to see us start to run and then just fall and because we were we were weak. And we went over a period of well two different times, we went about nine days without eating anything except that one time. We'd go four or five days not eat anything and then eat a little bite one day and go four or five more days and So naturally we were weak. (I: yeah) And I believe I have a third one down there. The real good laugh was when we were freed out from the camp. And We woke up one morning Every morning we'd have roll call and I don't know how they expected us to escape because they had big barbed wire fence oh, taller than that tree out there, twenty to twenty five feet in the air. And with that all that wire on top But every morning got to have a roll call. Well one mornin' we woke up and no roll call, no roll call, and thought, "What in the world goes on here?" And we knew that the Russians were by listening to that radio it'd been couple days since we heard anything but we knew they were closing in and that's what had happened. The Russians had closed in and the German guards had disappeared. So that was a real laugh. And we knew at last when the Russians came in even though we couldn't understand them they couldn't understand us much, but we knew that they were on our side and we were free. (I: And you were laughing?) We were really laughin' 'cause we were FREE. And 'course we stayed in the camp another month or so until our troops came in and released us. But that was a big laugh when we knew once again, that we were free to do whatever we wanted to do. And after 'Course, I I was only there about six and a half months. Some of 'em were there for years and it must have been terrible. But the Red Cross helped us so much and I've heard what people, you know, say bad things about the Red Cross but I couldn't, I couldn't. If it hadn't been for them, we we would've starved to death. 'Cause the Germans didn't have anything to feed us. They did not have anything. Every house we went

well, the first three or four months that I's there, we'd get those Red Cross parcels and they had everything in there, just so much. And then they quit. People were just giving the Red Cross down the road. "Well, when we need 'em the most, they let us down." But we found out what happened, after the war. Every house we went in had those empty boxes. And that's we had people tell us that that's what they lived off of 'cause they said, "We didn't have anything to eat." And said, "We lived We stole those from the Red Cross." and said This one girl told us said, "And you probably would have done the same thing if your people were starvin' to death." said "You probably would have done the same thing." And we probably would have. So, all in all, we made it and survived but, some of 'em didn't. Lot of 'em didn't. And that's that's the ones I my heart goes out to those and still their families. (I: their families) I I still visit some of their families, boys that (I: yeah) that gave their all.

I: And you could tell their families something about them.

CP: Yes. Sure could.

I: That's that's big. Could you describe that that day when you woke up and and the laughter.

Could you describe that in more details like so I could see it a little better?

CP: Oh, you shoulda you shoulda heard it! I People were jumping up and and hollering and yelling and said, "This is it!! This is the day we've been lookin' forward to. This is it!!" and We'd run and 'Course men, 25 years old 20 or 25 would run to each other and grab 'em and grab and hug and kiss and like like we'd lost our minds, and we were so happy. But if if that could've been recorded, it would've been a wonderful thing to play back sometime! But you you just, unless you were there, you couldn't imagine all the yelling and screaming and "Hurray! Hurray! Hurray for the Russians!" even and 'cause they were the first ones to get us. and (I: okay) And then just "Oh, this is it!! Today is it!!" and then we couldn't notify our parents for awhile even at that but, It was just Oh, it was just just a good feeling, good feeling. 'Cause we knew and 'Course at the

same time we were wondering if there might be a counter attack. I was talking to a boy who was oh, four five bunks from us and he said once before they were freed, and the Germans made a counter attack and recaptured 'em. And we weren't thinking about that. We were All we were thinkin' about just bein' free and do what we wanna do and eat what we wanted to eat. And so I don't know you'll probably ask about what food and everything later, but I tell we didn't have any food there. (I: There just wasn't any.) Wasn't any there.

I: That's something that I had been reading about. (CP: yeah) But I wanted to get in on the laughing part. There's a pretty much documented about no food (CP: oh) and that you didn't get all the Red Cross packages (CP: no) that were (CP: no) coming to you, but, describe to me again about those ball games, then.

CP: Oh, we just We would sort of get Sometimes we'd have fifteen or twenty on each side just to get out there and get a little exercise. and and 'Course somebody would pitch the ball. If we ever did hit one we'd It would been so we could have sold that as as something, I don't know what. If we could have had taken pictures of those but Just the men running and and take two or three steps and just so weak they just fell to the ground. and (I: right) and we'd go probably Well, I did the same thing. I fell a couple of times and and One time we had this fellow who was huge when he we first got captured. He I guess weighed two hundred and forty five pounds maybe and he'd lost oh down to a hundred and sixty, maybe. But we'd lost I weighed about oh I guess a hundred and eighty maybe when I was captured was down and I weighed a week or so later and weighed ninety seven pounds. So, ninety seven pounds tryin' pick up somebody who still weighed a hundred and thirty or forty, why. But we we had a lot of fun, though. We were doing it. and As I say, we didn't laugh at each other we just laughed with each other. (I: yeah, kinda) We'd say, "Hit and Run! Hit and Run!" and We'd hit it and try to run, but we didn't run too far.

I: But it sounds like you picked each other up and...

CP: Yeah, we did, we did.

I: And you laughed and kept going. (CP: yeah)

CP: Even the ones on the other team would go come help pick us up and then they'd try it again.

We just We'd do that. Well they wouldn't let us do it every day, but (I: um) They'd let us about twice a week, sometimes maybe three times. They'd let us get out and play for about an hour at a time. And we Every time we always had oh half the camp, I guess, out there tryin' to play. and So it just was so many people out there. You almost couldn't never could get a safe hit. I mean, it was just covered, but (I: uhum) But but we had a That was just a good time. We just had and As I say We of course We were still thinking about what's the future and if we were ever gonna get outta there or if we were gonna get out alive and yet we, for the time being, we just forgot about that. We'd just let that get out of our mind and we were out there to have a good time and laugh and have a fun and that's what we did.

I: Put everything else out of your mind.

CP: That's what we did. That's what we had to do. Oh. I'll tell you, if we had worried about those things, we we would have been driven crazy. There's no question what. I think if you'd just dwelled on what we saw every day in there and we could be and what did happen and what might happen later, we probably all of us would have ended up in an asylum somewhere. But we just made the best of it the whole time, hoping that tomorrow would be a better day and well, "Maybe maybe it's tomorrow. Maybe it's." 'Course, listening to that radio helped us, encouraged us some. We could let We got the big laugh out of that those German guards. They'd they'd come in there, "Mum um mum um mum!!!" and they'd grab some of us and I I didn't know what they were gonna do to us. They didn't grab me but they'd grab some of 'em and "blub ub blub ub!!!" and "Don't

know! Don't know!" And they'd pull this back and pull that back and then 'course that We didn't laugh while they were there. No. But after they left, we got the good laugh.

I: Got the good laugh.

CP: Yeah. We sure did.

I: Describe that laugh for me.

CP: Well, it was about the same way. We we didn't laugh too loud 'cause we knew they might suspect something. But, after they were out we said, "Well, the German's are supposed to be smart people and I guess they were." But said, "But we have really outsmarted 'em on this."

I: You outsmarted 'em, huh?

CP: 'Cause they were lookin' for the whole radio. And they didn't even think about different a hundred. Well, I guess maybe not a hundred but forty or fifty people havin' little parts. and But, I never did see the radio all together. But I did see parts, several of them. Fact I had one of them new swapped about. And maybe Some of us on this side would take two or three parts. I'd take one, somebody else'd take one, and then the next day next time we put it together, why somebody else would had this part and somebody else would that part and So, if they ever caught us with that little part on there, then the next time, why we we wouldn't have it. So they but they We had had a good time.

I: Was that just about every night?

CP: We'd we'd listen to it about every two or three days. Yes. Listened to it about every maybe every other day or every third day. Never went longer than three days at a time without keeping up with that and laughing because the Germans knew and somehow they could sense that we had something comin' in there. I don't know whether how they found out, but But, they'd come in there. And then occasionally we found one that would speak English and he'd say something

about, "Where's that radio?" "Where's radio? Where's radio?" (shrugging) "Don't know. Don't know."

I: 'Cause you didn't.

CP: No. No. It wasn't there. One part was here and one part was there and then But we didn't dare laugh when they were in 'cause they was We wouldn't have been here today if we had, but afterwards (I: but afterwards) After they left we we had a good chuckle. and so We kept saying This one comedian anyway he says, "Ha! They they think they're smart but they're not. They don't They're not near as smart as we are! They're not NEARLY as smart as we are." But that thing went on for months and just never they they never could find it. (I: yeah) So it's just Well that's the thing, another thing, that we just As I say, we sorta laughed to keep from cryin' because we we knew that anything could happen. Might be tomorrow that they take some of us out and the ones they took out we'd never never see again. So, don't know if they killed 'em or we they froze to death or starved to death or what. but But, anyway, we we just didn't We tried to put that out of our minds as much as we could and let the things that we could laugh about take over. (I: yeah) and...

I: So you let the things that you could laugh about take over (CP: yeah) and keep the other (CP: yeah) out of your mind.

CP: Yeah, that's what we had to do. (I: okay) Otherwise, we would have lost our minds, I guess.

I: So coming back from that, do you think laughing helped you keep your mind?

CP: Oh! I think it did. Oh! I don't think there's any doubt but what laughter. I mean, that can cure a lot a lot of ills. and I don't I think if we had taken everything so serious and just brooded over it and worried over it and that we might not be here today. But I think that laughing actually kept us going and. We We'd look look for different things you know and Say, this one comedian He'd always think of somethin' to to tell. And I always remember a joke and it's been a hundred years

ago seems like, but he'd say he read a statistic someplace that one out of every three people are ugly and that joke stayed with me. And I've heard that not too long ago, the same joke. He said, "One out of every three people are ugly." He said, "Check out Look off to your left. If that person's not ugly. Look over to your right. And if that person's not ugly, guess what? You are!" And I still remember that joke.

I: And everybody would laugh?

CP: Yeah. Everybody would laugh at that. and But he He was He was quite a comedian. He In fact, he had been in radio, I think, some before. But he But that's one of the ones I I remembered. And he was talking about had one about his family you know how many was in his family. And and he One of them was named one of the gosh awfulest names you ever heard of. and And I I 'Course none of it was so, but we knew it wasn't. But he kept us laughing, because We we were just looking for something to laugh at. And and he he kept he kept us And he kept talkin' about what he was gonna do when he got out, you know. He was gonna do this and he was gonna do that and he was gonna climb over that big fence and we knew he wasn't gonna climb over the fence. Nobody was going to climb over that big high fence. But he'd he'd map out Every once in awhile he'd talk about, "Well, I'll tell you what we can do now when." 'Course they had Those guards had those big rifles like that but said, "Now, when the guard comes in here, we can overpower him and then we can get together and and do all this." And he had the whole thing planned out but Why we (I: but you knew) We all knew it wasn't gonna happen. Why we Why they Why they would have mowed They had big machine guns. and They had big towers up there and had those big machine guns in there and They'd have mowed every one of us down. (I: yeah) But but he he was a had a name like S. I don't know how in the world you'd spell it, but let's "S" (CP: attempts to spell it) something S. I'll never forget his name. (I: yeah) But he...

I: He kept you laughing.

CP: He kept us laughing and we had to, we had to listen to him. and...

I: Tell me about having to listen, I mean, having to laugh.

CP: Well, we wanted to, we wanted to and to say, if you know, if we hadn't, We could always find somethin' to be sad about or something but yet we didn't look that way, we looked the other way. Anything that we that normally probably wouldn't seem so funny to us, would would give us something to laugh about. About how What what happened in in school. We talked about things that happened in school. Really wouldn't that funny, but to us it was. And so we just...

I: How did that feel when you were laughing about say, a fellow tellin' you about something that happened in school? Tell me how that felt.

CP: Well, it felt like that that someday we knew that or we were hoping that that we we'd be back out of that thing so we could be back in reality where where things like that did happen. And so we we listened to him. just And there were others, too, that would always look on the bright side. A boy that lived out here in west N. that would come in and he died in the prison camp, too. But he he came in and every morning wake up after that roll call and he'd say sing a little song, "On the sunny side of life," he'd sing. And he'd come in and he'd say 'course I'm no singer at all but I'll just You know how "The Sunny Side of Life" song and He'd sing a little tune of that and of course, that kept us in pretty good spirits. And he he died in in a prison camp. He just He didn't have any business over there. He was a weakling. Had malaria fever when he was young and such a weakling. And I went to see his mother a couple times after after the war and but But he kept He always had that sunny side of the street, sunny side of life.

I: He chose (CP: Yes.) to look at the sunny side (CP: Look at the good side.) and you say everybody had to kind of choose.

CP: Yeah, Yeah. And we just As I say We could've looked at the dark side and we could have looked at the bad side and had plenty of reason to do that, but yet we were optimistic and knowing that if we didn't look on the brighter side and didn't laugh when we really at times didn't feel like laughing we were hurting and I know couple times we got a pretty good lickin's and even though we were hurting, we were we would still again look at the brighter side and try to laugh and and look at the humor side instead of trying to look at the bad.

I: You had mentioned about that laughing so you wouldn't cry. (CP: Yeah. Laughing to keep from crying.) Tell me about it. Can you tell me about a specific instance with you where you remember where you laughed instead of cried?

CP: Yeah. We Twice a week would go out and get wood and I know we were comin' back one time and had that wood strapped to our back. and and I felt somebody comin' up behind me. I just thought it was one of our boys, 'cause there was still some behind me and all of a sudden, that guard just whammed me right in the back and for no reason at all that I could ever think of. And 'course that, I waited till he left and 'Course we started some of the others came up there and I we just started laughin' about it. 'Course it was killin' me. but He he hit me twice, I think. and and I said, "Well, we can't do anything about it." I said, "Just, There's gonna be a better day." So we just sorta got a chuckle out of out of that. I said I said, "It could've been worse. He could've killed me." (I: yeah) Yeah. He could've shot me. We never found out why he hit me. and Oh, they would just do those things like that. So we we made a laughin' matter out of that when it really could have when I was hurting. And I was hurting with that. He hit me with that rifle butt a couple times, but we laughed about it and I said, "Well, I'm thankful that he didn't stick that gun to my head."

I: So laughing was like saying, "It could have been worse." (CP: yeah) and "Can't do anything about it." (CP: That's right.) and "We can all laugh together."

CP: All laugh together and that's what we did. and Of course, they knew I was hurting and but yet we got a pretty good chuckle out of the fact that it wasn't as bad as it could've been. (I: yeah. um. oh.) So We have a lot to be thankful for, too, we really did. And that's what one thing that kept us going. We just I I said "No matter what happened to us, it could've been worse." And we thought, "Maybe well tomorrow's gonna be better."

I: You had hope.

CP: Had hopes! We sure did! and 'Course we had several boys that were pretty religious and and I I was always involved and still am involved in church and I and I I mean I don't apologize for that. I'm I'm glad I do. I felt like that we had our daily prayers and I think that helped some. And I It made us feel better when we did. So we all just hoped "Well, we'll see better days." and 'Course the ones that lived through it are seeing better days. (I: yeah, yeah)

I: And so that was the hope that there would be a future. (CP: That's right. That it would be better.) The days would be better and so prayer was one thing (CP: Sure was.) also. (CP: Certainly was.)

CP: Every day, we'd we'd and I'm surprised that they let us do that. But they a couple times the guard would come in there and break it up, but they didn't do anything to us for it.

I: Just make you disperse or something.

CP: Yeah, yeah make us. They didn't want to see us together for any reason. They figured I guess every time they saw a group together that they were plotting maybe an escape or somethin' like that. But they Every time those guards come in there and see a group together, they were "Raus! Raus!! Raus!" Whatever that meant. "Get out of here!" I guess. (I: yeah) And we got out. We did did disburse. Couldn't argue with 'em. I mean, you know, they had the upper hand and we realized that. That's the way it was.

I: So there it was you think they might not have known that you were praying but it was just you were gathered together. (CP: gathered together) You mentioned something about that again that the laughing. You didn't let them know you were laughing.

CP: Not 'til after they'd left we did. No. We we waited until they left. But we were afraid, you know. If we had If they saw us laughing there's no telling what They didn't want to see us happy. I mean they...

I: Tell me about that.

CP: Oh, yeah. They they didn't want to see us happy at all. They they thought we were there and we should be down in the dumps and have every reason in the world to be so sad. And nah they I've seen 'em come in there when somebody maybe was laughing a little and they'd just take that rifle and and they'd shake their head like that and hit 'em with it. But they, for some reason, they didn't want to see us laugh. So that's the reason we we didn't until the guards left. (I: But then you did.) Then we did. Then we had had a good laugh.(I: Had a good laugh.) 'Cause we were almost afraid to when when they were there 'cause we saw it break We saw it several times when it would break up Somebody would just be talking to each other and laughing a little and for some reason we never understood why that they just didn't want us seem like we were even halfway happy. They thought that we'd...

I: Do you think they thought you were happy (CP: yeah) when you were laughing?

CP: Yeah, I think they did.

I: And 'course you thought you were happy (CP: yeah, yeah) when you were laughing, too. (CP: That's right. That's right.)

I: Okay, that's very interesting. Very interesting. Do you have any other situations that you remember that you laughed?

CP: Not right off hand, no. 'Cept of course, as I said, the main one and when the Ger when the Russians released us. But then when they ran the German guards away. But then after that is when we really got a big when our troops came in. In fact General Eisenhower himself came in about three or four days after we were released and that was that was Everybody got a big kick out of that, big cheer. And he says, "Don't leave." I can still remember the words just like it was yesterday. And it was back in May or June of 1945. 50 Over 50 years ago. And he said, "Don't leave." He said, "The war's over. The German The European war's over. Japanese war's still going on." But says, "We've got snipers out there." and says, "Don't leave the camp, because it'd be terrible." And of course, I'm not I don't remember the exact words, but, he says, "But it'd be terrible for you to go through what you've been through and then go out and get shot by a sniper." And I guess I was chicken 'cause I didn't leave 'til American troops came in there and got us. (I: uhum) But yeah we were That was a another happy day when And I 'course we never expected to see He came in about a week after the Ger other American soldiers A Colonel K. came in and told us we were free. But then when General Eisenhower came in and I knew I never will forget that. That was so pleased. That's one reason I voted for him when he ran for President, I guess, 'cause I was so glad to see him come in there and tell us. And he probably saved some lives there because he said "There's snipers still all around." And said that, "Eventually they'll will be captured or dismantled." But he says, "They're there." And said, "You don't want to take a chance on that being shot by a sniper after what you've been through. So (I: That was interesting.) Yes. So we're There's no question in my mind but what that laughing helped us through that. I don't I don't I don't have any doubt about it. (I: That's great!) We tried to pick out something, you know, to be cheerful over.

I: You tried to pick things out (CP: yeah) to be cheerful about (CP: yeah) and laugh about. (CP: yeah)

CP: Sure did. Sure did.

I: Can you remember another thing you picked out? It may not have been funny but that you picked out and decided that you were gonna laugh at?

CP: Well, you Sometimes we laughed have a maybe a what some of them called a silly silly giggle or something when when really things weren't that funny. But when they were talking about things that happened back home and and all. And 'When we get back home we're gonna do this and we're gonna do that.' And half the time it didn't it didn't make good sense. But again, we'd laugh to just have a silly giggle over it just to keep from keep from our mind off of the bad part of it.

I: So you knew that giggling or laughing (CP: yeah) would get your mind off it.

CP: It would and it did. Sure did.

I: Now when one person would giggle...

CP: Now, that that'd start it. That would start it. And we'd all chime in, you know, and we'd This boy I was telling you about, that was a comedian, and he 'Course he usually would start it and then well we'd Sometimes we'd laugh at him because he When somebody'd say something to him and and which really wasn't all the funny, but he'd he'd get tickled and then we'd got tickled because he got tickled. And it just I mean To begin with looked like I guess people that some outsider or something would've thought we'd lost our mind about laughing over some of the silly things and sittn' there and laughin' and at When he'd get so tickled he'd just laugh just wiggle and deep down and But lot of times we'd laugh at not the things that went on, but we'd laugh because he got such a kick out of out of things. And this boy that I was tellin' you about that used to sing that song and he'd do the same thing. He'd he just he kept us going until he got so sick. and then See we didn't know for awhile, I didn't know until I got home that he died. We we knew that he got sick and they took him and I didn't know whether they killed him or just let him die or

what. But when I When we got home, I found out that he (I: That he just wasn't there then.) No. Wasn't there. and (I: um) Well see we never knew what whatever happened to him. They'd take 'em out and we'd never We wouldn't know what happened to 'em. (I: That was bad, wasn't it?) Yeah, sure was. (I: That was bad.)

I: Then you missed that sunny side. (CP: Yeah. Sure did! Sure did!) The laughn' with it. Yeah. That was That's hard. Well, that's You've given me quite a few of the different things and I appreciate it.

CP: Well, I just it's I'm glad glad I've helped and I...

I: If there's anything else now I will be coming back and giving you the interview and you can look over it (CP: uhum, Okay.) and tell me if it was accurate or not (CP: Alright. Alright.) so between now and then, it'll take me a little bit to do this. (CP: Well that's alright.) But in between then, if you ever think of something else, (CP: I will.) jot it down (CP: Yeah.) because then we can just add it. (CP: Sure. Sure.) Add it right back in. (CP: I will.) Yeah. And I'm trying to think if there was anything else you could tell me about any of these stories, any more description or how you felt or how you felt after you laughed or anything else you want to tell me?

CP: Well, we felt mighty good after we laughed, I'll tell you! We laughed!

I: You felt really good after you laughed. (CP: Yeah!)

CP: 'Course the only bad thing about after we left For a while, they wouldn't let us eat much because we had all you know, our stomachs had just shrunk down to nothing. I and (I: shrunk down) shrunk, had shrunk and I We dreamed about and you know another thing that kept us going while we were in there We talked about, 'When we get outta here, first thing we're gonna do is go a big steak.' and we already had planned planned menus about what we were going to have: ice cream and coconut pie and all this stuff we planned. And of course that's another thing that kept us going, just planning something for the future and But that wasn't so when we got out

They took us and just barely let us eat a little at a time. and of course, I I could understand later.

But why they did that 'cause they Well they said we'd have stomach cramps and everything else if if they had let us eat anything we wanted to eat, going hungry that that long.

I: And your stomach shrinking (CP: Oh, sure!) and your body couldn't take that. (CP: Sure!)

CP: My arms wouldn't anything. 'Course I wasn't as bad off as some of 'em 'cause some of 'em had been there for years. But I was just, We were just like that just skin hanging there. Well, you can imagine six At that time I was six feet tall. I've shrunk an inch now. But I'm five eleven, but I was six. Weighed ninety seven pounds. Oh you, you can imagine that. I I wasn't anything but (I: skin and bones) My legs were about like that and just nothing hangn' on there.

I: But in your minds, you kept planning your menus for the future.

CP: Kept planning it. Kept planning it. (I: Kept planning it.) so we...

I: Well, now you had mentioned food before and was there any time that you remember connecting food and laughing? I don't know.

CP: Well, not not really. Of course the food except for, you know, what we was talkin' about what we were goin' to do after. (I: yeah) There wasn't any connection between the food we ate. 'Cause 'cause we we just didn't have anything to eat.

I: Didn't have anything. So you could laugh though, (CP: yeah, a thankfulness) for the food in your mind.

CP: That's right in the mind! That's right in the mind we did. 'Cause we did Oh, just time and time again, we'd you know we'd plan these meals and what we were gonna do. and We were all gonna meet somewhere when we got back to the states and go somewhere, some floozy restaurant and all this. and Occasionally, we do. We get back together. We have a POW national meeting once a year.

I: I think B. (CP: yeah, yeah) this year.

CP: But I I I can't go to that and I've I've been tryin' to get out of what I've got Our church, I'm a leader of the Senior Citizens group at our church and we've got a group planned to go to PF and I've been tryin' to get that changed and yet it's a it's a whole state thing. So, if just our group were going, I could change that, but it's a whole state convention.

I: That's a hard decision, isn't it?

CP: I know it and I hate to miss that POW thing. I A real good friend of mine, 'course it's just has just recently taken over as state commander. And another good friend of mine was state commander last year. and I I'm still tryin' to get out of this trip to PF without, you know, if I could do it real gracefully, I want to go to that meeting in B.

I: Well, good luck on that, that's a hard decision and I hope God's will.

CP: I do too. We've been to several of 'em, though.... Yeah, we had a real good time, real good time. (I: Well, that's good.)

CP: But I've I've been to several of those National POW conventions and...

I: Well, somebody mentioned that if I would go to something like that and have two or three or four gathered around, there'd be a lot more stories.

CP: I bet there would be, I bet there would be. (I: they say individuals) Maybe maybe if you went down to B. you could get something like that.

I: Well, I'll have to see. (CP: Okay.) Well, is there anything else you'd like to add?

CP: I guess that's about it as far as I know. I hope it has helped you some.

I: It has. Believe me, this was a GOOD interview and I appreciate your contribution. And taking your time. I appreciate it very much.

CP: Well, that's alright. I'm just glad to do it. I mean You're the one taking your time, too so...

I: I feel very honored.

CP: You only had to make a trip all the way from K. I had to make one from 5 miles out here.

I: Well, mutual admiration society.

CP: Okay. All right.

I: I appreciate that and thanks for the contributions on that (CP: Okay.) and have a good afternoon.

CP: All right. I surely will. Thank you so much. Enjoyed seein' you. Talked to you a couple times.

VITA

Gail Horst attended school in the Maryville City Schools System and graduated from Maryville High School in May 1970. Immediately thereafter, she began attending the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She received her BA in Psychology and Tennessee teacher certification for psychology and four natural sciences in June 1974. Starting her masters program in education that same summer, she followed in her mother's footsteps and completed her MS in Educational Psychology in 1975, just before she married David Romer. She taught for two years in the Knoxville City School System and completed Secondary Counselors Certification in 1977. Following her husband, she joined the Air Force in 1978, attending Officers Training School in Texas. Stationed in Minot, North Dakota and then in Guam, she resigned her commission and joined the reserves in 1983. In Blytheville, Arkansas, Gail taught Psychology part time at a community college for three years and took an active role in a local church and the community. Returning to Tennessee during the year of "Homecoming 1986" she taught Psychology a couple of semesters at Tennessee Tech in Cookeville. Following her husband back into a doctoral program, she completed all coursework for a Psychology Ph.D. before "coming home" to the College of Education just before its reorganization. She received her doctorate on 16 May 1997. She plans to make full use of her Preventive Mental Health specialty in Educational Psychology to create and enhance educational environments at the post-secondary level, while staunchly supporting her family, church and community.