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Lester C. Rasbury  
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Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello  
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Oral History Collection

Lester C. Rasbury

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

Date: June 10, 1978

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Lester Rasbury for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on June 10, 1978, in Fort Worth, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Rasbury in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Actually, Mr. Rasbury was a member of a group of prisoners known as the "Lost Battalion." The proper designation for the outfit was the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, 36th Division, and Mr. Rasbury had been assigned to the Headquarters Battery.

Mr. Rasbury, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Rasbury: Well, I was born in Decatur, Texas, on May 31, 1917.

Dr. Marcello: Were you educated in Decatur and in that area?

Mr. Rasbury: Yes, in the Wise County area. I started to school in a

little place called Newark. Then we moved from there into a little school that's still existing, a one-room school-- Deep Creek. Then we moved into Decatur, and I went to school there one year and then back to Deep Creek and then from Deep Creek out on the prairie to a little place called Blewett. Well, we moved from there, then, in 1931 and went back to Decatur. I don't guess you would say I graduated; I "quituated" (chuckle) in the eighth grade.

Marcello: When did you join the Texas National Guard?

Rasbury: Well, I joined them . . . oh, it's somewhere around the last of October, somewhere along in there.

Marcello: Of what year?

Rasbury: Of 1940. I was on the inactive list. They were full up, and I was on the inactive list until November 25th, which was mobilization day,

Marcello: The mobilization date was November 25, 1940.

Rasbury: Yes, 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join the Texas National Guard?

Rasbury: Well, I don't remember who all it was, but there was six of us who decided that we were going to have to go into the service anyway. They'd started the service call, you know, and everything. So we went to Fort Worth . . . well, I lived in Decatur at that time. We came to Fort Worth, and we all decided we was going together.

The first place we went was the Navy. Well, some of us, like myself, didn't have the education that they required to get into the Navy at that time. Well, then we decided to go to the Air Force, and it was the same thing. Well, then it was left to either the Army or the Marines, so we decided to go to the Marines first. One of the boys by the name of C. T. Mann, he was too short. He was too short to get into the Marines. So that only left the Army.

Well, we decided, "Well, if we're going to have to do that, we'll just go with a bunch of people we knew." We came back to Decatur. Something kind of funny, we all went to . . . my sister was working in a beauty shop, and we all went over there and got a permanent wave and then went out and joined the National Guard (chuckle). So that's the way we got started there.

Marcello: What sort of a unit was it in Decatur?

Rasbury: Well, it was headquarters for the 2nd Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery. They had the instrument section, radio section, wire sections, and different things that the organization handled.

Marcello: I gather that during that period the National Guard in a way was kind of like a social organization, as well as being a military organization.

Rasbury: Yes. I had known a lot of people in the radio section--that's

what I got into--and they had tried talking me into, oh, two or three years before to get in. But, like you say, it was sort of a social organization, and I didn't drink much and run around very much, and it seemed like most of those boys did. So I just never did get in the organization until I had to.

Marcello: And you said that you more or less joined the National Guard around November 1, 1940?

Rasbury: Yes. I know it was a few weeks before that I was on the inactive list.

Marcello: What did you do during this period, that is, between November 1st and November 25, 1940, when the National Guard was mobilized?

Rasbury: Well, we were, like I say, on the inactive list. We didn't have to make roll calls or anything, but we could go down and observe. I just went on just like . . . you know, I reported every day. I stayed at home, but I reported every day to just see what was going on.

Marcello: Oh, even before the unit was mobilized, it was still training every day there in Decatur?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, they were training every day. They had stepped up the training to where they was training every day.

Marcello: How did you eventually get into the radio section of Headquarters Battery?

Rasbury: Well, we had our choice. Since I'd kind of studied radio, the

the radio sergeant . . . I knew him real well, and I used to go up and spend a lot of time with him. His name was Emory Hoyle. Well, we called him "Noisy" Hoyle. He was hard of hearing, but you'd put him in a truck where there's a lot of noise, and he could hear everything you said (chuckle). So he picked up the name of "Noisy" Hoyle. But he kind of wanted me, and there was another fellow by the name of Ted Kendrick, and he was a real good radioman. He was in at that time, but he had a problem, I think--heart problem--and he didn't get to go with us. I don't know, I just always liked radio, and I got started in it, and I just stayed with it.

Marcello: Did you actually receive any training as a radioman there in Headquarters Battery while you were in Decatur?

Rasbury: Yes, we trained there from . . . well, we'll say from November 25th until around January 1st, somewhere around there. I know it was after Christmas when we moved to Brownwood. We were in like little training, little maneuvering, around there, you know, ourselves.

Marcello: Now during this period, how seriously did the men regard the training that they were going through?

Rasbury: Oh, it was just like the song, "We'll Be Back in a Year, Little Darling." (chuckle) We never thought anything about it.

Marcello: Did mobilization perhaps make you realize a little bit more the seriousness of the situation, or hadn't that really occurred

yet?

Rasbury: Yes. Of course, we were all old enough to know what was going on, but we weren't . . . I don't think the newspapers ever put out the true facts of what was going on in Europe. But we'd hear the news broadcasts and things that way, and we really didn't think we'd ever get into it. Even when we did think we'd get into it, we didn't think it'd last very long.

Marcello: How closely were you keeping abreast of current events and world affairs at that particular time?

Rasbury: Not too close, because at that age you don't think about things that way much. You think about right then (chuckle).

Marcello: What would you estimate was the average age of the individuals in the 2nd Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery?

Rasbury: I'd say in the twenties.

Marcello: And when you say in the twenties . . .

Rasbury: Well, around twenty. I think we had some around eighteen and some around twenty-five probably the most. We did have older ones in the organization at that time, but they didn't go overseas with us.

Marcello: In other words, the bulk of the personnel in the unit would perhaps not have been too mature, really.

Rasbury: Well, that's about right.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that the National Guard was mobilized on



November 25, 1940, and during this period you were kind of in training there at Decatur. Now what happens at this point then?

Rasbury: Well, they were working on Camp Bowie in Brownwood at that time, and it just wasn't ready for us; they didn't get it ready for us. It wasn't completed, but as they completed each unit or part, you know, to get them in, why, then they moved us on down there. It was around the 1st of January when we moved in in '41.

Marcello: During this period between November 25, 1940, and January of 1941, you mentioned that you were training there in the armory at Decatur. Now were you going home in the evening and reporting in the morning, or were you stationed somewhere around the armory all the time?

Rasbury: Well, no, if you wasn't on duty, like on KP or on guard, then you'd go home after four o'clock, say, in the evening. You were turned loose to go where you wanted to.

Marcello: That in itself probably would have downplayed the seriousness of the situation, perhaps.

Rasbury: Yes, because, gosh, some of them lived in Chico and some in Alvord and some in Bridgeport. Well, there'd usually be . . . some of them'd get together and go to Fort Worth. You know, they were just having a big time right then.

Marcello: Okay, now describe what takes place when you move on to Camp

Bowie in January, 1941. You mentioned that Camp Bowie was being completed in sections, so to speak.

Rasbury: Yes. When they got ours . . . they didn't get us out of the mud; they just got us into the tents. They were big tents that held six people and had six cots in each one of them. It was all laid out, and the tents were there, but there was no sidewalks or anything like that. So we did most of that ourselves after we got there. They'd get truckloads of gravel, and we'd take one-by-four's and put them up and put our gravel sidewalks right down in front of our tents. We did most of that ourselves. That was extra duty, and we went right on with our training like we were supposed to be doing.

Marcello: What sort of training took place here at Camp Bowie?

Rasbury: Well, I went into . . . all the radio section went into a thirteen-week radio school, and it was eight hours a day.

Marcello: Am I to assume this is the first real training that you had?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, as far as operating radios and learning the code. That was the main thing--learning the code.

Marcello: Did you ever have any basic training, as we know basic training in today's Army?

Rasbury: Yes, that's what we got in Decatur. We learned all of our foot drills and all of that. See, it was in the wintertime; it was kind of cold and all, so we did a lot of it inside the building there. By the way, this building still exists that we trained

in. It's a feed mill now, and I think it was at that time, but it had been closed down and made into an armory.

Marcello: Did you ever get out on the rifle range or anything like that while you were either at Decatur or Camp Bowie?

Rasbury: We went on the pistol range, oh, once or twice. In Decatur we had .45-caliber automatics. Then after we got to Brownwood, they issued us . . . they took up the .45-caliber automatics, and I think sergeants was the only ones that had those. Most of us had the old cavalry pistol . . . .45-caliber. I guess it held six . . . I don't remember now (chuckle) . . . about six shells. A revolver is what it was . . . crossdraw; you wore it on the left side.

Marcello: Is there anything else eventful that happened here at Camp Bowie during this period when you were undergoing additional training that we need to talk about? Is this the period when the Army went through a reorganization from the square divisions to the triangular divisions?

Rasbury: Well, not immediately. That didn't start until November of '41.

Marcello: This, I assume, was after you had been on the Louisiana maneuvers and all that sort of thing.

Rasbury: Yes. We had gone through all of our maneuvers around the camp there, and then we went into Louisiana and maneuvered there a couple of months.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about those Louisiana maneuvers. When did they

begin?

Rasbury: Well, let's see . . .

Marcello: According to my records, I think it was somewhere around August or September of 1941.

Rasbury: Well, it was somewhere along the last of August, I guess, because we was down there two months . . . a little over two months.

Marcello: What did you do while you were down on those maneuvers in Louisiana?

Rasbury: Well, since I was a radio operator, I was assigned to a liaison. There were a lieutenant and a corporal, scout corporal, a scout sergeant, telephone operator, and the driver, of course; it was that kind of a crew. We were gone most of the time; we didn't stay with our organization much. We stayed out with the infantry on communicating back. Our job was to . . . if the infantry needed artillery fire, well, then the sergeant and the lieutenants would figure out the location, and then I would radio it back. Communication between the infantry and artillery is what it actually was.

Marcello: Now were these maneuvers extensive? In other words, are we talking about a large number of troops involved in these maneuvers?

Rasbury: Yes, it was the 3rd Army. The 45th Division out of Oklahoma was down there. I think we maneuvered against them . . . the 36th Division against the 45th Division. Yes, it was . . . oh, there was troops all over that place down there.

Marcello: Evidently, the 2nd Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery made a pretty good showing on those maneuvers, did it not?

Rasbury: Yes. Of course, I didn't know what was going on in the other part, but where I was, why, I think we made notice; you know, they noticed us pretty good. At one time, we were attached to General Patton; I don't know exactly what for. But my liaison was with him when they made a run on a little place down there close to De Ridder. I've got pictures of General Patton.

Marcello: Now you move back to Camp Bowie in September of 1941. According to the records, it was September 15, 1941.

Rasbury: Yes, I believe it was.

Marcello: What happened when you returned to Camp Bowie?

Rasbury: Well, that's when they were changing--the big changeover.

Marcello: In other words, we're referring to the change from the square division to the triangular division.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: How did that affect the 2nd Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery?

Rasbury: Well, they picked . . . they just had more organizations than they needed in a triangular division. I think it cut it to about half. I think we had approximately 30,000 troops in the square division with all the attachments, and they cut it to about half. So they had to move those out. We were just, I guess, one of

the lucky or unlucky--I don't know which--groups to leave . . . first ones to leave.

Marcello: I heard that part of this reorganization came about from observing the German Army. Evidently, they were trying to pattern the American divisions after the type of organization that the German Army had in Europe.

Rasbury: Yes, probably so. Because on the maneuvers, we had some English observers. They would observe Patton crossing the river and all. I was in on that, and that's the reason I knew that they were from England . . . big officers over here.

Marcello: Now how else did that reorganization affect the unit?

Rasbury: Well, they interviewed each one. If you was married and had a family, you didn't have to go.

Marcello: When you say you didn't have to go, what do you mean by that?

Rasbury: Well, go overseas--when they was picking the ones to go overseas. So they took the 2nd Battalion--like headquarters--and the ones that they decided was going--those people--they went in and separated the ones that was eligible to go or the ones that wanted to go. Some of them that went were married, though, but I think they could have got out if they'd have wanted to. Because they could have gotten other people from other organizations, which that's what happened. They filled in from other organizations--the same aged people and all. They tried, you know, to keep them all single if they could.

Marcello: Did this affect the cohesiveness of the unit in any way?  
In other words, all of you knew each other; you were all from the same locality. Now all the sudden you have some strangers, so to speak, coming into the infantry. Did this cause any problem?

Rasbury: No, because they had gone through the same training that we had, and they tried picking the same . . . like, if they was short a radio operator, well, they'd pick the radio operator from another place, which we had worked together or went through the same training and all. They did fill in now. . . the only ones that . . . we really didn't have any trouble with them; they didn't have the training that we did. When we was in Louisiana, we picked up quite a few Selective Service men, and they'd just gone through boot camp. Of course, about half-way over to Honolulu, they read in the paper where they wasn't supposed to leave the United States after they was in the Army, but (chuckle) they was already on their way.

Marcello: Was there very much of a turnover in personnel when the troops were presented with this option that we've just talked about?

Rasbury: I'd say about half . . . just about . . . yes, I'd say about half of them.

Marcello: And at this time, you did know that you were going overseas.

Rasbury: Well, we knew we was going overseas and the destination was PLUM. That's all we knew.

Marcello: What were the rumors going around when you heard about this destination called PLUM?

Rasbury: Well, we just didn't know. We knew it was in the Pacific, because we went to San Francisco. If we'd have went the other direction, we would have known it would have been Europe. You really couldn't tell for sure because of the way they did things; they might take you to the Pacific and then carry you to Europe. But then after we got on the ship and headed for Honolulu, why, we was pretty sure it was over in there somewhere, but we didn't know where.

Marcello: Did most of you kind of feel you were destined for the Philippines, however?

Rasbury: Yes, that's what the big rumor was, that we were headed for the Philippines.

Marcello: Again, do you realize that things are getting a little bit more serious by this time, or still hasn't the seriousness sunk in yet, so to speak?

Rasbury: I don't think so, because . . . well, as far as I'm concerned, it hadn't on me. It was just a fantastic boat ride and a new experience. When we went through Honolulu, we got about four hours leave. We let half of the ship go and then the other half for four hours each. But you had to have . . .the funny part there was that you had to have five dollars before you could leave the ship. Well, we like to wore those five-dollar



bills out moving them from one person to another (chuckle).

Marcello: Why did they make you have five dollars in your pocket?

Rasbury: Well, they just figured you didn't need to be on shore without money. We hadn't been paid since we left Brownwood. So after spending a week in San Francisco, why, we were all pretty well broke.

Marcello: Let's back up just a minute. You mentioned that you went from Camp Bowie to San Francisco, and you were going toward this destination, which was code-named PLUM. Describe the transport vessel that took you from San Francisco over to PLUM.

Rasbury: I'd like to describe a little bit before this.

Marcello: Okay, go right ahead.

Rasbury: They carried us over to Angel Island. The only way off of it was by ship, see. I guess they figured we might leave (chuckle). But anyway, there was something there that I don't know whether the others have mentioned or not. The first day . . . well, we got in there in the evening, and then the next day they called for all of us . . . well, the whole outfit was on KP. Altogether out of other organizations and ours, too, there was over 400 KP's. Now that was the biggest KP duty I ever did. You'd have a section of two long tables, and that's all you did. You'd just clear the food off and put the other food back on with new plates and silverware and everything. You just had a section to work. We fed three groups at each meal. I think they said it held

around 3,000 people, so we fed about 9,000 people at each meal.

Marcello: Did you say that you actually spent five days in San Francisco before you moved over to Angel Island, or was this all part of your stay there?

Rasbury: No, this was in Angel Island. Now they moved us as soon as we arrived . . . we arrived there . . . some say on two trains, but I'm going to stick to three trains until they prove different. There were three trainloads, and we all hit there at about the same time and moved into Angel Island on small boats.

Marcello: So immediately upon arrival in San Francisco, you were transferred over to Angel Island.

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, right on over to Angel Island.

Marcello: And you spend mainly that five-day period, then, there on Angel Island.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Did you get a chance to get into San Francisco to see the sights?

Rasbury: Yes, there was a boat that went in nearly every night or every day, but I never did go in but one time. I went in one time and saw it pretty well, and I didn't go back no more. I was invited to . . . there was some women there inviting soldiers for Thanksgiving dinner, but we didn't go back so I didn't go. We had one of the best dinners I ever ate there at Thanksgiving there on Angel Island. I mean, you just ate all you wanted, and

they had cigars and cigarettes and all kinds of fruit. It was really a feed.

Marcello: Okay, so was it at Angel Island, then, that you went aboard the transport USS Republic?

Rasbury: We left Angel Island by small boats and went on over to the dock, and we loaded on the USS Republic.

Marcello: Describe what the Republic was like from a physical standpoint.

Rasbury: Well, it looked like it was about to fall apart (chuckle). It was just a big, old, dull gray ship. Since it was the first one I was ever on, I didn't know too much about one. I just went right on into the hold, and I didn't come out for about three days (chuckle) because we were all too sick . . . well, I never did really get sick to where I'd vomit or anything that way like a lot of them did. I stayed in my bunk most of the time and ate crackers and drank grapefruit juice.

So I ventured out about the third day and went up to the PX to get me some more . . . other guys had been bringing it up to me. So I ventured out on the third day. Of course, right up where the PX was was close to the kitchen, and the first thing I smelled was cabbage cooking (chuckle). I came back down, and I went back to bed for a few days (laughter). But I got to where it didn't bother me.

Marcello: I understand those ground swells that one encountered in leaving the harbor were perhaps at the root of the seasickness that

one incurred.

Rasbury: (Chuckle) Yes, and going into Honolulu, they were pretty bad. The porpoises, they were following us, you know. Of course, we didn't know anything about a porpoise; we thought they was just following us and hoping some of us would fall over (chuckle).

Marcello: Now you mentioned that when you got to Honolulu, you had the opportunity to take four hours of shore leave. What did you do when you went on shore leave in Honolulu?

Rasbury: Well, we didn't go too far in. The guy that I went with was named Chumley from Alvord--Horace Chumley. We went in and just looked around and got us a Coke--I think he probably got him a beer and I got a Coke--and some postcards and mailed them home. That was about it . . . just looked around, you know, because, you know, you didn't have long.

Marcello: Were you able to observe any tenseness or anything at that late date in Honolulu, or did everything just seem to be normal to you?

Rasbury: Well, since this was the first time we was ever away from the States and in a place like that where this was all so new to us, we couldn't tell; we just didn't know. Because we couldn't . . . well, it was just more or less like being in the States; you could get everything you wanted in the States, but it's

just a different type of people that we wasn't used to. So really, I couldn't tell or really wasn't thinking about that part; I was just looking, sight-seeing.

Marcello: Okay, so you get back on the Republic once again. Let's pick up the story from that point.

Rasbury: Well, I don't remember much of what happened . . . just sort of routine duties that different ones performed. Before I got to Honolulu on the ship, I was detached to a detail that was handling the food and stuff down below. This sailor kind of took a liking to me--he was in charge of the ship's stores--and he wanted to know if I'd like to stay and work with him. I said, "Yes," so I got assigned to him all the way across. I just went back to my duties moving food from the lower holds from the refrigerators and all up to the kitchen by elevator. But the elevator wasn't big enough to ride on. I'd just put the stuff in it and then punch the key on the floor I wanted it to stop on , and then I'd walk up the stairways and take it out.

Marcello: Was the Republic rather crowded?

Rasbury: No, not really. It was designed . . . from what I could gather of the history of it, it was a captured German luxury liner which had been turned into a German troop transport. Then we took it over. I understood that in World War I, they was transporting troops on it. They had three different groups,

and they filled the bunks, say, with 3,000 people. I don't know whether there was that many, but there was quite a few on there. They filled the bunks that way, and then they had the other two-thirds on deck. They'd rotate in using the bunks, so I'd call that crowded.

Marcello: Was your unit the only one that was aboard the Republic during this period?

Rasbury: No, we had a few casuals--officers--and had some Air Force on there.

Marcello: But the bulk of the people on the Republic were from the 131st Field Artillery.

Rasbury: Well, there was only about 500 or 600 of us in the battalion, is all. The rest of them was Air Force. I'm not for sure, but I think it was the 22nd Bomb Group that was on there.

Marcello: The 22nd Bomb Group?

Rasbury: Yes. I think they was the ones that went into Australia the same time we did.

Marcello: Now when you left Honolulu, did you pick up any additional ships? In other words, were you part of a convoy when you left there?

Rasbury: Yes. When we got there, there was another artillery outfit; it was the 147th. The 26th Brigade was with us, too; they were on our ship. They had joined our outfit and went on to Java with us. But I think there was two other transports with us. The only thing I knew that was on the others . . . it could have

been just equipment, but I know the 147th--a certain part of that field artillery--was there.

Marcello: Where was the 147th Field Artillery from?

Rasbury: I don't remember.

Marcello: But it was not originally part of the 36th Division.

Rasbury: No. No, it was from somewhere else. They didn't leave Australia with us, either. In fact, I don't even remember seeing any of them.

Marcello: Didn't you also pick up the cruiser Pensacola somewhere around here?

Rasbury: Yes, it was our escort from Honolulu to Java.

Marcello: Also, it seems to me that I've read or heard somewhere that you had also picked up a corvette.

Rasbury: Yes, a small "tin can," I think we called it. You're talking about the seriousness now. Well, the day that I would say that most of us decided that there was something going on was the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed or as soon as we heard the news,

Marcello: You were eight days out of Honolulu when Pearl Harbor was hit.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Describe the reaction that swept the ship when the unit heard the news about the bombing at Pearl Harbor.

Rasbury: Well, I was probably thinking about so much I didn't pay much attention to other people. But I don't remember just off-hand

how . . . I think they announced it on the intercom. But I think before it was announced they sounded general quarters. We probably thought it was just a training business.

Marcello: Well, what did general quarters mean to you since you were in the Army?

Rasbury: Well, on general quarters at that time, we would just all go out on the deck, put our lifejackets on, and stand there; that was all. But it wasn't that way this time. The Navy personnel, they had gone into moving the ammunition up and getting the guns ready and pulling the covers off of them. There was so much . . . well, I just didn't know there was all that kind of ammunition down there. They were just getting ready for the real thing.

Marcello: Now where were they getting their weaponry? In other words, were these your fieldpieces?

Rasbury: Well, they had some on there. The ship had its own. I think the 6-inch was the biggest thing they had on there. It had its own, but the artillery manned those guns. We didn't have to set up any of ours on that ship. They had all their guns on there with big armor in front of them. They had .30-calibers and .50-calibers all over it. It was pretty well-armed.

Marcello: What was your first reaction when you heard about the attack at Pearl Harbor?

Rasbury: Well, we had talked about it. It goes back to the same old



story: "Well, give us thirty days, and that'll be it."

(chuckle)

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese during that period, what sort of an individual did you conjure up in your own mind?

Rasbury: Well, it was hard for me to really figure out, because I knew he was an Oriental. The only Japanese or Chinese that I'd ever had any contact with weren't Orientals. We had a Japanese with us, and we had a Chinaman with us.

Marcello: Are you referring to Frank Fujita and Eddie Fung?

Rasbury: Yes. I just couldn't see people like them doing the things that we'd heard they were doing.

Marcello: Did Fujita come for any kidding or anything of that nature after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?

Rasbury: Well, I didn't know him that well, but I imagine he did (chuckle).

Marcello: And as you mentioned awhile ago, you thought that whatever occurred at Pearl Harbor that this was going to be a pretty short war.

Rasbury: Oh, yes, we were all that way. We had one lieutenant, and he didn't know how right he was . . . well, he might have, too. He was a pretty shrewd guy, a guy by the name of Hampton from Decatur, Lieutenant Hampton. We'd all be standing around talking to him, and he would do it especially in front of certain people that he knew, like "Dude" Cobb; he just couldn't stand to talk about what might happen, you know. This lieutenant would say, "Well, they're gonna capture us. They're gonna take us one of

these days, and we'll have to eat rice," and all this stuff, you know, and he'd tell about what was going to happen. Well, Cobb just couldn't stand it. Then he would get serious, and he would tell us what was really going on. He was one of the few . . . I don't know whether he knew more than the others or whether he was guessing, but he was . . . well, I'd call him just a shrewd man. He knew what he was doing.

Marcello: What happened to the other ships in the convoy at this point?

Rasbury: Well, the one on the right of us--I don't know my sides of the ship--it was . . . I don't remember what color it was, but it had a big American flag on the side of it. We happened to wake up one morning and looked over there, and that flag was folding up. They had enough people that you could just see that flag moving; they was painting over it--painting it gray, you know.

Then one of them broke down. I think something went wrong with the rudder, and we had to tow it into . . . I believe we towed it into Australia. It didn't break down until after we went . . . see, after we heard the news, why, we changed course. Of course, they put out lookouts and everything, you know. We changed course and went south to the Fiji Islands.

Marcello: Did the Pensacola stay with you all the way during this period?

Rasbury: Yes, it was never was out of sight. They had those two planes they'd shoot off every once in a while to scout around things

that way.

Marcello: But the Pensacola always was within sight of the other ships in the convoy.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: What happened when you got to the Fiji Islands?

Rasbury: Well, you just couldn't believe there was a war or anything going on; it was so peaceful.

Marcello: Did you get off the ship there?

Rasbury: Well, I did. I volunteered for a detail to . . . we was taking on food supplies and stuff, and I helped load those on the ship. We didn't get off very long we wasn't there very long . . . just on the dock, was all.

Marcello: Now during this period, you probably crossed the equator somewhere along in here.

Rasbury: Oh, yes (chuckle). We crossed the 180th meridian and the equator, too. They gave us a pretty good celebration then. We was going down this hall. I'd already had a little warning of what they might do. Some of them, boy, they was in their shorts, because they had built a swimming pool there. They knew they was going to get dunked. But I decided I'd wear my old loose coveralls.

So when we come up to this door, why, that guy just ripped those coveralls off and painted a big red "X" right across my chest and sent me in the other direction. Well, the ones that

went this way (gesture) had to go through that swimming pool and that hot seat. But I went this way (gesture), to the left, after we went through this doorway and out the other side onto another part of the deck, why, this guy grabbed me and said, "I think you need some dental work." He had a big old syringe about a foot long, and it was full of soap suds. He just squirted my mouth full of soap suds (chuckle). He said, "I think that'll take care of it!"

Marcello: And he did this with a syringe?

Rasbury: Yes. Another guy said, "Well, I think you need a shave." So he sat me down on a box with a big old wooden razor about that long (gesture) and like he's putting lather all over my face. Instead of lather, it had gray paint mixed in it (chuckle), and he put that all over my face. Then he said, "Well, this razor's too dull. It won't shave. Why don't you just get you a haircut?" Well, they started with a pair of clippers right across my hair, and they just went up part of the way and they hit something. I've got a mole up there, see, and they hit that mole. He said, "Oops, what's that?" I said, "That's a mole." So he just quit; he didn't cut no more. I was lucky that I could comb that over and you couldn't tell where they'd cut it off. But some of them, boy, they went all the way across (laughter).

Then there was this wind tunnel that had a fire hose in the other end. So I was watching what they were doing. They

were beating them on the back as they went through that tunnel with those little sausages, we called it. They were sacks of cotton, wet cotton. Then as you stooped over to go into the thing, why, they'd bust you one as you went through. Boy, they were hitting them pretty hard. So I thought, "Well, if I could get down in there first before he could swing back, well, then he wouldn't have a chance to hit me very much." I did, and when I did, he caught me right across the eye with that sausage and just laid it open right across there (gesture).

Marcello: You called it a "sausage?"

Rasbury: (Chuckle) Yes, that's what I called it. It looked like your old stuffed sausage, you know. It was cotton in a sack. That thing was stiff enough that it cut my eye across there--about a one-inch gash. Well, I didn't know I was cut, because it was salt water that was hitting me in the face. But when I came out, I had blood all over me. Boy, they grabbed me and carried me down, and that was all of my initiation then. I thought I was hurt bad, but they put a couple of stitches in it. Shoot, there was guys in there with broken collarbones and shoulders out of place and everything else. They treated them pretty rough.

Marcello: Now this all occurred after December 7, 1941?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Evidently, the seriousness of the attack at Pearl Harbor and

the amount of damage there wasn't really known.

Rasbury: Well, I don't think that they put that out. We didn't know what the damage was. All we knew was that it was bombed and war was declared. I think maybe the officers knew, but they didn't put it out to the enlisted personnel.

Marcello: But I guess my point is that the seriousness of the situation still wasn't really known. I mean, you're still going through this initiation process and all this sort of thing even though there's a war going on.

Rasbury: Yes. Oh, yes. Well, I don't think it ever got serious until down to the last minute as far as our bunch was concerned. If I was to ever . . . this may be getting off the subject, but if I was to ever write a book on who I thought had more to do with bringing people back and getting people through this is the people that never had a serious thought; regardless of how tough things was going, they found something to laugh about or joke about or do something crazy, you know, to keep your mind off the serious part of it.

Marcello: So your course is diverted, and you're on your way to Australia. When did you arrive in Australia, do you recall?

Rasbury: Yes, it was just before Christmas. I've got the exact date.

Marcello: Was it perhaps December 21, 1941? Does that sound pretty close?

Rasbury: That sounds close. Because I know I helped unload the ship.

Marcello: Where did you land?

Rasbury: Brisbane.

Marcello: And what happened at that point?

Rasbury: Well, when we landed, when we got into Brisbane into the sight of the city, well, we were too heavily loaded to get into the river, so we had to wait for the tide. Also, at that time, they unloaded all the oil--took that much weight off. As we went through down the river, we was still dragging the bottom. They moved everybody up on the deck and up on the bow of the ship to get the screws out of the mud even at high tide. We went on in all right. Of course, we was dragging about thirty-five foot of water. Then they threwed big lines over from the ship and pulled the thing over sideways, you know. It was kind of tilted a little bit to the side. It was sitting right on the bottom. Of course, after we got it unloaded and it was high tide, it went on out all right.

I caught the detail of helping the people that unloaded--it was Australians--and to tell them where to put the stuff. We had to mark some stuff. The mix-up was that all of our stuff--most of our trucks and things--went to Sidney. It was Air Force stuff that was there. So they gave us a list of material of trucks and things that we needed, and we just stamped that "131st Field Artillery" on it, and then it would be moved with our stuff. We also stamped a bunch of Christmas candy that was supposed to go to the Philippines, but we knew

it wouldn't be going. So we put our stamp on it and it wound up in Java with us (chuckle). I don't know . . . about twenty-five or thirty cases of it.

Marcello: Where were you assigned when you got off the ship there at Brisbane?

Rasbury: We went to a . . . they carried us into a racetrack.

Marcello: Do you remember the name of the racetrack?

Rasbury: No, not offhand.

Marcello: It was Ascot, was it not?

Rasbury: Ascot, yes. Ascot Racetrack--that's where it was.

Marcello: What happened when you got to the Ascot Racetrack?

Rasbury: Well, they had tents set up. I don't remember how many . . . three or four to a tent or something like that or maybe just two. I don't remember. They were small tents . . . wood floors. It was quite a bit different from what we were used to (chuckle). They began to sort of harden us up a little bit.

Marcello: What sort of a reception did you receive from the Australians?

Rasbury: Well, we had the red carpet. Boy, I mean, they wouldn't let you pay for nothing if you went uptown for anything. Well, like drinks now. If you went into . . . they called it "chemists"; if you went into the drugstore to get a roll of film or something like that, well, of course, they took the money. But if you went into a beer joint, there was always



somebody in there that they'd never let you buy anything.

Marcello: Was this one of your first encounters with mutton, also?

Rasbury: Yes. On Christmas Day they really put on, I guess, a real good feed. But, boy, we wasn't used to eating mutton (chuckle) for Christmas. I don't think anybody ate much of it; they had most of it left over. Of course, I was working on the dock, and I wasn't there.

Marcello: I assume, then, that you were not one of the lucky ones who got invited into the home of an Australian.

Rasbury: No, I didn't get in on that.

Marcello: What sort of training did the unit undergo here at Ascot Racetrack?

Rasbury: Not any. We just unloaded the . . . had details, you know, in the service batteries. Now the others, they just took care of the . . . well, they had been issued rifles on the boat. After that, they probably had to clean up their rifles and things.

I wasn't around the camp very much. Like I say, I was down there on the dock helping them unload that thing. In fact, old Horace Chumley and I was the last two off of the boat. In fact, we talked about staying on it (chuckle). We had an idea it was going back to the States. There was a case of some kind of serum--shots of some sort--that we had to get off out of the freezer. So we went back on to get it, and they

was already getting ready to pull the gangplank up. I asked old Horace, "What do you think about us just staying on here and going back to the States?" He said, "Oh, they'd just send us somewhere else." "Well, let's just stay, then." (chuckle) So we went on off. They raised the gangplank and took off.

Marcello: When did you leave Brisbane?

Rasbury: Well, I think it was about seven days later, I mean, after we arrived there. I'm not for sure of the date. I've got it down, but I don't know the date for sure.

Marcello: You boarded another ship at this point.

Rasbury: Yes, they put us on the Bloemfontein, a Dutch freighter. Well, it was a combination freighter and liner. Of course, they didn't have enough bunks for all of us. We slept on the decks; the officers got the bunks and some of the higher-ranking sergeants.

Marcello: It was faster than the Republic, was it not?

Rasbury: Oh, yes. Old Chumley and I was on guard one night after we'd been out of Brisbane, oh, two or three days, and the moon changed sides (chuckle). It was like the moon moved instead of it. But from what I understood, it had two six-cylinder diesel motors. It had two screws, and they only used one screw for just normal running. But they threwed all of it in that night.

We didn't know what the deal was, but we heard the next day that there was a submarine sighted behind us, and he was headed into the coral to where it'd be too shallow for him. Of course, when we woke up . . . well, the next morning, all of our escorts was gone. Then eventually they come up; they'd been back. We heard, too, that they'd sunk it about thirty miles behind us.

Marcello: Now did you know that you were going to Java at this point?

Rasbury: Yes, I think so, because this was a Dutch ship and all. I think we knew we was going. Of course, we didn't know where Java was. I don't even remember studying about the East Indies, let alone Java, you know.

Marcello: Did this cause any speculation among the troops and so on, that is, the fact that you were heading toward Java?

Rasbury: Yes, there was kind of a question: "Well, what are we going to do there with just one battalion of artillery?" Of course, when we got there, we found out. Now some of them may have known, but I was sort of a person that didn't check in too much on what was going on; I just took it as it come. When we got into the airport, well, then we knew what we was there for.

Marcello: But up until this time, they really hadn't told you why they were sending you to Java.

Rasbury: No, no.

Marcello: Okay, so you land at Surabaya. What happens at that point?

Rasbury: Well, we get in there kind of late in the evening. I think it was somewhere around January 11th, I believe, or something like that. They put us on a train, and it was way in the night when we got into this camp--a camp called Singosari.

Marcello: Singosari, which is outside of the town of Malang.

Rasbury: Malang, yes. In fact, they unloaded us in Malang onto trucks and then carried us on out. But it was dark and we had no lights; we wasn't allowed any kind of light. They just brought us a mattress cover, a bunch of straw, and we thought we was in a horse stables at that time. But it was regular barracks, was what it was. Then the next day they brought the rest of the stuff.

Marcello: Some people in the unit were evidently very much impressed by the tremendous numbers of people that they saw on Java. Did this make an impression on you?

Rasbury: Yes. I thought, "Well, we're not going to have any problem here; there's too many people," you know. Of course, the longer I stayed, why, the more I found out that didn't make any difference.

Marcello: Describe what Singosari looked like from a physical standpoint, that is, the base itself.

Rasbury: Well, it was laid out in streets--squares and streets and things, you know. Over on one side, it had a group of houses for the officers. Then they had barracks; then you had places

for the trucks and vehicles and things that way to store stuff. We had a main headquarters where you'd come in, and it had a big parade ground out in the middle. We had a PX, a place off a canteen, and kitchens for different organizations. The barracks was just . . . we didn't understand at the time what kind of an organization it was for, but we heard that in the Dutch Army . . . each one of these cubicles was about, oh, say, about six feet wide by about eight feet long, and that was families that lived in those cubicles. Of course, we thought we were crowded with just two people in them (chuckle). Of course, we had an old hard bed; it was just a board with a straw mattress, was all we had. It was a nice, clean place.

Marcello: What sort of reception did you receive from the Dutch?

Rasbury: Oh, not too much. Of course, like I say, we got in there in the evening. Of course, the natives always gave us the victory sign and all that.

Marcello: The natives must have thought that you were on the winning side at that point,

Rasbury: Yes, that's the reason they did it, because they changed later (chuckle).

Marcello: What did you do when you got to Singosari? In other words, what sort of activity did you engage in?

Rasbury: Well, the first evening--the first day--well, we just kind of straightened our own cubicles and got our bunks ready. These

boards they dumped out there for us, why, we got to looking at them, and it looked like they had dirt in between the cracks of the boards. It wasn't; it was bedbugs. So we started taking gas and burning them out and cleaning them, you know, so we could try to sleep with them. We did that the first day. Of course, half the group went into town the first night. Since my name was "R," I was on the list for the second night. The next day, well, I'd been up there; we didn't get in until two or three o'clock the next morning, and I kind of overslept.

Marcello: What was there to do in Malang?

Rasbury: Well, the first night we didn't know much to do, because we didn't know where to go. We just stayed right up on the square at a place called . . . the Yankee Inn was one place where they had a band and had drinks, and it had kind of a cafe--you could eat--and a little place to dance. Then another one was just sort of an ice cream parlor. That was two of the places at the time that wasn't off-limits. We had just nearly the whole town restricted to start with. Then eventually, why, the more we was there, well, we'd start venturing out and going to other places.

Marcello: What sort of actual military activity did you engage in while you were here at the airfield?

Rasbury: Well, the next morning, why, it was about nine o'clock before

the first sergeant finally found me in my bunk. I didn't make roll call; I overslept. He sent me up to the canteen. I don't know . . . I guess the reason he sent me up there was because I had run a place of business like that before and all, and it was on my records. He said, "If you're going to work in the canteen, you better get up there. Captain Parker, the new officer that came and got with us in Australia, is up there waiting on you." I said, "Well, I didn't know I was going to work in the canteen." So I went on up, and, shoot, there wasn't but one guy there, and he had his shirt off and was a big red-complexioned guy, looked like a football player, and was stooped over this beer box straightening up the bottles of beer and soft drinks and all. I said, "Soldier, can you tell me where Captain Parker is?" He looked up and kind of grinned, and he said, "That's me." I figured then I had it made. So that's what I did; I run the PX all the time I was there. That's the only thing I did.

Marcello: Now when did the remnants of the bomb groups from the Philippines come in?

Rasbury: Well, they were already there. The 19th Bomb Group was already there, but there was some coming in all the time, you know. They were still active out of there.

Marcello: What sort of association did you have with the 19th Bomb Group and these other groups and so on?

Rasbury: Well, it was a real close association, because they were shorthanded, and our people . . . our mechanics went down and worked with their mechanics on the planes; our people went down and helped load the bombs on them, ammunition, and everything else. In fact, if you didn't have any kind of a rating and you wanted to transfer to the Air Force, well, Colonel Eubanks was the officer and he'd take them. I did train some on the .50-caliber, because I'd kind of had in mind a little later on I might just transfer, too. But the colonel wouldn't let anybody with any kind of a rating transfer. They had the radios silenced and we couldn't use them, so that may be one reason they put me in the PX-- because I really didn't have anything to do anyway, as far as my job was concerned.

Marcello: Now pretty shortly thereafter, I guess you get your first taste of war. I assume we're up to the point where we can talk about the first of the air raids. I'll let you pick up the story at that point.

Rasbury: Well, they had moved me out of the PX, the building that was supposed to be for the PX for the 22nd Bomb Group that came in there from Australia. They used it for their kitchen. So they moved me out back down to the back of the camp in a . . . well, it was a garage-like, just a place where they kept trucks and things. So things was kind of getting tighter, and we



were having a few problems with some of the natives and things like that.

Marcello: Problems in what way?

Rasbury: Well, at night you could see signal lights all over in the hills. Our instruments men would get out and shoot those and locate them on the map, and then the Dutch would go hunt it out. It was what we called Fifth Columnists then. There was a lot of that going on, and, of course, there was probably a lot of Japanese sympathizers in there and everything, anyway.

But they had dug holes--air raid shelters--all over the place, and they assigned so many to each shelter and told us to go. Well, they didn't get them finished; they were just open holes. Well, we didn't know. We thought, "Well, shoot, they told us to go." When the alarm sounded, well, I fooled around there a little bit and was closing up the canteen and got my rifle and my helmet and went out to this hole.

We was sitting there, and then all the sudden, boy, things began to happen. Of course, the first thing, I think, before they ever dropped any bombs or anything . . . of course, we didn't know it--I didn't--because I was involved in this PX business and not knowing what was going on around camp. Well, they had our fieldpieces set up. When those things started going off, I thought it was bombs, and, boy, it really scared

me (chuckle).

Of course, then the Zeros started coming in and strafing the place. Of course, the bombers, they dropped their load just where it was and left. They got out of there, because they didn't know exactly what those high explosive shells were. They just cut those things to where it would burst right up among them; you didn't have to hit them. But I don't think they done much damage, but it scared them off.

Marcello: In other words, they had dug in those artillery pieces so that they could elevate them enough to fire at these bombers.

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, they could elevate them enough to go up. I didn't know that was even going on, see, and that scared me worse than anything.

But then after I kind of calmed down, one of the guys that was in this hole with us had a Browning Automatic Rifle. Of course, I fired at these Zeros two or three times with my rifle, but I don't think it even got close. But we had a sergeant who took the Browning Automatic Rifle, and he did all the firing, and we loaded clips for him. He'd get pretty close sometimes, but I don't think he ever did hit one.

Marcello: Were you scared?

Rasbury: Yes, I'd have to admit I was scared.

Marcello: About how long did the attack last altogether?

Rasbury: Oh, I'd say . . . it seemed like for an hour, but I imagine it

was about not over thirty minutes or something like that.

Marcello: What seems to bother you more--the bombers or the Zeros?

Rasbury: Well, at that time, the Zeros were.

Marcello: They were mainly strafing, I guess.

Rasbury: Yes, they were strafing. We had trucks with .50-caliber rifles mounted on them--.50-caliber machine guns. They didn't know at the time, but there was a lot of bad ammunition, and most every one of them jammed. They were just trying to stay out of the way, and, of course, those Zeros were strafing the streets more or less, you know, coming down through and hitting those trucks.

I don't remember any damage that day at all, I mean, only maybe to the street. Well, they did . . . I think they strafed some planes. That was the big damage. As far as our camp, they didn't do any damage to the camp that day. The bombers just dropped their load and left. They got close to the camp and close to the airport, but I don't think it was anywhere close to the planes or anything.

Marcello: Are you beginning to take things just a little bit more seriously at this point?

Rasbury: Yes, we began to settle down a little bit more and think more about what was going on. Of course, we didn't know whether they'd ever be back or what, you know, because they did such a poor job that day. We thought, "Well, if that's the best

they can do, why . . . . " It kind of gave us a little hope, I mean, as far as I'm concerned. Of course, now some of them was probably in positions worse than I was that probably thought otherwise. They was down there loading those planes and had to unload some of them . . . had to take the bombs off of some while they were strafing.

Marcello: With what regularity did these air raids occur in the future?

Rasbury: Well, see, we could tell there was an air raid over the island before our alarm ever went off.

Marcello: Why was that?

Rasbury: We learned the signals of the drums of the natives. If they noticed anything coming in over the ocean, you know, coming in over the coast, why, the natives got the word, and it was faster than our communication. We could tell the way the drums sounded that there was an air raid. And the natives would start wanting to go towards the jungles and get into the jungles. I had two working for me in the PX, and, boy, when they'd hear those drums, boy, there was no way I could keep them there. They kept things cleaned up for me.

Marcello: Now what sort of damage did the subsequent raids do?

Rasbury: Well, I think the next thing , , , yes, we had another bombing later on. Things were kind of quiet as far as coming up in there. They were bombing around at other places and having a few little air raids, but as far as ours were concerned, they

didn't come back for, I guess, over a week. Then I had even . . . in fact, it might have been longer than that, because I had moved. They decided they wanted that place, so I had to move my PX to another building up closer to the gate. I was in there, and we were supposed to open at four o'clock in the evening and stay open until dark because we couldn't have any lights.

So I was getting things ready, and this Lieutenant Stensland--he was an officer that came to us from the Philippines--he kind of liked his beer. I already had it cold, so he'd always slip in there in the evening before everybody else and get him a bottle. He was drinking a bottle of beer, and the air raid alarm went off. This is somewhere around 2:30 or three o'clock, you know.

Well, I was going to be brave like him and stay in camp; he never did leave camp. I said, "Well, lieutenant, are we going to stay in camp today, or are we going to leave?" "Aw," he said, "I think we'd better leave." He said, "I got a feeling." So I got things ready and locked the door, and he just walked off.

He went on down to the command post, and I went on down through the jungles and met an old boy down there and sat down, and we was talking. It seemed like, oh, maybe twenty minutes passed. Directly we heard something that sounded

like a bunch of bees, and I think there was twenty-one bombers in that group.

They came in and they knew exactly where those guns were, because they dropped one bomb right on the trail of one of the guns or right close to it. In fact, I think it bent the trail a little bit. It covered one guy up, and they were digging him out. They made a circle and came back. They told me--I didn't go look at it--but they told me that they dropped another one in the same hole.

Marcello: Are these high-level bombers or dive bombers?

Rasbury: Yes, they were high-level. I've got pictures of that raid. It dropped one bomb . . . I kept my radio . . . see, I had a command car with my radio in it, and I kept it in the building next to me. It burnt it. It dropped a bomb right in the sitting room of the PX where the tables and all were. It like to have flattened that building, but it didn't . . . it blew a hole right over my beer box about that big (gesture). When I got back up there, everybody was lined up helping themselves (laughter). It blew all the top . . . that clay tile all fell in; it was all off the top of the PX.

Marcello: So how many of these air raids occurred altogether?

Rasbury: That was the last one we had before we moved from there. Well, now I'll say it was the last one with bombers. We had one after that. About a week after, they were putting a roof

back on. We had nine P-40's . . . this native was down at the air raid alarm reported--somebody reported to him-- that there was nine P-40's coming in, but it wasn't--it was Zeros. They strafed the camp pretty good. I think they burned one or two vehicles, was about all the damage they done.

Marcello: Has the unit suffered any casualties up to this point?

Rasbury: Not from bombing or strafing, but we had lost two men, I think, by then. They were working at the airport as mechanics, and they went up as a mechanic in a B-17 to check it out. They didn't carry any ammunition or anything with them. It was shot down on another little island over there; the Zeros shot it down.

Marcello: Evidently, some of those planes came back in pretty bad shape, did they not, after they had gone out on these bombing raids? I'm referring to the American B-17's.

Rasbury: Yes. When we first got there, they didn't have tail gunners; they didn't have a gun in the tail. So I'm not for sure, but I think they installed the first ones; they installed them themselves. But anyway, when we started getting them from the States then--finally they started flying them in there from the States--why, then they did have tail guns. Those machine gunners would roll high dice to see which one got back there, because they knew they was going to get the most

killed (chuckle) because they'd always come in on that tail.

But then they learned that there was a blind spot even below, because that gun would only go so far and the belly gun would only come up so far. So they learned where that was, and they would come up and shoot this tail gunner. We had two or three before they put armor in there. You had to sit with your feet stretched out, and they'd shoot their legs.

Marcello: You mentioned Lieutenant Stensland awhile ago. He was kind of a mystery man, was he not?

Rasbury: Yes, he was. I heard that they got him out of jail there; that he was in the jail there at Malang and the Dutch told the officers about it and they went down and got him out. He was out of the Philippines. I don't know whether they ever got the story straight or not; I know I never did. I never did know for sure. He was supposed to have been a quartermaster man that was sent in to buy food and stuff for those islands.

Marcello: Well, supposedly, didn't he have a lot of money with him or something?

Rasbury: Yes, I heard that he'd had one big check, a U. S. government check, which he was allowed to cash. But I think he turned it over to the colonel or to supply.



Marcello: Was he more or less integrated into the unit?

Rasbury: Yes, he stayed with us. He was a little more seasoned than the others or just had more nerve or had more guts than brains or something. He was pretty "macho," I guess you'd call him. He was right out there in all of it.

Marcello: You never did find out why he had been in jail?

Rasbury: Oh, I think he just got drunk, and they threw him in. He liked to drink (chuckle). He even did that after he was a prisoner-of-war.

Marcello: Now, I think it was on February 27, 1942, when the bomb groups left for Australia. Talk about this situation.

Rasbury: Well, all the organization had left Singosari and gone up into Malang. Since I had all the PX stuff, I loaded it all on a truck. So it was late when we got through, and Captain Parker said, "Well, if you all want to, just stay out here tonight and then come on in in the morning." So that night there was two B-17's that came in, and some of them came up there. Even Lieutenant Stensland was . . . he'd had a few drinks, and we thought, "Oh, well, he doesn't know what he was talking about." He told us, "Now you better carry all your stuff with you, because you won't be coming back."

Well, the Air Force wanted us to go with them. He told them what was going to happen. I said, "Well, no, we can't go." Just me and my truck driver was all there was--just

two of us--a guy by the name of Tom Wilson out of Plainview. I said, "No, we can't go unless we get permission from our officers." I said, "That'd be the same thing as deserting."

So we stayed all night, and the next morning we got up. I had my coveralls on, and I carried one clean uniform, my rifle, mess gear, water bottle, and, you know, a few things like that and just left my locker out there, because I thought we'd be coming back. Shoot, we found out later that, boy, they wouldn't even let us go back out there after nothing. I lost everything in that locker--everything I had.

Marcello: Now, this is out at Singosari where your locker was?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: You said by this time they had moved the entire unit out of there?

Rasbury: Oh, yes. They had already moved into . . . I never did see the place. There was some place up in Malang. Now, I went by it; I did see it, but I don't remember what it even looked like. Because we just went in, and then, boy, they was ready to go. We just took right on off on our road march.

Marcello: In other words, the base was literally abandoned.

RAsbury: Yes.

Marcello: This occurred when the bomb groups moved out?

Rasbury: Well, that wasn't the reason. The bomb group moved out, but then we got different orders. We was supposed to go to the

other end of the island, see.

Marcello: What effect did the departure of the bomb groups have upon the morale of the people?

Rasbury: Well, I don't think the majority of the people knew it, because they had already left the camp and they spent that night in Malang. They really didn't know what was taking place at that time. In fact, we heard that we were going up to support an Australian group. But I think from the way things were . . . and I've heard so since then--of course, this might not be right--but I think it was on account of so many Japanese sympathizers and things in all these towns. We got every vehicle we could get, and there wouldn't be but two to three people in a vehicle. We'd maneuver right out in the daylight where they could see us. At night, we'd go around and around through these towns. It was more or less for them to think there was a lot more people there than what there were.

But we did finally get to the west end of the island to a place called Bandung. We went through Bandung; that was the capital. But we wound up close to Buitenzorg, and that was the first contact we'd made with them, was there at Buitenzorg.

Marcello: First contact you made with whom?

Rasbury: The Japanese.

Marcello: In other words, you seemed to simply to be moving from place to place in order to give the enemy the impression that there

were many more troops on that island than there actually were.  
You actually weren't told this at the time, though.

Rasbury: No, no.

Marcello: And I assume that you couldn't see any point to all this  
maneuvering around at that point.

Rasbury: Yes, that's what we couldn't understand--what it was all about.  
Like I say, I've heard, but I've never heard anything officially  
on it. But the idea was that there was a large convoy headed  
for Australia. This was done to try to stop them. I think  
this is where the cruiser Houston and the Perth from Australia  
and all that bunch got into it. They run into this convoy.  
That's where they got sunk. They just decided, "Well, there  
must be something in this rumor," and they came back and landed  
on Java instead of going to Australia.

Marcello: At this time, I assume that the unit was rather optimistic in  
that it did not realize the hopelessness of the situation.

Rasbury: That's right. Well, we were all scared, you know. Of course,  
we were doing all we could. In fact, we didn't think we was  
doing anything; we couldn't understand this moving so much,  
you know, and not contacting the enemy. That's what I couldn't  
understand. But once we made contact, then we pulled up and  
moved again, see. So later on, that's what we heard the orders  
were, was to make contact and pull back. In other words, we  
were to hold for eight days. They gave us the exact days.

They hit on March 1st, and on March 8th, well, that's when it happened.

Marcello: When you say "that's when it happened," you are, of course, referring to the surrender.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Now, you were fully expecting to be evacuated from the island.

Rasbury: Yes, we thought that we'd get out of there. That's where we thought we was headed then, was back to where we could get out.

Marcello: Describe this contact that you had with the Japanese. Were you directly involved in it?

Rasbury: A little bit. I went on one sniper hunt, and I was up there. Since I was a radio operator, they didn't need me at the front; a telephone operator went down instead. Lieutenant Stensland was the lieutenant that went down. The one that was supposed to have went down was sick, and so Lieutenant Stensland went in his place, which was my liaison officer. So I thought maybe he'd want me to go, too, and he said he didn't need me; he'd just take the telephone operator and a scout down with him. There was three of them, I think, that went down to where they direct the fire, you know.

Marcello: Now, during this period, do you come into contact with any of the other nationalities, that is, the Australians or the British or the Dutch?

Rasbury: Yes. The Australians . . . we was with what they called the "Black Force." It was General Black's . . . I think they were pioneers instead of infantrymen. But they were dug in on the river bank, and we were back behind them, see.

Marcello: And when we talk about pioneers, I assume we're talking about a construction outfit.

Rasbury: Yes, engineers . . . what we call engineers. Yes, this lieutenant that went down there, all he had . . . they went to this dugout under mortar fire where they could get down and get a view of things right down with the Australians. All he had was a road map and a pair of field glasses. He wasn't for sure where that first one was going. We didn't have any smoke shells. I've talked to some Australians, and they said they was sure hoping that that lieutenant knew what he was doing (laughter). Sure enough, he fired one shot . . . one round. He gave them the dope on it, and they fired one round, and it uprooted a tree about fifty yards in front of the Australians. From there he corrected it. It went right in where he wanted it, so he just told them to fire at will and let them go.

Marcello: But now you actually didn't come into any direct contact with the Japanese?

Rasbury: Well, I'm not for sure. I went out on a sniper hunt. The snipers was coming across pretty bad, and I went out on a

sniper hunt one time, but we never did find any.

Then there was a big old wire truck setting up there, and there was a plane flying around. So this Major Rogers had decided that we might ought to move that truck; it could be spotted, see, from the air, because they were looking for us. It had all the wire and equipment and stuff on it for telephones--a telephone wire truck.

So there wasn't any drivers there, and I said, "Well, I can move it. I can't drive it, but I can move it." So I moved it on down the hill about, oh, I guess, about a half a mile right in a crossroad. There was a little old village there, and I just drove it inside one of these huts. Of course, there wasn't nobody in them, you know.

Then I parked myself across the street and was sitting there where I could watch the truck. There was an Australian lieutenant and two or three others came by and stopped and talked to me a little bit and wanted to know what kind of orders that we had on those natives. I said, shoot, we didn't have anything--just to let them go. He said, "Well, I've instructed my men to shoot anything that looks like a Jap." (Chuckle) So I said, "We haven't had any orders like that." But I got to thinking about it: "How do I know what they look like?"

So after they went on, why, I thought I saw something

run around behind another building across the street the other way. So I pushed my rifle off of safety and watched and thought, "Well, now he might go around another building," you know. Sure enough, about that time, here he went between another building. Well, I fired and he hollered, but I never did find anything. So I don't know if it was a Jap or a native or what. That's the only really close combat . . . about as close as I ever got.

Marcello: So essentially, then, you were actually behind the front lines, wherever those front lines were.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us up to the surrender that occurred on March 8th. Let's talk a little bit about the initial reaction when you heard that the unit was to surrender.

Rasbury: Well, the colonel just called us all together about twelve o'clock that day.

Marcello: Called the entire unit together?

Rasbury: Yes, everyone that was there. Some of them were out on details and things that way. We were close to this place called Garoet. He just told us that--that's when we all learned a new word--that the island had "capitulated" and that he was going to surrender to the Japanese, and for the ones that wanted to stay and go with him, he'd do all he could for us. The ones that thought they might have a chance and wanted to go



do something else, well, that was up to them--whatever they wanted to do. So there was a few of them that left, but most of them stayed.

Marcello: What was your reaction when you heard that the island had capitulated?

Rasbury: Well, like I say, that was a new word, and I really didn't know for a little bit what it meant (chuckle). But then when I found out, well, there was a lot of things that run through my mind, because I didn't know exactly what might take place. We just didn't know, because we'd never had that close of a contact with the people. We knew we were fixing to have. So we just sat around there that day. We destroyed our vehicles and stuff like that and got rid of most of our ammunition. We still held onto our guns, because they hadn't told us to do away with them yet. We kept part of our ammunition. Then that night, they told us to move out onto a racetrack.

Marcello: Another racetrack.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Now when you find out that you are to surrender and become a prisoner-of-war, what do you think about?

Rasbury: Well, not having any contact with them, it's just a mystery; you just don't know. You don't know whether they're going to . . . like when we got onto the racetrack, the first thing that happened the next day was when a couple of Zeros came

over. We didn't know whether they was going to strafe us or not, you know, but they were just looking. Really, I think--and this goes a way back even into Australia--we were a group of Americans that were the first American troops that was ever in the Fiji Islands, Australia, and Java. We weren't the first prisoners, but we were the first in that part; and the Japanese had never seen--those that were down there--had never seen Americans. We were just like monkeys in a cage, and they were all curious.

Marcello: Let's back up here a minute and talk about the events surrounding the initial surrender. Had you heard the rumor--or was the rumor circulating--that the Japanese did not take prisoners?

Rasbury: Yes, and we heard also that the ones that they did take in Guam--those Marines they took in Guam--that they cut all their trigger fingers off (chuckle), you know, and just silly things like that. Of course, I didn't believe that part of it, because why would they want to do that? They could always use the other finger.

Marcello: Did you give any thoughts to heading for the hills, so to speak?

Rasbury: Well, I did for a little bit. Then I got to thinking, "Well, now how can you survive? If you run into a patrol, then you're in trouble . . . without very much ammunition or anything."

There was no way you could get off, because they'd already told us that everything--the boats and all--were gone. I knew that all the Air Force was gone. Of course, there was some of them that could fly. Major Rogers was a pilot. Now if they could have got that B-17--they found one; they knew where it was--and if they could have got it to running, it's possible they could have got off. But they never could get it to run. So they just went on down to the coast and stayed several days and come back.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that some of the prisoners actually felt shame, that is, they were ashamed over the fact that Americans had to surrender.

Rasbury: Well, I think that run through all our minds, and it affected us some because at that time, we didn't know what the whole story was. Then later, when we found out that we did what we were supposed to do and found out that we were just really sacrificed, I think most of us had a better feeling about the situation.

Marcello: Okay, so on March 9th, the next day, you moved into this race-track, or at least you were there on March 9th, is that correct?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: What happens when you get to the racetrack?

Rasbury: Well, of course, like I say, we had our own guards; we had our own guns and our own transportation. We just communicated with

the Jap headquarters. We had our officers, who'd go down-- the ones that was handling that part of it--and the Japs would tell them what to do. We had our ration people; they were allowed to go in and buy supplies and stuff. Of course, at that time, we still had our own money, and we still did our own buying and everything of what we cooked and ate. There on the track, why, we had no contact with the Japs at all. I think there was some that maybe rode by or something, was about all. I guess I was--as far as just an average soldier--was one of the first ones to have any contact with them.

Marcello: I guess at this point the Japanese were still trying to secure the last remnants of the island.

Rasbury: Yes, in other places they were, but in this place, well, these Japs were taking care of us, you know. So they ordered all the guns and the ammunition, so we just all throwed them in the truck. Then it come up and the sergeant said, "Well, there's somebody who's got to go with it." The driver and the officer would go, and nobody else wanted to go (chuckle), because we had fouled these guns up to where they couldn't be used and throwed the firing pins away and things like that, you know. We thought, "Well, now they're going to see that, and they're really going to work somebody over."

Finally, I told Horace Chumley, I said, "Well, Horace,

what do you think? We might as well get our feet wet and see what it's like." He said, "If you want to go, I'll go." So we were the two that went in the back of the truck.

We got down to Garoet about, oh, I guess a couple of blocks from this headquarters. There was so many natives and people in the streets that we couldn't get through. So they sent out a group of Japs with fixed bayonets and just opened the road up and moved them back so we could get in with our truck.

Marcello: Did the natives show any hostility toward you?

Rasbury: No, but they wasn't giving us the victory sign (chuckle). In fact, they was giving us the other sign (laughter). So we went on in and backed up to where they told us to and unloaded this. When they saw those .50-caliber guns--there wasn't but two of them--boy, that took their eye. They didn't have anything like that. I think a .40-caliber was the biggest thing they had. They wanted to know all about it. Of course, our officers couldn't speak Japanese. They had interpreters there, you know, and they explained to them and showed them a little bit.

So after we got all the stuff unloaded, Chumley and I went back and got back up in the truck. Well, there was a little Jap guard standing out there and acted like he wanted to be friendly. Well, we didn't try to talk to him or anything.

So directly, he walked up to the truck and gave us a little candy. Well, we didn't know whether to eat it or not (chuckle), and we was afraid not to. So we didn't know how to thank him, because we didn't know enough Japanese at that time. But he just wanted to be friendly with us, I guess, and he gave us that candy and we ate it. That was our first contact with them.

Marcello: What did they look like from a physical standpoint? I'm referring now to the uniforms and things of that nature.

Rasbury: Well, we had heard all the time, you know, that the Japanese were small people. That was definitely wrong about some of these people. There were just some pretty good-sized soldiers there, and they were pretty well-armed. The uniforms that they had were neat and clean. Of course, I have seen some later that didn't look too good, but they'd been right in combat. But these guys were troops that were trained to do this particular job; these weren't field troops. Now I never saw any field troops for a long time . . . until after we got into Burma.

Marcello: And you say that their attitude was one of curiosity, perhaps, more than anything else?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, they had their cameras out. Most all of them that we come in contact with knew California or Hollywood. If you was from Texas, you was automatically a cowboy. They associated

Texas with cowboys and Hollywood with movie stars. Chicago and New York were gangsters. That's the way they had them just from seeing movies. From California to New York, as far as they was concerned, you could travel it in a day (chuckle).

Marcello: Now what happens at this point? Do you go back to the racetrack one more time?

Rasbury: Yes, they take us back to the racetrack. Of course, everybody else was still out there. We stayed there for two or three days after that. So I got to thinking, and I guess the others did, too, about, "Well, now what's going to happen to us? Nobody's bothered us yet."

Marcello: Were you speculating at this point as to how long you were going to be a prisoner-of-war?

Rasbury: Well, yes, but every day I just knew that they'd be coming in there to take us over, you know, take us out. So I got to thinking about, "Well, what if they take our clothes away from us?" So I thought, "Well, shoot, I'd better get me a suntan," and everybody had the same idea, you know. We said, "Well, when will we get any more clothes?" We didn't have nothing, only what we had right with us. Two suits was all I had. Well, some of them had more--had their barracks bags and stuff with them. But that's all I had, was a pair of coveralls and one pair of khakis.

Marcello: That's right. You mentioned that you had not been able to go

back to the base.

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, I lost my camera and souvenirs and everything.  
That's all I had.

Marcello: You had no mess gear or anything of that nature.

Rasbury: Yes, I had my mess gear. My mess gear and my water bottle, I never went off without it. I carried it and my rifle everywhere I went. So I got my shelter half out and pulled my shirt off, you know, and started taking on a little sun, and I looked at my watch. The first sergeant come by, and he said, "Rasbury, you better get up from there! You're gonna blister!" I looked at my watch, and I said, "I've only been here three minutes." He said, "Well, your back's just as red as it can be." He said, "You're gonna really get in trouble." So I got up and put my shirt on. I peeled; I blistered enough in three minutes, because there was water on each side of those rice paddies, you know, and I think that had a lot to do with it. I blistered and my back peeled off in three minutes.

Well, there wasn't nothing to do. We just sat around and read, and the officers had gone to town and bought several cases of cigarettes for the boys and bought everybody a deck of cards and bought some dominoes and stuff. So they had an idea that we might have time for a while, you know, to use them. So we did stay out there two or three days. Then we



went from there to up in a tea plantation up in the mountains.

Marcello: So how long were you at the racetrack altogether?

Rasbury: Oh, I'd say four or five days.

Marcello: And this was in Garoet?

Rasbury: Yes, it was in Garoet. The tea plantation was near Garoet; it was just up in the mountains, was all.

Marcello: But the Japanese never really came into this racetrack at all.

Rasbury: No.

Marcello: I assume in terms of rations, you were eating more or less what you had been eating for several months.

Rasbury: Yes, we was buying our own rations . . . going down and buying them. It was the same way up at the tea plantation.

Marcello: How did you move from the racetrack to the tea plantation?

Rasbury: Well, we still had our vehicles. They didn't take them up.

Marcello: Were they marked in some way so as that you wouldn't be fired upon?

Rasbury: No. No, everything was over, and they just never did bother us. When we moved, why, they knew we was moving. We moved up into there, and at one time we got cut off. The Japs couldn't get in there, and we couldn't get out.

Marcello: Why was that?

Rasbury: Well, we had a big rain, and there was a big landslide, and the mountain slid down across the road.

Marcello: How long were you at the tea plantation altogether?

Rasbury: Oh, I'd say about a week.

Marcello: And what did you do up there?

Rasbury: Just sat around. Everybody thought the money wouldn't be any good, and they was playing Black Jack with hundred-dollar bills (chuckle) and just stuff like that. Just kind of amusing themselves up there.

Marcello: Were you thinking very much about the future and what your fate was going to be at this early stage?

Rasbury: Oh, I think we'd think about it. As far as myself, I didn't discuss it with nobody, because I really didn't know nothing . . . what to expect. We were just kind of riding the thing as it went to see what was going to happen. Now if we would have known the future, we might have tried to do something about it. But things were pretty easy up to then: "Well, we'll just wait and see."

Marcello: I assume that you are still acting in a military manner. In other words, discipline was being maintained and this sort of thing.

Rasbury: Yes, that's right. That was never changed, but there was a change made later. We stayed there about, I guess, about a week. Then we went into . . . they moved us down right . . . we stayed in our trucks and camped out on the side of the road right in Garoet right by the railroad. I guess we was there for close to a week.

Marcello: Did you still not have any contact with the Japanese?

Rasbury: Just patrols coming by.

Marcello: And that was it; they were just coming by?

Rasbury: Yes. We didn't salute them or nothing; we just ignored them. They'd be on bicycles, and they'd just ride right on through.

Marcello: So you were here at this . . .

Rasbury: Now some of the boys had contact with them--the ones that was on supply and things that way, you know, and the ones that would go into town. (Chuckle) One guy went into town, and he and his partner got pretty "soused up" and walked right into a guardhouse. Boy, they picked them up and brought them back out there. But they didn't give much trouble at all.

Marcello: So what did you do here by the railroad tracks?

Rasbury: Oh, just sat around and played cards and dominoes and talked and took care of our regular duties, you know, and kept what few clothes we had clean.

Marcello: Now are we still talking about the whole unit? Is most of the unit still here at the railroad track?

Rasbury: Yes, everything but one battery. Battery E was in . . . Battery E, see, didn't go with us. They stayed behind in Malang, and then they went from there to Surabaya. They went back into Surabaya. Because they were supposed to have had a ship waiting for them there. Oh, I don't know . . . Fujita, if you talk to him, he'll give you all that. He was in that group.

But the rest of them had . . . the ones that had left us, most all of them had come back up on the hill.

Marcello: So where do you go from the railroad tracks?

Rasbury: Well, they loaded us on the train and moved us into Tanjong Priok, which was the wrong camp; they got mixed up. We stayed there for about a month. Around the 1st of May, why, then they moved us out of there into Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: Now was the trip on the train done in a rather orderly manner? In other words, did the Japanese harass you at all as they were getting you on these trains and so on?

Rasbury: Oh, they kind of hurried us up, you know, if you lagged behind, but not so much getting on the train as it was after we got off of it that night. They got pretty rough with them, because we had to march all the way from the railroad to Tanjong Priok. Man, there was some of them loaded with two barracks bags, and there's no way they could walk that far with them. If they'd have laid them down, well, the Japs would make them pick them up again. It was a pretty rough march. I don't remember how far it was--quite a few miles--that we had to go in. It was all at night, too.

Marcello: Describe what Tanjong Priok was like from a physical standpoint. Describe the camp, in other words.

Rasbury: That was the first barbed wire we had seen. It was a native barracks. There were English and Indians--I don't remember

whether there was any Dutch; I don't think there was any Dutch in that--and some Australians, and then we were in there. It was pretty close quarters.

Of course, I guess that's why most of the boys don't know too much about my activities, because I was sort of a loner. I didn't like to be crowded. If it was any way possible, I didn't stay in the same places as the rest of them. I got out and pitched me a shelter tent out where I'd have plenty of room and stayed outside.

Marcello: But the rest of them were in barracks?

Rasbury: Yes, they had barracks. I could have been in there, but I'd just rather been outside. It was a little old . . . I think it was a bathhouse of some sort, and I took it. I didn't sleep in there. It wasn't big enough to sleep in, but I kept all my stuff in there. I slept out under that shelter half.

We kept a radio in there that we'd smuggled in. This radio communications . . . "Jess" Stanbrough was his name; he would operate it and listen and get the news and stuff.

Marcello: How did you sneak the radio into Tanjong Priok? Was it taken in in parts?

Rasbury: No, I think it went in Tanjong Priok as a whole. Now we didn't want to use the speaker on it, because we was afraid that they might hear it. So we got to watching, and at one of the places where we was working, I found a set of headphones,

and I brought it in for him.

Marcello: I assume that, even at this early date, the Japanese had told you the consequences of being caught with a radio?

Rasbury: Oh, yes, we knew that. The English had passed that on down to us, too.

Marcello: Was the radio assembled and then disassembled after each use, or how did that work?

Rasbury: When we left Tanjong Priok, we took it all apart--"Jess" did-- and different ones would take a different part.

Marcello: But how about when the radio was still in camp yet? Was it kept in one piece at all times, or was it broken down there, too?

Rasbury: Yes, it was kept in a water can at that time. They just thought it was one of those . . . you know, that had water in it. He kept it out there in that bathhouse. They never did bother about going and looking in it or anything. In fact, they never did shake us down. I don't remember them shaking us down in Tanjong Priok at all.

Marcello: What sort of food did you get here at Priok?

Rasbury: Well, that was our first encounter with the type of food we was going to have from then on. The English was doing the cooking, and they brought it up there in big pots. It was kind of a tapioca stew and rice with worms in it. Of course, at that stage, that was our first . . . well, that next day

was our first meal . . . well, breakfast was; I don't remember what we had for breakfast--wasn't much. But our first daylight meal where we could see, well, I just couldn't hardly eat any of it. But eventually, I got, you know, hungry enough to where I did. But I still picked those worms out. But after awhile, you got tired of that (chuckle); you'd shut your eyes and eat them all.

Marcello: Is that all you were getting here, is rice?

Rasbury: Yes, it was rice and a stew-like of just vegetables like pumpkin and cucumbers--all kinds of vegetables thrown into the pot and boiled up.

Marcello: What sort of work were you doing here at Tanjong Priok?

Rasbury: Well, we'd go out on clean-up details at the docks and around the oil refineries and load barges with stuff that they were taking away from Java to probably carry them back to Japan or other places. I've worked on docks and loaded rubber; I've loaded quinine; I've loaded machinery. I've worked in a place they called the Studebaker House where they were separating automobile parts, you know, this part and another--getting them ready to ship out.

Marcello: Was this hard work?

Rasbury: No, they didn't work us . . . some of it was. Handling that rice, that 200-pound sack of rice, was pretty heavy for us. Handling that rubber was worse than the quinine, I think.

Marcello: Now, were you closely supervised by guards on these details, or were you more or less working under the supervision of your own officers?

Rasbury: Well, we were under our officers, too, but also the guards was there telling us what to do.

Marcello: Did they harass you at all on these details?

Rasbury: No, not if you did what they'd tell you to, they didn't. But if you goofed off and they caught you doing something you wasn't supposed, why, they'd bash you around. On all the details I was on, it was that way.

Marcello: Were you able to steal anything while you were on any of these work details?

Rasbury: Yes, that's the reason most of us wanted to go out, because you was . . . the guards--some of them--were pretty good, and they'd let you buy stuff and bring it in. You was always able to steal something if you could get it in. You'd have to figure out different ways of getting stuff in.

There's one thing I tell. I don't remember who the fellow was, but the Jap down on the guard one day was in a ration warehouse. It had all kinds of milk and food supplies, you know. He was going to show us how the Americans would steal things. I guess because we would steal, why, he figured all the Americans was that way. He found him a case of this condensed cream. So he tore the thing open right quick, you



know, and then he just stopped and looked around like nobody's watching. Then he got him a can of it and sat it over on a rice sack and put his hat over it. He walked around a little bit and come back, and he reached to get it and it was gone. (Laughter) Somebody had already stole it.

Well, he didn't know what to think about it, but he didn't say too much then. But when we got ready to go in, he shook everybody down and didn't find the milk. But he got to thinking about it after we got in camp, and so he had them to shake them down again and didn't find the milk. He just couldn't understand what went with it. He figured, "Well, they just hid it somewhere down there." So as we was walking off, this old boy took that can of milk, hollered at him, shook it, and he just told him to go on (laughter). But he'd had it . . . he was wearing a G-string, and that's where we'd hide things--just right in our crotch, you know.

Marcello: You were wearing the G-strings even this early in your tenure as a prisoner-of-war?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, some of them would wear them.

Marcello: Am I to assume that these work details were voluntary, or were you assigned to them?

Rasbury: No, they would just call for so many, and they went down the roster. See, we were still an organization. The way the

Japanese put it, we were part of the Japanese Army--the labor force, I think they called it. So that's why they wanted us to sign that paper in July of '42 that we would not escape.

Marcello: Okay, this is getting a little bit ahead of our story, because that occurs up in Bicycle Camp.

Rasbury: Yes, that's right. We're not in Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: We'll talk about that later on.

Rasbury: But in this camp . . . most of the things we did was around the docks because we were already there; we were down on the docks.

Marcello: Did they harass you very much in this camp?

Rasbury: No, in Tanjong Priok, I think they were still scared of us. They would not come in the camp.

Marcello: What made you think they were perhaps scared of you?

Rasbury: Well, like I say, Tanjong Priok was down on the docks, and there was lot of Japanese soldiers and navy personnel, air force personnel, and they'd all come by and take pictures of us through the barbed wire. When they found out Americans were down there . . . now they didn't seem to pay any attention to the Australians and English, but when they found out the Americans were there, why, they'd come down, and they'd take pictures through the barbed wire--just for their own use, I guess. They'd just heard so much that I guess they wanted to

know what kind of people they were against.

Marcello: Let's get back to that radio one more time. There are one or two questions I should have asked you earlier. When would you listen to that radio?

Rasbury: Well, this sergeant would listen even in the daytime or night--most anytime--because he'd go out in this little bathhouse. There'd be some people watching. We had people on the gate to keep anybody from coming in all the time. We had our own guards on our gate, and that was the only way in and out.

Marcello: What sort of reception were you getting with this radio?

Rasbury: Well, he was getting pretty good reception. He could get San Francisco pretty good. It was a portable set.

It belonged to . . . this particular one belonged to a sergeant from Decatur by the name of Marlin Lewis. It was a battery set or electric--either one. Of course, there in Tanjong Priok, we had electricity, so we was using it.

Stanbrough was a real good technician. Without him, I don't think anybody else could have ever made it work. It was a short-wave radio, was what it was. So that's probably why it picked up so far.

Marcello: What were the shower and bathing facilities like here in Tanjong Priok?

Rasbury: You know, that's something that's completely slipped my mind.

I don't even remember . . . we were bound to have had a place, but I just don't remember. It seems like it was sort of a community place that everybody went to. I'm just not for sure on that.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how was the health of the prisoners here at Tanjong Priok?

Rasbury: Well, we were holding up real good there with everybody going out working. We had very few of what you'd say were real sick people. In fact, I don't think we had too many sick people in Java at all.

Now I had a friend--I won't call no name--that was . . . they put him in the sick ward, but it was . . . well, he broke out; it looked like a rash, but they wasn't so sure. So they thought maybe it might be something else. So they put him down there with the Indians and Australians and everybody else. But then we moved, and they found out later that it wasn't what they thought it was. It was a change of diet, was what caused it.

Marcello: In other words, at first they thought he had some sort of venereal disease or something of this nature?

Rasbury: Yes, yes. Then he broke out in sores all over. But it wasn't that at all. The Dutch doctor got hold of him, and found out and said it was the change of diet, is what caused it. But there wasn't too much that went on there in Tanjong Priok,

only just these details that was going out.

Marcello: Were you still rather optimistic, if we can use that term?

Rasbury: Oh, yes. Like I've had people to ask me, "Did you ever think that you wouldn't ever make it back?" And I said, "No."

Marcello: Of course, the ones that did not think they would make it back are still over there.

Rasbury: Yes. I said, "I always looked from one day to the next." It didn't take me long to figure out what to do; if you had anything to eat, you ate it all today because tomorrow you didn't know whether you was going to be there or not. Like here in Tanjong Priok, the English told our officers that if they caught you with food, why, they'd give you a lot of trouble. So we turned all of ours in. We had a lot of sugar and canned stuff and everything, and turned it in to them. Well, later on, why, we was buying it back from them. It didn't go to the mess at all; they took it and traded it back to us for cigarettes.

Marcello: The Japanese did this?

Rasbury: No, the English did.

Marcello: At this early date, are you already forming some rather negative opinions of the British?

Rasbury: Yes, we found out they'd take the advantage of you right quick. I won't say all of them, but the higher ranking officers would. Later on, if we get that far, I can tell you a lot more about that.

Marcello: Now you mentioned awhile ago that when you were on work details, some of the guards would allow you to buy things from the local population. Where were you getting your money?

Rasbury: Well, we all had money. They never did take it away from us or anything. Most of us had some money. If you have a watch . . . well, if it was an American-made watch, well, it was hard to keep it. Now they wouldn't take it away from you, but they'd aggravate you to death until you sold it to them. So that's where we'd get most of our money and stuff like that. Of course, at that time, everybody had a little money. Everybody had cigarettes; they didn't have to buy any of that, because the officers bought enough to issue them for several months.

Marcello: Were the officers buying food here out of company funds? I believe you said that awhile ago.

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, they . . .not in this camp, they didn't. In Tanjong Priok, I think they only let them buy canteen supplies one time. I think everybody got an orange drink and a tube of toothpaste and a toothbrush and a comb. I think that's about the only thing that they bought in that camp there.

Marcello: Let me ask you a rather general question at this point, and I hope I can phrase it clearly. How do you learn to cope in a stress situation of this nature? In other words, you're encountering people from a different culture; they have a different

set of values; they have a different way of life. How do you adjust? How do you cope?

Rasbury: Well, you just have to kind of go along with things and learn to live a different life, is all. You've just got to make up your mind, "Well, that's the way it is, and there's nothing that you can do about it." If you want to survive, you've just got to adjust. Because if you try to get rough with them, well, they can just get rougher. The best thing to do is just to kind of go along. The way I always looked at it was to do what you're supposed to do. Still sometimes when you'd do that, you'd get in trouble.

We also learned that--not in this camp though but later on--when we was having more contact with the Japanese through working and all, that if we learned to talk Japanese, it'd keep us out of a lot of trouble. Because if they misunderstood or you misunderstood and did the wrong thing, then they were just liable to bash you for it. In fact, I think in the beginning, that's what most of the bashings were over--a misunderstanding. Of course, we learned to count; we learned to drill in Japanese. In fact, I can count in Japanese now just about as good as I can in my own language. I don't guess I'll ever forget it.

Marcello: So in other words, you do have to learn a little bit about their culture.

Rasbury: Yes, you've got to. You've got to learn their way of thinking

to get along with them. If you intend to get along with them, well, then you've just got to do it. So I never did have too much problems with them. In this camp, I didn't have any trouble with any of them at all.

Marcello: Also, when we speak about physical punishment, we do have to remember, do we not, that physical punishment was a way of life in the Japanese Army?

Rasbury: Yes. That's something else that I will say, and that is that they went along with the prisoner-of-war life like it was supposed to be. They paid us according to what they paid their soldiers, and they fed us the way they fed their soldiers-- but they were used to it. Well, I won't say all the time they did. They expected respect, because we were the ones that was defeated. Actually, I don't guess you'd say we were defeated, but to them we were.

Marcello: Well, I think we could probably even go one step farther and say that so far as they were concerned, you had forfeited all rights to live simply because you had surrendered. You had, in effect, disgraced yourselves by surrendering.

Rasbury: Yes, that's right, according to them--their way of thinking.

Marcello: So essentially, they could do anything with you they wanted to, as far as they were concerned.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Did you ever see examples of a Japanese sergeant bashing a



Japanese corporal and a corporal bashing a private and so on?

Rasbury: Yes, but that comes later on, if you want me to wait on it.

Marcello: Well, we'll talk about that a little bit later on then. Is there anything else that we need to talk about with regards to Tanjong Priok, or have we more or less covered that month you spent there?

Rasbury: There just wasn't much that went on there. That'll cover it.

Marcello: Okay, what's the next move?

Rasbury: We went into Batavia then; they moved us all into there.

Marcello: How far is Tanjong Priok from Batavia?

Rasbury: Oh, we went by truck, and it didn't take us long. It wasn't too far. It's in Batavia; Tanjong Priok is part of Batavia. It's just the docks of Batavia, which is called Djakarta now. They changed the name of it. I don't remember . . . we went there that day. In other words, it's just a few hours . . . just an hour or so or something like that to drive.

Marcello: What did Bicycle Camp look like from a physical standpoint, because that's where you were going?

Rasbury: Well, when you first looked at it, you couldn't tell too much about it from the front, because it was more of a long camp that went way back. You know, it wasn't wide. You'd just see these barracks, and you'd go in by the guardhouse. I don't know why they saved the front barracks--right in the front--for the

Americans (chuckle). Probably the English and Australians probably had something to do with that. Of course, the Dutch were over by themselves; they didn't mix us in with the Dutch at that point.

Marcello: Was there barbed wire around this camp?

Rasbury: Yes. But it had . . . in fact, the Dutch . . . best I can remember, around the front of it, it seemed like there was a rock wall up around the front. But then there was barbed wire at the back and the sides, because the guards would walk around the outside of this barbed wire.

Marcello: Is there a certain psychological adjustment to be made when you first have to live behind barbed wire? Does it bother you in a sense?

Rasbury: Well, I think by the time they put us . . . now if they'd have thrown us right in behind barbed wire . . . now some of the sailors, they had encounters like that; I think their's was worse than us. As soon as they hit the island, well, they picked them up and threwed them in jails and behind barbed wire, and they had no freedom like we had, you know, out on the roads and stuff like that. It seemed like we just gradually built into this thing. We were adjusting to this life; we didn't have barbed wire around us, but we couldn't go nowhere. Well, some did, but you wasn't supposed to. I think we were a lot better off than those Navy boys were.

Marcello: When did you move into Bicycle Camp?

Rasbury: I believe it was in May.

Marcello: Of 1942?

Rasbury: May of '42.

Marcello: Describe what your living quarters were like here.

Rasbury: Well, it was long barracks with porches on it. I wound up out on the porch, because, like I say, I never liked to be crowded inside. After about a couple of days of kind of getting adjusted to a new place, you know, and finding your way around and having new friends--this is where we got with the sailors off the Houston--and when all that excitement of talking and finding out new things and different things died down, well, then you started settling down on living.

Then the details started coming up. They put me to work up in the carpenter shop with an Australian.

Marcello: Let's just back up a minute here at this point. We're talking about your living quarters. You mentioned that you were actually sleeping out on the porch. What were you using for bedding?

Rasbury: Well, now that's what I was fixing to say. They had to have somebody on a woodwork detail or a carpenter helper and all. So I had done some of that, and they knew it and they sent me up there. Well, I just worked for him for a long time there. What we were doing was building beds out of taking doors off of buildings and making bunks for the hospital. Well, I made

me a frame and put a rice sack on it. That's a lot better sleeping than on the floor . . . on a concrete floor (chuckle). But I'm always coming up with some kind of sleeping quarters. I just didn't like sleeping down on the hard floor. So I just, you know, took me two boards and two-by-fours and made me a framework and put those sacks right over it and made me a hammock-like, you know.

Of course, I guess I've always had a . . . like being a merchant of making money or surviving all my life. Like I say, we didn't have much money then. We was working for twenty-five cents a day, I think is what it was, when we went out on details. But if you didn't go out, well, you didn't get anything. Well, I wasn't going out. I was working with this carpenter shop.

So I started . . . they had a canteen that you could buy stuff from, and I started making fudge candy. We could buy this sweetened condensed milk, and it had a recipe on there. So I started making it--just plain fudge, you know. Well, it sold pretty good. Well, it got to where I was selling quite a bit.

So other people decided, "Well, if he can do it, well, we can," see. So they decided they'd do it, too. I would do this at night after I got off from work, you know. So they'd let us build fires out in the camp, you know--certain areas where you can build fires and cook stuff and things that way. So

these others started. Well, that kind of narrowed my sales down, so I had to do something else.

So I went to the canteen and bought all the chocolate they had. They only bought supplies once a week, so I knew that I could last a week on that. I bought all the cocoa they had. So I had chocolate fudge where they just had old plain fudge, see.

Well, the next move I had to do was when they got their chocolate, why, I bought all the peanuts up (chuckle) and put peanuts in it. Well, that went on, oh, for I guess a couple of months. I had two or three shelling peanuts for me and helping me make candy and helping selling. It was just a little business, you know, right inside the camp.

But I'd go ahead out on other details if, you know, if my time come, but most of the time I worked there in the carpenter shop. The last job I did before I quit . . . we worked in the guardhouse. We put a door on a room. When we got through there, they wanted us to put a lock on it. Then they told us to go in there in another room where they had their ammunition in this guardhouse and put all the ammunition in there. They wouldn't let the guards have but one clip. They got a bunch of new guards in there, and they didn't know anything about rifles. They were Koreans. They'd shot the ceiling nearly out of that thing (chuckle)--letting them go off.

They wouldn't let them have the ammunition; they just issued it to them when they wanted them to have it. They kept the ammunition locked up in there. That was the last job that I did with them.

Marcello: Now how long did you work in that carpenter shop?

Rasbury: Oh, I guess I worked there probably about three months.

Marcello: Were you doing mainly odd jobs? Is that the best way to describe it?

Rasbury: Yes, just around over the camp. When I wasn't doing anything, I built me a desk. It was sort of a draftsman's desk. It was about three feet long and about two feet wide. It hinged but had no metal screws or anything like that; it was all put together with pegs. This Australian carpenter, boy, he was one of the best. He really knew how to carpenter. I learned a lot about carpenter work from him.

Marcello: Now I assume that you were not being supervised here necessarily by the Japanese.

Rasbury: No. No, this is just by the Australian.

Marcello: Why did you decide to quit working in the carpenter shop?

Rasbury: Well, they really didn't have enough to keep us busy, and I kind of wanted to get outside and see what was out there. I started going out on details outside.

Marcello: What sort of details did you work on outside the camp?

Rasbury: Oh, we went to a golf course and stacked barrels. We'd go

down on the docks, and we went to another place where they had car parts. We'd, you know, straighten them up and separate them. It was just boxes of stuff; we'd take them out and lay them out and separate them where they could know what was what, you know.

Marcello: They were shipping most of this stuff back to Japan, I gather.

Rasbury: Yes, they were shipping most of it, and they was using some of it, you know, on vehicles and things there.

Marcello: Now when you came into Bicycle Camp, what were some of the rules that the Japanese laid down for the prisoners? In other words, what could you do and what could you not do?

Rasbury: Well, there wasn't too much rules to it. You just couldn't get out of the camp. They'd come in there once in awhile, but you just didn't go in and out of the camp. What you did back there, you know, it didn't make any difference to them.

Marcello: Suppose you encountered a Japanese guard. What procedure did you have to follow?

Rasbury: If you was bareheaded, you bowed to them; if you had a cap or a hat on, you saluted them. That was the main thing. That was the first time I got hit by the Japs for not doing that.

Marcello: Why don't you describe this incident?

Rasbury: Well, it was kind of funny how it happened. I never did like oatmeal in my life; I'd never eat oatmeal. But that morning, we had oatmeal for breakfast, so it was either eat oatmeal or

eat nothing. So I ate it, and it was good. I heard they had some more, so I went back for seconds. But they'd run out just before I got there.

I'm going down around the back to go on out, and there was a guard standing behind a gate that I went through, and there was a sack on this gate. Well, I didn't see him. He steps out from behind it and hollers at me. Well, I had my cap on, because I didn't like to bow. I wore my cap. I saluted him, but that wasn't good enough for him.

Before I knew it, he'd done bopped me up side the head and then made me go around behind the kitchen. There was about four other guys around there. The only one I remember for sure around there was Crayton Gordon. They were standing with their hands out like this (gesture) at attention. Well, we stood there awhile and was about to give out, and this Jap out of the kitchen came out and told us to go home. Well, we started, but we met this other guard right around the corner, and he put us back to attention (chuckle).

Then these two Japs got in an argument, so old Crayton said, "Well, I believe we're going to get bashed either way, whether we stay or go!" I said, "Well, you all can stay if you want to, but I'm going!" I took off (chuckle) while they were arguing, and they did, too. So we never did hear no more out of it. But we heard they got in a scrap after we left;



they really tangled.

Marcello: What items did they expressly forbid you to possess?

Rasbury: Well, at that time, they didn't. . . of course, if they caught you with a gun, they'd probably take it away from you. But they wouldn't take your pocketknives or anything like that.

Marcello: How about writing material?

Rasbury: No, they'd let you buy it, you know. That's where I got . . . in Bicycle Camp is where I bought a couple of books that I got that I kept all my notes in.

Marcello: How about matches?

Rasbury: Yes, lighters and cigarettes. They didn't care. They were real strict about smoking and smoking areas. You'd better have something to snuff it out in if you was smoking. You sure better not let them see you throw it on the ground, because they were really scared of fire.

Marcello: Did you bring your radio into Bicycle Camp, also?

Rasbury: Well, I didn't bring anything in, but they brought it in and set it up there. I never did see it no more after that.

Marcello: How was the news distributed?

Rasbury: Just from one person to the other.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever pull sneak inspections at the barracks here at Bicycle Camp?

Rasbury: Yes, once in awhile they would. In fact, they changed guards

there one time, and we got a bunch of new Koreans in there that was really rough. One they called the "Brown Bomber"; he'd just be sitting around out there on guard kind of getting bored with everything, and he'd just grab his rifle, put his bayonet on it, and here he'd come. He'd walk down through there, and you didn't have to do anything; if he didn't like your looks, well, boy, he'd . . . if you was too tall, especially the taller people--he was real short--he'd make them get down on their knees where he could slap them a few times, you know. It just aggravates you, you know, to go through that. He couldn't hurt you--those guys couldn't--but just hurt your feelings, you know (chuckle).

Marcello: Describe what the food was like here at Bicycle Camp.

Rasbury: Well, it wasn't too bad, because the officers took money and bought supplies and things and channelled them through the kitchen. It was battalion money, see. The last month that we were supposed to get paid, they kept that and thought it would be more beneficial to us that way instead of taking it off of our pay.

Talking about food now, there's one thing that happened to me. This friend of mine was real sick, and I was doing all this work and selling this candy and trying to keep food for him to eat, like peaches and cream and stuff that way. Well, when they decided to put all this food through the kitchen,

well, they wanted us to turn all of our food in and let it go through the kitchen. That way they had a bigger buy, and they could buy more stuff. If we bought it, they couldn't get it through the kitchen. Well, I didn't turn mine in, so the major came to talk to me about it. I said, "Well, sir, I know I'm supposed to, but I've bought this food. I know you're going to pay me for it, but I got this as much for Chumley as I have for myself on account of him being sick." I said, "If you will set up some sort of a kitchen for people like him that needs a little something extra, then I don't want no pay; I'll just donate it." He said, "All right. We'll just do that." He said, "You're in charge of it."

After that, I didn't know that it was going to pertain to work for me to do, you know. So we started to buy a kitchen. I went up to the kitchen and got me a room on this little building for the sick people to eat in. We had tables. I got all the soup. I didn't get all the fruit, but if they was short on fruit, why, I got what I needed. If somebody was sick and was in for a day or so, like with dysentery and stuff like that, well, I had a special diet for them. I fed quite a few people through there.

Marcello: What was the general fare of food that you were receiving here in Bicycle Camp?

Rasbury: Well, it was pretty good. It was more of a . . . they couldn't

buy enough of steak for us to have steak or enough eggs just to have eggs and stuff like that. It would be more of a stew or rice patties or something like that . . . beans . . . something we'd buy in large quantities.

Marcello: Were you getting sufficient amounts of food here?

Rasbury: Yes, I think we were. I don't think anybody went hungry there. Of course, a lot of them ate rice, a lot of rice.

Marcello: In other words, were you more or less holding your weight here?

Rasbury: Yes. I don't remember anybody ever losing too much weight, even when they were sick. As I say, they all had a little money, and they were buying a little extra stuff outside and things that way, you know.

Marcello: Did it take some experience before the Americans got the knack of cooking rice? I assume here in Bicycle Camp you were cooking your own rice.

Rasbury: Yes. But the kitchens were set up to cook rice. That's where they got their experience, was there through the Dutch and the Australians. The Australians were real good rice cooks, and that's where they learned to cook it, was there through them.

Marcello: Were you getting three meals a day?

Rasbury: Yes, we were eating three meals a day.

Marcello: I've heard it said from time to time that the officers seemed to be living a little bit better than the enlisted men or eating a little bit better than the enlisted men. The implication is

that the officers were perhaps buying better food for themselves than what they were giving to the prisoners. Have you ever heard this?

Rasbury: Well, I didn't have that close a contact with them in Java. But that's something that--I'll explain later on, too--after we got into the jungles that they didn't have. If they did, there was some of the men that ate a lot better than the officers, because they bought it. They had the money to buy it, and the officers had a little more money. What they had extra was stuff they had bought for themselves.

Marcello: In other words, they were using personal money rather than the company's money to buy the food.

Rasbury: That's right. They wasn't using the . . . see, the officers were paid . . . I think they were paid about, oh, I don't remember the amount; you can say 200 dollars a month. They'd hold out so much for clothing, which they didn't get; they'd hold out for their lodging; and they'd hold out for their place to stay. Then what they had left, they'd give them five dollars a month or twenty-five--whatever it was--and then the rest of it went into the bank in Tokyo (chuckle). That's how they got around it, see. They still paid them according to the books. They paid them as much as they did their own officers, but they didn't get it.

Marcello: Did they make officers work?

Rasbury: I never saw any. In the camps I was always in, the officers was in charge of the groups. But now there was officers' camps where they did work.

Marcello: Did the officers more or less serve as the go-between for the Japanese and the enlisted prisoners?

Rasbury: Most of the time.

Marcello: In other words, the chain of command was from the Japanese to the officers to the enlisted men.

Rasbury: That's the way it was supposed to have been, but a lot of times it went straight from the Japs to the individual.

Marcello: As you mentioned previously, military discipline was still being maintained in this camp.

Rasbury: Yes, that was one of the things that . . . after we was a prisoner-of-war . . . the first camp we went in--I think that was Tanjong Priok . . . it might have been Bicycle Camp; I believe it was Bicycle Camp, but I'm not for sure. Anyway, the colonel put out an order--and it was passed on down--that since we were in such close quarters, the saluting would be stopped. Because it was a pain for them as much as us, you know, for that close a quarters. And as far as the discipline and everything it would be carried on as well as the military organization and everything. But just the little formality-type things didn't have to go on, because we were too closely encountered that way.

Marcello: Some sort of military discipline, I would assume, was necessary for survival under these conditions.

Rasbury: Oh, yes. It had to be. I think the Japanese understood that, too, so they requested that.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that in July of 1942, the Japanese tried to force all of the prisoners to sign a non-escape pledge, so to speak. Describe that particular incident.

Rasbury: Well, I was on a detail that day. They had asked us before time, but our officers had suggested that we refuse to sign it. Because if you signed it voluntarily, it could be something that'd come of it, you know, later on. But if you refused to sign it one time through the officers, why, then if they make you sign a piece of paper, it's no good to start with. So that's what happened there; everybody refused to sign it the first time.

Well, then the next time it happened on the Fourth of July. I think they did it then because I think they figured the Americans was kind of leading the pack on that. On the Fourth of July, well, they shut our kitchen down, so we had to eat with the Australians. We'd ordered a bunch of extra stuff, you know (chcukle), because we were going to celebrate that night.

Well, I was on detail that day. We came in, and they stopped us outside. They came out and told us, "You're going to sign this piece of paper or else!" The ones that didn't

sign it, they put them in a room, and they had that room full of them. Shoot, I walked right on through there and signed it just like it didn't mean nothing to me.

I thought everybody eventually signed it . . . I thought everybody had signed it, but I found out later that there was one that didn't . . . named Williams. After we got on up into Burma, they found out where he was and discovered he didn't sign one. They brought it to him to sign, and he said, "Why should I?" I don't think he ever signed it, but I do think the Jap sergeant that was in charge forged his name on it and sent it on back, because they never did do anything with him.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that you had your first contact with Korean guards here in Bicycle Camp. Describe those Korean guards.

Rasbury: Well, about the best way I can describe them is . . . you know, Korea was under Russia for many years; then Japan took them. They'd been under the thumb so long, and then when you give them a little bit of authority, boy, they didn't know what to do with it. They took advantage of it. They thought authority meant to beat people, I guess, because they sure did like to.

Marcello: Evidently, they were very brutal.

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, they had some treacherous ways of punishing people.

Marcello: What were some of the things they would do here in Bicycle Camp?



Rasbury: Well, they caught about a half a dozen people with some things like nails--just little things that didn't amount to anything, you know. It wasn't anything they were trying to escape with; it was just something to fix their bunk with or things that way, you know, maybe something to eat. They shaved their heads and put them right out in the hot sun and made them get on their knees and put a bamboo between their legs back here (gesture). That was in the evening, and they were still there the next morning. A big sign out in front said, "These men have stolen." Well, some of them passed out, and they finally turned them loose the next day. But they were there nearly forty-eight hours.

Marcello: Is it accurate to say that in many cases they were simply sadistic?

RAsbury: Well, yes, I believe that's the way I'd put it.

Marcello: Did you see them perform any other types of punishment?

Rasbury: No, that's about the only occasion that I can think of. Now they might have been nasty out on details that I wasn't on, you know, and things that way might have happened.

It's right back to the same old story that I said before. If they catch you doing something, they're going to punish you. We all knew that; it was just chances that we would take. It was according to what was involved and whether we'd want to take a chance on that or not. It was according to how hungry you

were and things that way.

Marcello: I assume you had nicknames for most of these guards.

Rasbury: Yes, the one I remember mostly there was. . . we called him the "Brown Bomber." Boy, when he come through there, he really knocked heads (chuckle).

Marcello: Am I to assume that bashings with fists and open palms and rifle butts was a rather common occurrence? You don't mention it very much, so I assume that it was so common that you perhaps don't even think it's worth mentioning.

Rasbury: Yes, you really didn't have to do much for them to do that. There in that camp especially, if they decided they wanted a little exercise, they'd just take off and go down through the barracks.

Marcello: Do you learn how to "roll with the punch," so to speak?

Rasbury: Yes, you try to, but they soon caught on to that.

Marcello: I've heard it said that one of the worst things that you could do would be to fall.

Rasbury: Yes, that's when they'd start stomping you and hitting you with a rifle butt. You wanted to stay on your feet the best you can. But that one time there was the only time that I was ever hit by a Jap; that's the only time.

Marcello: Did you ever see instances where perhaps prisoners would become so frustrated that they would strike back at the Japanese? Did you ever see this occur?

Rasbury: I saw Lieutenant Stensland do that there in Java. We was out on a park just leveling it up, you know, just something to be out to get out of camp. There was a Dutch lady who brought some bananas on a bicycle; she stopped and held them up. There was a guard came up behind her and hit her. She didn't see this guard, and he hit her and knocked her down--her bicycle and all.

We were across a kind of a just a ditch like that, and Lieutenant Stensland was standing there. Boy, before you knew what was happening, he was over there and he'd done knocked that Jap down. He went one way, and the rifle went the other way. He was helping this lady up, and, boy, that Jap picked up his rifle and run . . . got back up there out of the way (chuckle). He didn't do a thing about it; he didn't do a thing. It scared him, I think (chuckle). Shoot, we just figured, you know, that that was it.

I saw one other case after we got up in the jungles--a guy by the name of Faulk; he was a Marine. We were working on this cut going down . . . making a cut through, you know. We were down in this place--it was probably about, oh, probably three or four feet high--and the guard was standing along the bank. He didn't think Faulk was working hard enough, so he hollered at him, "Speedo! Speedo!" you know. Old Faulk said, "You and the Dutch are the same! You just jabber all the time!"

He made him mad, and he jumped off of there. The first think you knew, he had hit Faulk. Faulk let him have it back. Boy, he jumped up and grabbed his rifle and put a shell in. I thought sure he was going to shoot him, but he backed off. Evidently, they orders not to, or I believe they would have a lot of times.

Marcello: Now it's in Bicycle Camp that you first encounter the survivors off the USS Houston.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Were they already there when you arrived?

Rasbury: Yes, when we got in there, they were already there.

Marcello: Describe what they looked like from a physical standpoint.

Rasbury: Well, we were sort of embarrassed, being the Australians and all were there as well as them. They just didn't have no clothes and were running around there in G-strings and stuff like that, you know, and eating garbage. Of course, they were eating with the Australians, you know, and, boy, they'd just eat anything they could get a hold of. The stuff they had to eat out of . . . one guy had a hubcap off of a little English V-8 Ford, and another one had a small night pot, a baby pot, you know . . . and just anything they could find to eat out of. They didn't have wooden spoons and no knives or forks or anything that way. So when we got in there, well, we fitted them out with everything that they needed, you know.

Marcello: Evidently, there was a great deal of generosity shown by the unit with regards to clothing and feeding these survivors off the Houston.

Rasbury: Oh, yes.

Marcello: They evidently were in sorry shape.

Rasbury: Yes, they were. Well, they just didn't have nothing, you know, because they'd lost everything on that ship. They was just lucky to get to shore. Some of them had been in the water for . . . some of them stayed in the water for nearly a week . . . that wasn't picked up, you know. The tide would bring them in and then take them back before . . . they was so weak they couldn't swim, you know. I don't see how as many of them survived as there were.

Marcello: Evidently, there was a rapid blending of the Houston survivors and the 2nd Battalion.

Rasbury: Yes, they stayed as a unit. Well, the rest of us would eventually just . . . they just all mixed in; we were all Americans. When they started sending them out on details, they'd mix them up.

Marcello: When you sat around after work and had your bull sessions, what would you normally talk about?

Rasbury: You know, that was something a lot of them did, but I always had something to do. I never did do that very much. Like I say, while I was there in Java, I was in that candy business (chuckle); that kept me occupied. I was trying to make a buck.

- Marcello: Generally speaking, how would the conversations usually run--those that you could overhear, perhaps?
- Rasbury: Oh, they'd talk about . . . most of the things they'd talk about was something to eat and thinking about what they was going to do when they got out, you know, and things like that. Like one guy said . . . they got to talking about girls, and this old boy from Chico said, "Well, I tell you what. There's a girl in Bridgeport, Texas, and when I get back, I'm going to marry that girl." We come to find out that an old boy that was sitting there with him, it was his sister (laughter). And he did; he married her. But, you know, it was just wondering what was going on at home and things like that.
- Marcello: Were there any opportunities for recreation here in Bicycle Camp?
- Rasbury: Yes, I think they let them play volleyball, and they got up a boxing tournament and such as that there.
- Marcello: Were there any plays or things of that nature?
- Rasbury: Yes, they had some. Even the Japs come to see this. It was something to do with the sinking of the Houston. Of course, the Japs was right in on that, you know. They liked things like that. Yes, they had plays and things that way.
- Marcello: Is it safe to say that nobody was really overworked here at Bicycle Camp?
- Rasbury: Yes, I don't think anybody was ever overworked. It didn't have enough work for us all to do, anyway. It was just more or less

to get out of camp, and everybody would more or less volunteer to get out. You'd get one once in a while down on the docks that was pretty heavy, like, you know, loading that quinine and stuff that way. Most of the time it wasn't.

Marcello: What were the hospital facilities like here at Bicycle Camp?

Rasbury: It just had a barracks and very little medicine or anything . . . just what they'd had on hand, and that was all.

Marcello: Were there very many hospital cases here?

Rasbury: Yes, there was a few. They did one appendix operation, and they did one cyst operation on a boy that had a cyst right down on his testicles. Anyway, they operated on him with a pocket-knife. All their equipment was in a truck, and the truck never got there right then. They operated on him with the doctor's pocketknife. They had one medicine that was for everything-- charcoal pills. It didn't make any difference what you went there for, they gave you charcoal pills.

Marcello: Evidently, the charcoal was fairly good, though, for dysentery, was it not?

Rasbury: Yes, that's why they'd go ahead and give it to you. If you went there with a toe ache, they'd give you charcoal pills (chuckle).

Marcello: Was dysentery perhaps the major malady that the prisoners contracted here in Bicycle Camp?

Rasbury: No, not so much in Bicycle Camp. In Java, there really wasn't . . . very few, as far as Bicycle Camp when I was there, that

. . . the ones that was sick was like off the Houston that had been burned real bad and that way. Now as far as the soldiers were concerned, I don't think there was too many. I just can't think off-hand of anybody. Now there probably was some that I didn't know, because there was a lot going on in that camp. You just don't know everything that's going on.

Marcello: That was a pretty big camp, was it not?

Rasbury: Yes, I don't know just how many, but I'd say there was at least 3,000 or 4,000 people in that camp.

Marcello: Did you have very much contact with the other nationalities here?

Rasbury: Yes, with the Australians mostly. I don't believe there was any English in that camp; I'm not for sure. They were in Tanjong Priok; the English were all in Tanjong Priok. The Australians were here; most of these were Aussies.

Marcello: Was there a great deal of rapport between the various groups?

Rasbury: You mean friction between the groups?

Marcello: No, I mean, were there good relations between the troops?

RAsbury: Oh, yes, yes. Especially with the Australians. Now we got along a lot better with them than we did the Dutch or the English--either one.

Marcello: Why do you think you got along well with the Australians?

Rasbury: I think they're more like us. They just talked different (chuckle). I think if it was a little bigger country, why, it might be



another United States. I think they'd have been on their own a long time ago.

Marcello: What were the bathing and sanitary facilities like here at Bicycle Camp?

Rasbury: Well, they had regular bathhouses there. It wasn't a bad place, I mean, as far as baths. It was just long buildings, you know, with these old flush commodes, you know, but they didn't use them very much. But it was sort of a community affair, you know, just all open barracks-like.

Marcello: Did you have ample opportunities to take showers and baths and so on?

Rasbury: Oh, yes. You could take one any time you wanted to.

Marcello: There was plenty of water in this camp.

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, Java had plenty of water.

Marcello: You mentioned that when you were initially captured you had only two suits of clothing. Had you accumulated any more by the time you got to Bicycle Camp?

Rasbury: Not up to that time, I hadn't, because if you got two suits, you can keep one clean all the time.

Marcello: What were you doing with all the money you were making out of your candy business?

Rasbury: Oh, we'd buy extra stuff to eat once in a while and fix up a special dish sometimes. He smoked; we'd buy cigarettes for him.

Marcello: When you say "he," are you referring to Chumley?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, we were sort of . . . well, he was in the radio section, and I was, too. We just sort of chummed up together.

Marcello: I guess, after a while, little cliques do begin to form. When I use the term "clique," I'm not using it in a derogatory sense. There were certain people that had things in common, and you kind of looked out for one another.

Rasbury: No, that's right. Well, see, we were . . . I never knew him until I got into the service, even though he lived at Alvord. Well, we got together in Brownwood, and we were sleeping in the same tent. We got to running around together, and we just sort of become real close friends from then on.

Marcello: Describe what a typical day would be like here at Bicycle Camp, that is, from the time you got up until you went to bed at night. What was a typical day like?

Rasbury: Well, usually you'd get up . . .

Marcello: When would you have to roll out?

Rasbury: Oh, I'd say around seven o'clock, because they didn't usually go out on details until about nine.

Marcello: How did they get you out of bed? When I say "they," did the guards come through, or how did it work?

Rasbury: No, they had a bugle. Well, the Army had a bugler and then the Navy had a bugler. They used the Navy most of the time. He'd blow reveille or whatever they wanted him to blow.

Marcello: After you got up, what would occur then? What would be the next step?

Rasbury: Oh, we'd all go to breakfast and then come back and get ready to go out on different details or whatever your work was for that day.

Marcello: Was there a roll call every morning?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, we had to have roll call. That was . . . I believe the roll call was the first thing that they did . . . roll call and then go to breakfast.

Marcello: Who called roll?

Rasbury: Well, each organization had their own--each battery. Then they took the report to the Japanese. Sometimes we'd have a Japanese muster, and then they'd do the counting; we wouldn't do any. That's when we had to learn to count off in Japanese. They'd count how many back this way, and then we'd count across. Boy, they'd walk along and see that nobody got out of line that way. We'd count off, and then they'd multiply it by that many. They'd have these things with beads on it, you know, and they'd go across and then figure it up right quick.

Marcello: Now when you went out on your work details, did you take your lunch out on the job, so to speak?

Rasbury: No, they'd usually bring it to us. Or if it was some places, they'd let us buy our lunch.

Marcello: What time would you normally knock off at the end of the day?

Rasbury: Oh, there in Java, we'd usually knock off around three or four o'clock or something like that--kind of early--because we'd come in and have a lot of time, you know, from then until bedtime. We'd go up and visit with the Australians and visit with each other and talk about things that happened out on the details that day and stuff like that--just like if it was a normal way of life, you know. Eventually, you get to where it's just a regular routine.

Marcello: I have one last question with regard to Bicycle Camp. If you could have stayed there for the entire war, would life as a prisoner-of-war not have been too bad? Now don't misunderstand me, being a prisoner under any circumstances is not a good thing. But as you look back on it, life in Bicycle Camp wasn't too bad.

Rasbury: No, it wasn't too bad. This Chumley was one that stayed there during that time. The only thing that would have probably bothered me would have been just being bored with staying in the same place all the time. He never did leave there, I don't think. I don't think he ever left.

There's one thing I'd like to say on this Bicycle Camp when we was talking about the Navy boys. See, there's a lot of things that happened like this probably that we overlooked. It's funny now, but at the time it happened, it could have been serious. I was out on a detail, and I went down to get some water at a little old place. We was cleaning up a camp. I don't know whether it was for Japanese to move in or more

prisoners or what, but we were cleaning this place up. I went down to this building, and there sat a box full of silverware--knives, forks, and spoons. Well, the first thing I thought of, "Now how can I get some of that stuff back to these Navy boys?"

Well, I studied about it and went on back and went on about my work and was thinking about it. I thought, "Well, I'll just go get them and put them in my pocket." I had loose coveralls on, and I thought, "Maybe they won't even think about looking in my pockets or checking us." So I went back and I got . . . I knew we could do without a knife, but I got forks and spoons. I don't know, I guess I got about a dozen of each. I had them in these big old coverall pockets.

Well, everything was working out just fine. We was getting ready to go; they lined us up to count us and everything. They counted the tools, and there was a chisel missing (chuckle). Of all things! If it'd been a pick, you know, it would have been all right, but it was a chisel. They shook everybody down. Man, they was coming down that line getting closer and closer, and I thought, "What on earth am I going to do? They're going to find all that silverware in my pocket."

So I had my canteen on my gunbelt, and I thought, "Well, I'll try that." I told an old boy, "Kind of cover for me here a minute." I just stepped back behind the truck where they

couldn't see, and I took them all out and just took them and put them under my belt because it was real tight, you know, and then I buttoned my coveralls back up and stepped back out in line.

Well, they was coming down through there, and they shook my pockets and those things rattled, see. He got about three down from me before it dawned on him that he heard something. He come back, and if he'd done the same thing, it would have probably rattled again. But he took and felt on my pockets (chuckle) real gently-like. Of course, nothing rattled. Boy, I just knew I was going to get caught with them (chuckle)! So that was the way I got all the . . . issued several of them-- I don't know how many--spoons and forks.

Marcello: Was this Japanese issue?

Rasbury: No, it was some Dutch stuff, Dutch silverware, that was in this Dutch camp that was left there.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Rasbury, we've been going at this interview since about 8:30. Why don't we just stop here and call it a day, and I can come back and interview you another day.

Rasbury: Well, that's okay with me. We're a long ways from the end (chuckle).

Marcello: I know.

Oral History Collection

Lester C. Rasbury

Part II

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

Date: June 15, 1978

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Lester Rasbury for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on June 15, 1978, in Fort Worth, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Rasbury again in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese in World War II. This is the second in a series of interviews with Mr. Rasbury while he was a prisoner and a member of the so-called "Lost Battalion."

Mr. Rasbury, when we finished talking the last time, we were just about ready to get you moved out of Bicycle Camp. Let's talk about the move out of Bicycle Camp. Were you given any prior notice that you would be moving?

Mr. Rasbury: Well, we was pretty sure . . . nothing definite . . . but we was real sure that we were going, although I wasn't with the first group that left. They called it Group 3. They were gone, oh, a few minutes ahead of us.

Dr. Marcello: Now, who was in Group 3?

Rasbury: Well, it was . . . well, I'm going to have to study a minute on it. I believe Lieutenant Stensland and part of Battery F, and, of course, there were some sailors and Marines. It was just sort of a mixed group.

Marcello: Were there other nationalities that were in this Group 3, also?

Rasbury: Yes, there were, I think, some Australians. I'm not for sure. I have talked to the boys about it, but there was a pretty good-sized group of them. They were more or less on their own, I think.

Marcello: Is it accurate to say, then, that there were groups leaving Bicycle Camp on a more or less regular basis for some time before you actually left?

Rasbury: Yes, I'd say so. But there were some groups now that . . . I'm speaking of going into Burma. The first ones that started leaving were technicians, and they was supposed to go into Japan. Because when they came around, they let everybody make up their own mind whether they was a technician or whether they was something else. Since I was a radio operator, well, some of the boys thought, "Well, why don't we go on to Japan? It might be better there than it would be in the jungle."

Marcello: Did you know that you would be going up into Burma and the jungles even while you were in Bicycle Camp?

Rasbury: Well, we'd just heard rumors to the effect. We didn't know where we was going. I told them, "No, I'll just take my



chances there." I didn't even want to let them know that I was a radio operator or that I knew anything about it. I'd just take my regular . . . what I turned in was that I was a creamery operator (chuckle), so they didn't know what that was. So I stayed behind and went with the next bunch.

Marcello: Why did you stay behind? Why did you not want to go to Japan?

Rasbury: Well, I'll tell you what. A lot of people, I guess, think it's silly or they don't believe in that, but I sort of believe in fate. I let my conscience be my guide. I'd stay in a place as long as I thought I should stay or whichever way I thought I would go.

I don't know, it just seemed like I had something sort of guiding me on the way. Just like, well, we were eight days out of Honolulu, and we missed there. Then we went south; we didn't go to the Philippines. We went on down to Australia and back. Now, we was going through things that . . . just like the day they bombed my PX, why, I didn't stay in there. I could have, but I didn't. I just sort of let things happen as it will. In other words, I didn't force anything . . . for me to go; I didn't volunteer too much for anything.

Marcello: Was there also a certain sense of security in numbers? In other words, did you feel more comfortable being with the bulk of your group and your buddies rather than being one of the first groups to be uprooted and being sent to Japan or

whatever?

Rasbury: Well, I kind of think maybe I did, too, because, after all, we were one of the first out of the 36th Division, and look what we'd already got into (chuckle). So I just sort of played my hunches and listened and just took the best course that I thought I could, if I had a choice.

Marcello: Awhile ago, you mentioned that there were rumors floating around Bicycle Camp that the ultimate destination of a good many of the people there would in the jungles of Burma. Was the camp one big rumor mill all the time?

Rasbury: Oh, yes. I started a book of rumors. It got so much that I didn't have paper enough to put it on (chuckle). One of the first rumors that I remember in Bicycle Camp was that the "Fighting Texans" . . . we heard on the news that came back by radio this way that the "Fighting Texans" were still fighting, holding out in the hills of Java. Shoot, we'd been a prisoner for over a month. But, you know, it was just things like that. So I started a book of rumors, and there was really some good ones. But I didn't keep it up, and I guess I lost it somewhere; I don't have it.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that one of the more rampant rumors was the type whereby one of the prisoners had heard that a rescue fleet was right over the horizon or something of this nature, that you were going to be rescued any time?

Rasbury: Yes, I thought any time. I had a brother that was in the Marines, and he was in San Diego at the time I went through San Francisco. He was on the alert to leave. I just figured, well, we'd see them just most any time, you know. I really looked for something to happen. I didn't think we'd be in there over thirty days. Then after that passed, I thought, "Well, it'll be another thirty days."

Marcello: Okay, now describe the process by which you were uprooted from Bicycle Camp and by which you ultimately left Bicycle Camp. Did it just happen suddenly?

Rasbury: No, we knew about it a little bit before that we were going, because we had time to prepare and get things ready. In other words, we knew we wouldn't see the people for a long time, if we saw them again. We just sort of celebrated with each other and things that way.

This friend of mine, Chumley, I left him behind. He was sick and couldn't go. He had some bad feet or something and couldn't wear his shoes, so they wouldn't let him go. I gave him all the money that we had--what little we had. I kept thirty-five cents for souvenirs and that's all, because I didn't know whether that money would be any good where we were going. The only thing . . . we wasn't for sure of anything at that time; it was just more or less rumors.

Marcello: Again, you still did not know that you would be ultimately

going into Burma and the jungles.

Rasbury: Oh, no. No, not at all.

Marcello: What possessions did you take with you? Do you recall?

Rasbury: Well, just my mess kit and my eating gear and water bottle.

I carried a couple of blankets, a shelter half to roll it up in, and my barracks bag with a few odds and ends in it--not very much because I'd already made two of those road marches, and I didn't want very much (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, you leave Bicycle Camp. Pick up the story at that point. Where do you go from there?

Rasbury: Well, they loaded us right into a barge.

Marcello: Did you have to walk?

Rasbury: No, they carried us in trucks, because it was a good ways to the docks. They carried us down there. I believe the ship . . . I don't think they could get the ship into the dock. I think they put us on a barge, and then we got off the barge onto the ship.

It was a scary feeling, because they put us into one of their troop transports. They had the decks in two parts--in other words, partitions--where when you sat down, why, the deck above you wouldn't be but maybe four or five inches off of your head. They just stuffed us back in there--made us all get back off of the hold, you know, back into where we was supposed to stay to start with. Of course, they eventually

let us move around some. I was on the top deck with the steel deck right above me; the main deck was right above my head. It was pretty hot in there.

Marcello: In other words, there was not enough room to stand up in this hold.

Rasbury: No, not any at all.

Marcello: Was there any light?

Rasbury: No. No light at all.

Marcello: Did they close the hatches?

Rasbury: No, they left them open. There was daylight from the hatch, and that was about all.

Marcello: Describe what life was like down in that hold during that passage over to Changi, which, of course, is where you were ultimately going.

Rasbury: Yes. Well, as I say, it was real hot. We were just sitting there. If we straightened our legs out, well, somebody else had to move out of the way. We sort of, you know, took time about. Normally, the people like that would get irritated at each other, but I don't remember a cross word from anybody about anything. We all just tried to get along together. We'd talk about things, and some had cards, and they'd play cards. Regardless of how hard things got, why, they'd always find something to pass off the time with.

There was nothing else but we had a door there, and

everybody was curious what was back in there. Well, they finally worked at it and worked at it, and they got the thing open. They got beer (chuckle) and some . . . oh, I don't know . . . some food of some sort--I don't remember now--and sardines and stuff like that. So we just feasted on that all the way. We didn't know what would happen when they'd find out that we was in there, but evidently they didn't find out. They never did say anything about it.

Marcello: What provisions did the Japanese make in terms of food, water, and sanitary facilities for the prisoners on this trip?

Rasbury: You know, we had tea; we always drank tea. I think the Japanese understood that any time you drank water in that area over in there, especially on boats and things, it was contaminated anyway, and they made tea. You know, if you didn't boil it at least twenty minutes before time, why, it's possible of taking dysentery and all that stuff. I think that's why they served us tea all the time. Rice . . . I don't remember ever having anything but just rice and tea.

Marcello: How were you fed?

Rasbury: Well, they just handed down in buckets the rice and buckets of tea. We just passed it around. They'd dish it out to you, or we had orderlies of our own, you know, prisoners-of-war, and they would handle the food down in the holds for us.

Marcello: I was going to say, you probably would have to have some system

for distributing the food and the tea. Otherwise, there would have been complete chaos, and there probably would have been some people who would not have gotten fed.

Rasbury: Yes. Well, when you're not doing anything and in a position like that and you don't eat much anyway--it takes very little--you'd be surprised what a fellow can survive on. Like I say, our group had managed to get into that storeroom; well, we ate out of there most of the time, so we wasn't worried too much.

Marcello: About how many people were feeding off of this storeroom?

Rasbury: Oh, I'd say probably thirty or forty. It was right in that area, because we knew better than to take enough to feed everybody. It was just as far as, you know, where we could keep it under cover and not let it get out.

But you're talking about the bathrooms and all. I guess, of the four days we was on there--I think we was on there about four days going to Singapore--I know I was bound to have used the bathroom, but that is one thing that I do not remember at all--whether I ever used the bathroom or not. It's possible that I didn't, because if you don't eat, well, you know, you don't really need to go. I probably did, but I just don't remember.

Marcello: I assume that, at this stage, dysentery was not too much of a problem yet.

Rasbury: No. I don't think anybody, as far as I know, this first trip, had any at all. They could have, you know, in other parts of the ship. I think they had about . . . I believe there was somewhere around 2,000 on it.

Marcello: So therefore, we're talking about a shipload of various nationalities.

Rasbury: Yes. In fact, we were called the "International Group." There was Americans, Australians, English--very few English--and the rest of them were Dutch. Most of the group was Dutch.

Marcello: What was the temperature like down in that hold?

Rasbury: Oh, I imagine it was way over a hundred. We didn't have any clothes on; we didn't put any clothes on. Just our trousers was all we had . . . most of us had shorts by that time. They were wet most of the time just, you know, from sweat. But you could get a little air down there once in a while. It was a pretty foul odor (chuckle).

Marcello: Did the Japanese allow you to take a sufficient amount of water along with you when you left Bicycle Camp? You mentioned that you had your water bottle.

Rasbury: Just our water bottles. Yes, just our water bottles was all.

Marcello: How much water would you estimate that you took along with you?

Rasbury: Well, I didn't have but just that quart--just a regular GI water bottle was all I had. But they gave us tea pretty often.

Marcello: When did you leave Bicycle Camp to go to Changi? Do you



remember the date?

Rasbury: I have the date, but I don't remember it off-hand. It was in November, I believe--November of '42.

Marcello: I think it was November of 1942. Okay, how long did this trip take?

Rasbury: I think it was about four days.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that the trip was uncomfortable but that there was really no suffering as we would know suffering?

Rasbury: I'll say that right where I was I don't think people really suffered too much. Now, when you'd lay down to go to sleep . . . you only had room to sit up, so when you'd lay down to go to sleep, well, you had some . . . half of us slept in one direction and half the other direction. We'd take time-outs with our feet on top of the others. We just kind of had to work it out between us.

Marcello: Okay, so you arrive in Singapore, and you go to Changi Prison Camp.

Rasbury: Yes, Changi Village is where we went.

Marcello: Now, there is a Changi Jail and there was also a Changi Prison Camp, wasn't there?

Rasbury: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: From what I gather, the prisoners didn't want any parts of that Changi Jail.

Rasbury: (Chuckle) No, they unloaded right out in front of it. For

some reason or other, we never did know; we thought they was fixing to take us up there. But then all the sudden they loaded us back up and took us up on to the other place.

Marcello: Okay, describe what Changi Village or Changi Prison Camp looked like from a physical standpoint.

Rasbury: Well, it was so large that you couldn't see it all from one point. They carried us in by truck into this English . . . well, it was their barracks is what they had. It was a three-story brick or masonry barracks--stucco. We were in the . . . it's called the Southern Area where we were. They had three different places; that was the hospital area, the 18th Division, which was all mostly Australians, and then the Southern Area, which was mostly English. I think this was a transient barracks that they had set up for us.

Marcello: What were your quarters like here at Changi?

Rasbury: Well, it was just a big building--a three-story building, concrete floors. When we first got there, I slept on the floor the first night, and the bedbugs like to have eat me up. So I made me a hammock the next day and boiled all my clothes and stuff, and I never let anything touch the floor after that. We wondered where they were coming from. We got out of wood in the kitchen one day, and I was working as a KP. They told us to get some wood, so we just went up and tore the facings and stuff off of the windows there, you know,

and that's where the bugs were. So we just practically stripped that building. The English, when they found out about it, didn't like it too much (chuckle).

Marcello: What was the food like here at Changi?

Rasbury: Well, they had just received a ship or two of Red Cross supplies. It wasn't American Red Cross; it was International Red Cross. It had lots of mutton on them, a lot of fish, all kinds of canned vegetables, and fruit and stuff. It was real good for about a week until they found out that we wasn't going on into Burma or wherever we was supposed to go. They usually come in there and stay three or four days, and then they're gone, you know. So they really fed us up good, but then they shut us off and said that all of our food had been shipped on ahead.

Marcello: When you say "they," are you referring to the Japanese or the British?

Rasbury: The British. They were handling all the food there at that point. So we just . . . well, I don't know what the others lived on, but for about two or three days there, I didn't have anything but rice and peanuts. Of course, you can eat a lot of rice and peanuts. Finally, we got to stealing so much stuff, why, they opened up and gave us some more supplies.

Marcello: Why don't you talk a little bit about the relationship that developed between the Americans and the British.

Rasbury: Well, it might not ought to be published (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, I think it should because I think it's a pretty important part of the story.

Rasbury: Well, I'll tell you the first detail I went on. I think there was about twenty-five or thirty of us. An officer by the name of Captain Wright was with us. They marched us down in front of this officers' quarters. Well, we didn't know what it was. He just told them to go down there and report to some English officer. Well, it was a big barracks and everything, and they were moving from there to another barracks, and they wanted us to carry their gear. Captain Wright said, "Is that all, sir?" He said, "Yes."

He just turned us around and carried us back and turned us loose and went down and told the colonel. He said, "I'm not about to carry all that stuff over there for those officers, because that's personal gear that they're wanting us to move." He said, "There's thousands of Englishmen here; let them do it." Of course, we heard from it later, but there wasn't nothing they could do about it.

But the first time that I had any dealings with the English . . . they're just probably like Americans and all of them; there's some of them that you can get along with and some you can't. I think there was around forty or fifty of us that they let go to the theatre that night--the first

night there.

Well, after the movie was over with . . . well, this might be interesting. While we were there, we just went in just like we came over on the ship. The only thing was that our clothes was clean. We changed shorts; most of us had shorts and no shirt and were barefooted. We went on down not thinking about it, and they let us on in. But then when the English started coming in and showing up, and the Australians, why, they had to be in full dress; they inspected them before they let them in there. Of course, we were sitting back over here (gesture) kind of up high and all together in a group, you know. It kind of reminded me--the way they looked at us and all--like we were the Dead End Kids or something, you know. They'd watch the movie during movietime, but then during the intermission, why, they'd all watch us.

Of course, we had some boys there that put on a pretty good show . . . some sailors and Marines and the Army personnel . . . you know, the way they talked. Because some of these Englishmen had never seen an American. We . . . I say "we." I was there with them. I enjoyed it--the things they'd say and do. Some of them was from the North with that Yankee brogue and all that.

But after it was over with, I got acquainted with an

Englishman by the name of Turner. He was a one-legged man; he'd lost a leg during the campaign. He wanted me to go to their place . . . and there was a sergeant with me. I said, "Well, okay." They was going to have "chips," which we found out in Australia that fish and chips is fish and potatoes, you know, like we have here now. Of course, at that time, we didn't know what chips were. Instead of potatoes, it was eggplant. Well, they thought they had grease enough to fry them in, but they didn't have any. So I went up to our kitchen and got enough of mutton . . . I just cut off fat, and we rendered it out and fried this, so we had a big feed that night.

So I sort of made an agreement with this old boy. He said he could sell anything that we could get hold of. So I told him, "Well, okay, I'll see what I can do." So we just went fifty-fifty on everything. The first thing we got was cigars. We went into selling cigars.

Marcello: Where'd you get the cigars?

Rasbury: Well, I'd go over in the 18th Division and get most of them.

Marcello: How did you obtain them?

Rasbury: Well, I had to get my first sergeant . . . well, he wasn't a first sergeant; he was the sergeant major of our group. I had to get him to go to the officer and get me a pass to go from one area to another. There was a guardpost between each

area, and you had to get a pass and give it to the English officer that was in charge at each one of these "ferries," they called them. So, well, then they would take us into the other area, and then I'd go on to the next one. The pass was good for both of them; so I'd go on through. I'd go on over there and go to this Australian and buy the stuff and get the cigars for ten cents a pack and then bring them back on my back, you know, on my pack, and come back through the same way. I'd carry them on down to this Englishman, and then he got thirty-five cents for them. So we made a little money that way.

Marcello: Now, where did you get the money in order to buy the cigars?

Rasbury: Well, like I said awhile ago, I had thirty-five cents when I went into Singapore. Well, everybody was going to the canteen, and that was before we went to the movie that night. So I went down and thought, "Well, I had thirty-five cents; I'd see what I could get. I got a can of pineapple and a coconut. So I spent all of it (chuckle). But they let us exchange some money. Of course, I didn't have any, but this Englishman had some. So I took his money and bought the cigars. Then we kind of worked it from that way.

Marcello: I hate to belabor the point, but where did the Australians get the cigars?

Rasbury: They went outside and got them. There was a Chinaman that would

bring them outside the camp . . . bring them out of Changi Village. See, there was a little village there . . . well, I think they came right out of Singapore. I think it was a Chinaman that brought them. I never did get to go outside. I didn't take that kind of a chance; I just bought them from him.

Marcello: When you say you didn't take that kind of a chance, I assume that it was forbidden to deal with the natives in the outside or to go outside.

Rasbury: Well, to go outside, it was. Of course, it was such a big area that I didn't know exactly where the area started and stopped where we were. I just never did take a chance on going where I thought we wasn't supposed to go. It was a fence, and they kind of laid the map out and showed us about where we could and couldn't go.

Marcello: So did you branch out into any other enterprises after initially beginning with cigars?

Rasbury: Yes, the cigar market kind of got down because others got in on it. Oh, I had a bathrobe that I bought before I left Brownwood; it was made of toweling. Well, I cut that up into face towels, and we got a dollar apiece out of those. I didn't need that bathrobe, so we sold all these. Anything I could get hold of, why, I'd take it down, and somebody might have a flashlight or a ring or something that way.



But to get into the big money, it was exchanging money. Because after we made our first exchange, the Americans didn't have much more.

Marcello: What kind of money were you dealing in?

Rasbury: Dutch money, and exchanging it for Singapore money. The Japs would change dollar for dollar, but they'd only exchange so much a week per person for each one, see. Well, the Dutch had rolls of money. They took all of their money out of the banks, and they had it on their body. So this Englishman come up with the idea that if I could get money exchanged, well, then we'd just exchange this Dutch money. So we went around and got a little bit of it--I don't know, I think probably a thousand dollars the first time--and we exchanged thirty cents on the dollar. Of course, we didn't have enough of anything there. This Lieutenant Hampton was in charge of that, so I turned it over to him, and he got it exchanged. Then we carried it back, and we'd split whatever we made on it.

Marcello: So you exchanged this Dutch money for Singapore money.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Which one had the greater value?

Rasbury: They was both the same . . . dollar for dollar.

Marcello: Well, what was the advantage of exchanging money?

Rasbury: Well, you couldn't spend the Dutch money, and you could spend the Singapore money.

Marcello: Okay, so in other words, in exchange for exchanging the money, so to speak, you got a certain percentage of the Singapore money and returned the rest to the Dutchmen from whom you had originally gotten the money.

Rasbury: That's right--the ones you'd got the money from. Well, we did that for, oh, about a week or so. I think we made two exchanges that way, which the second time was a little more than the first time.

But we decided to make one big haul out of it. I found out how much . . . I don't remember the exact figures, but it was up into . . . I'd say between ten and twenty thousand dollars. I went ahead and sent it through and got it exchanged, but I held onto it. I didn't tell this Englishman I even had it. So they were kind of getting worried about their money, and I told them, "Well, I'll tell you what to do. You just tell them that I'll see how much I can borrow, because we're fixing to leave. If I can't get the money back, I don't know what I can do about it." Because I knew I was going to have to make one last move, you know, on it. So he went back and talked to them, and they said, "Yeah, see what they can get. We'd be willing to take nearly anything." So we just reversed it. We give them thirty cents, and we kept the seventy cents on the exchange, because we knew they all had plenty of money, anyway.

I had other rackets. I cooked all the time there and made cakes. One guy I remember for sure, called Georgie Brown; he was our battery clerk. These big pan cakes about that big (gesture) and about that long, you know, like they use in regular ovens? I'd cook one of those full and cut it up into slices and sell it for ten cents a slice. Up on the third floor was where he sold most of it, because it was kind of like Las Vegas up there. Oh, every nationality you can think of, even some Japanese, would come in there and gamble at night. They'd gamble all night long.

Marcello: Where'd you get the ingredients to make this cake?

Rasbury: Well, I always managed to work in the kitchen. So I could get rice from the kitchen, and I'd buy sugar and stuff out of the PX for whatever kind of a cake I wanted to make. Flour and stuff, you know, we could buy from the PX.

Marcello: Generally speaking, I gather that relations between the British and the Americans were not too friendly here at Changi.

Rasbury: No. I really never had much dealings with them--only this one--because I didn't go out and work out in the field or out in the woods cutting wood and stuff and clearing and things like they did. But I would hear things.

We had one sergeant that lost his stripes. They took them away from him, but he never lost any pay on it; they didn't make it official, you know. But he kind of banged one

of them up pretty good out on a working party--one of the Englishmen that was trying to run the thing, you know, and trying to tell them what to do.

Then another time, the boys decided they wanted some coconuts, and we couldn't climb the trees. So we went down and cut the coconut trees down. See, the English had MP's roaming around all the time, and they caught them. They had a pretty good battle royal. Of course, it was dark as it could be, and they all got away. But somebody had left one of the axes, and it had "Southern Area" on there, and they knew that was ours (chuckle). So they had a full parade the next day trying to find out who did that. They didn't want to find nobody; they knew who it was, but they knew better than to figure out who it was, you know, and let it be known.

Marcello: Is this the incident that is sometimes referred to as the "King's Coconuts?"

Rasbury: Well, yes. That was one incident. Another one involved a guy by the name of "Red" Lee, who was up in the cherry tree. This MP come along and told him to get out of there, that that fruit belonged to the Queen. He said, "Queen, hell! It belongs to me and the emperor right now!" (chuckle) So he just kept picking his cherries.

But there was a lot of little incidents that happened like that. One of the English officers had some chickens, and

they were pretty good to eat. We ate nine of them (chuckle) and took the feathers out and threwed them around the Dutch latrine, so they got the blame for it.

Marcello: I understand that the British weren't too clean, either.

Rasbury: No. Well, like I say, some, you know, were, but as a majority they weren't, you know, in groups.

Marcello: I'm sure that by this time you were beginning to realize just how important hygiene, cleanliness, and so on was going to be.

Rasbury: Yes. Of course, nobody . . . I didn't know many people that got sick. There was some that went into the hospital for different things, but I was too busy. I didn't check on the sick people too much there in Singapore. I don't know, I just met up with this Englishman and had friends and just made new friends, and there was so much going on all the time that I had to keep things going.

I had three decks of cards, and cards was hard to get hold of. I'd give a deck to a different guy, and they'd go up and lease them out. They'd sit in a card game, and every time the pot went in, they'd reach in and get a quarter. So we made a lot of money that way.

I don't know where all this money went; I never did have anything. I'd loaned it out and get stuff, you know, and pay other people. You had to pay to get anything done. Oh, you didn't have to pay, but I didn't feel right to go in there and

bother the sergeant and them to get passes to go get stuff or people that helped me--go pick up stuff for me and help me cook and all that stuff. Well, we just kind of all worked together. It wasn't all my money.

Marcello: You mentioned that you worked in the kitchen most of the time. Is it safe to say that if you worked in the kitchen you perhaps ate a little bit better than the general run of the prisoners?

Rasbury: Well, yes, because usually you did your own cooking. When I worked around--I was on the garbage detail, was what I was on--well, I would very seldom eat what come out of the kitchen. I'd make enough, you know, on the side to go down and buy me stuff, what I wanted to eat. I'd cook what I wanted.

Marcello: By this time, are most of you becoming vitamin-conscious and things of that sort?

Rasbury: Yes, because it seemed like I went to the doctor one time for something . . . I don't remember what . . . oh, I know. It was a vitamin deficiency. They called it "Changi Vitamin" or something. But anyway, you'd break out in a rash, kind of. I went down to see about that. There was another guy there that the doctor was examining. They'd stand him up against the wall and then tell him to shut his eyes and see if he really knew . . . because what he'd do, he'd just be walking along and fall down. So as soon as he shut his eyes, he lost

his balance, and he just started going over forward. That was caused from vitamins. That was where the vitamin deficiency really started hitting us.

Marcello: What were the hospital facilities like here at Changi?

Rasbury: I never did go to the hospital. I went through it, but I never did go in. I never did know. Where I went was just the doctor's call, you know, just the doctor there in our hut.

Marcello: Did the doctor have anything for your vitamin deficiency?

Rasbury: Yes, about the best thing that we could get--but it was a dose to take--was rice polishings. We tried every way in the world to doctor that stuff up without killing the vitamins in it, but you'd just have to take it and eat it like bran. It took a lot of it. I guess I ate enough; I got better . . . quite a bit better.

Marcello: What were the bathing facilities like here at Changi?

Rasbury: Well, this was all right. We went down to . . . well, I don't know whether you'd call it the coast. See, we were out on the island, and it was a place where they used to bathe--to go swimming--because they had it where the sharks couldn't get in. They had it fenced off. It was all right. You could go down there . . . oh, I think they went two, three times a day. I never did go but about twice a day.

Marcello: In other words, you could take daily baths.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: What are you using for toothpaste and soap and things of that nature?

Rasbury: Well, at that time, they could get them in the PX. We could buy them through there if you had the money.

Marcello: Do you have very many dealings with the Japanese here at Changi?

Rasbury: No, the only time we'd ever see them is when they'd come in for what they called tenko. Then they'd go, and we wouldn't see them very often.

Marcello: So for the most part, you were under the supervision of the British, then.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Even on the work details?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, how long were you at Changi altogether?

Rasbury: Oh, I'd say over a month . . . a little over a month. It seemed like it was sometime in February when we left there.

Marcello: Now, when you leave Changi, do you know that you are going up into the jungles of Burma?

Rasbury: Not for sure because one boat that left there went to Japan, or in some way they'd already found out they were going to Japan. So we wasn't for sure where we were going, but we did know that Group 3 went to Burma. The only thing that we had



was that the English officers there in charge said that our food had already been sent to Burma. That's the only reason we figured that's where we were probably going. Because we didn't know whether they sent any up there or not, which we never did see, so I don't guess they ever did get there.

Marcello: Describe the process by which you eventually left Changi.

Rasbury: Well, they just gave us orders, in other words, to get our stuff together, and we were leaving on a certain date. They put us in trucks and carried us down and loaded us on . . . no, I take it back. I started to say a boat, but they didn't. They loaded us on a train; it was cattle cars. I think they were small cars, and there were about thirty-five to a car. Of course, it was open and they didn't even fasten the door or anything. They just put us in there and took off up to Malaya.

Marcello: Were you sorry to leave Changi?

Rasbury: Yes, because we figured that it was going to get rougher. We hadn't really heard too much--just a few rumors of what was going on that this railroad was being built. We figured it was going to get rougher up there.

Marcello: Describe this trip on the train.

Rasbury: Well, it wasn't too bad. The heat was pretty bad, but when we was traveling, why, there'd be quite a bit of air, you know--the wind blowing from the moving of the train. We'd get a

few sparks back from the engine every once in a while. When they'd stop, well, they'd let us get off the cars and use the bathroom and things like that. If there were natives around that had bananas, why, we'd buy some bananas and things.

I don't remember how long it took us. I believe we was probably a couple of days getting up to a place called Penang.

Marcello: Did they feed you while you were on this train?

Rasbury: Yes, I think so. That's kind of a faint memory, but I'm pretty sure that, if we were on there through mealtimes, well, they fed us rice and tea or something. I don't remember now what it was--maybe hardtack or something.

Marcello: And you did say that you were in boxcars?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Were they closed, or did they allow them to be open?

Rasbury: No, they were cattle cars.

Marcello: So in other words, there were open spaces between the slats and so on.

Rasbury: Yes. It would have probably been pretty hot in a boxcar, but the ones I was in was cattle cars.

Marcello: Now, did the Japanese harass you at all while you're on this train?

Rasbury: Oh, they never did bother our car or anything. I hear that they did bother some of the others. But I think most of that harassment was probably caused from what somebody was doing. Of

course, you know, if somebody gave out and lagged behind, why, whoever was behind, well, they was catching it. Because they wanted them to keep up with the rest of them. I was just lucky that I was physically fit enough that I stayed in the group; I never did get behind or anything.

Marcello: So what happens when you get to Penang?

Rasbury: Well, they loaded us on this barge to take us way out to the ship. Then we knew that we was going to go by water for a while.

Marcello: Do you remember what the name of this ship was?

Rasbury: Dai Nichi Maru. Dai Moji Maru was the first one, and Dai Nichi Maru was the second one. I think they had hauled some horses somewhere down there in it. Because they put us right on in the hold, and we were shoulder to shoulder. Then they told us to sit down.

Well, I was right in the back corner, and there was a pile of bamboo. I threw my pack up on a board, about a twelve-inch board about ten feet long, that was laying up on that. I threw my pack up on it. As soon as they got out of the hold, I went up on it, and that's where I stayed most of the trip, was on that board. I slept on it. I had a little more room than the rest of them.

Of course, then after they got out and counted and saw that everybody was there, why, then they got out and left them

alone. Then they spread out over the hold, and we had a lot more room then. Then eventually after they got out on the way, why, they even went up on top . . .let us out on top. But on that first ship, they didn't let us out. They kept us below on there.

Marcello: It must have been pretty rank down there in the hold of that ship if they had been hauling horses in there, and now they had all these sweaty bodies in there.

Rasbury: Yes, it was. To take up more room, they lowered, I think, two vehicles down in the hold and set them down in there.

But as we were there awhile, some of the boys got to exploring. They took blankets, tied them together, and they lowered themselves down in the hold. They come out of there with barracks bags of little old crackers. We called them crackers, and they called them biscuits. So we ate pretty good on that trip, too.

Marcello: In other words, you're referring to the hold that was below the one that you were on.

Rasbury: Yes, the deck below. They just didn't have any food . . .just those . . .anything much. I didn't see anything; that's all I ever got hold of, was just those biscuits.

Marcello: Did the Japanese not supply you with any food?

Rasbury: Yes, they fed us just like they did on the other ship, but we was always looking for something better. They had several

barracks bags full of them when they started off. Then the rumor got started that they was going to shake us down (chuckle), so they didn't know whether to take them off or not. But some of them did anyway, but they didn't get caught with them. They didn't shake us down.

Marcello: Now, you were part of a small convoy here, were you not?

Rasbury: Yes, there was two ships with us. There could have been another one, but I didn't see it. But there was two prison ships. The one in front of us, I don't know what the name of it was, but it had about a thousand Dutch on it and about that many Japanese.

Marcello: Most of the Japanese were technicians, were they not?

Rasbury: Yes . . . well, they were occupational troops. Most of them was officers, sergeants, or something like that. Most of them had sabers.

Marcello: Describe the incident involving the B-24's.

Rasbury: Well, the sergeant and I was sitting up on deck, and I was engraving on my mess gear. Then everybody started running and screaming and looking up. So I looked up about that time, and they'd already released their bomb. They were right over us.

Marcello: How many B-24's were there?

Rasbury: There was just one, was all I ever saw. I told this sergeant, I said, "Well, those bombs are for that other ship, but he'll be back!" By that time, the Japs were running us down below.

So we saw them hit that ship.

Of course, I think while all the Japs was screaming, the captain of the ship was trying to keep his crew on the guns up there. After we got below, why, they finally got their crew back up there, and they got to firing at this . . . after they'd already sunk the other ship, they got to firing at this plane coming in, and they shot one corner of the bridge off.

That was the only one of our boys that got hurt, was from some glass--some sailor. But on the back of the ship, the fantail, they had another one back there; there was some sort of an explosion back there with that gun. We heard it was a muzzle burst, and then we heard that it fell out in the boy's arm. Anyway, I think there wound up about fourteen or fifteen Australians killed back on the back.

Marcello: Were you scared?

Rasbury: Well, it all happened so fast that you really didn't have time to get scared (chuckle). You just hoped for the best, was about all you could do. They had us down in that hold; there wasn't nothing we could do.

Marcello: How long did this incident last?

Rasbury: Oh, it seemed like for an hour or so, but I'd say not over twenty minutes. Because it didn't take him long to make that first run and then come back on us.

We were lucky. He was coming right down on the ship, and about the time he released or was in the position to release the bomb, why, the captain of the ship was smart enough to know to maneuver. He turned to the . . . well, I forgot. I think he went to the left. No, he didn't; he went to the right, and then one dropped right at the fantail, and then one dropped in front of the other. In other words, he just turned crossways, and they just dropped this way (gesture) across him. They were both in the water.

Marcello: Did they shake the ship up any?

Rasbury: Yes, the one in the back, it got below water. It knocked a hole or two right at the water edge. There was quite a bit of water . . . we were taking on water at that time. In fact, I don't think their pumps would even keep it pumped out.

Marcello: Which side were you taking up for in this incident?

Rasbury: (Chuckle) Well, I was kind of hoping to take up for myself, if I could. But we was glad to see it, and we weren't either. We at least knew they were still doing something.

Marcello: So it was a morale booster to some extent.

Rasbury: Yes, I think so. I think that at one time it was talked on this ship of us taking the ship over. If we'd have known before that happened, see--if we'd known--we could have taken the ship over, because it wasn't too many on there at that time. But then when they got all these others on there, why,

there was too many.

Marcello: In other words, your ship did stop to take on the survivors.

Rasbury: Yes, they picked up the others. I think the best account I remember was we lost about thirty or thirty-five Dutch and around 200 Japanese. But from the way the Dutch talked, we lost most of those Japanese after it got dark.

Marcello: In the water, you mean?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: How long did you stick around to pick up the survivors?

Rasbury: Oh, it was around midnight before we got off and before we got away from there . . . or maybe later.

Marcello: When had this attack actually started?

Rasbury: Oh, I'd say about three or four hours before. Oh, it wasn't that long. I'd say two or three hours before dark. It was in the evening.

Talking about the Japanese, I heard these Dutch talking that said every time they run onto one floating in the water--after it got dark so nobody could see--well, they'd just hold him under until he quit kicking (chuckle) and turned him loose. That's the way they lost most of them.

They lost another bunch. A Dutchman said there was about 200 Dutch and about that many Japanese soldiers in this hold. After it was already hit and was already turned, you know, well,



these Japs was trying to get out, and they just had one ladder. So this big old Dutchman said about three or four of them stepped up there and took the saber away from one of them. Each one of them got them a saber, and they fought them off the ladder and let all the Dutch out. All the Dutch got out. No, I believe this was before . . . it seemed like they made two runs on that ship. Because he said after they got out, the Japs were coming out, but there wasn't but only three or four of them that got out until there was a bomb that went right in the hold. No one come out after that.

Marcello: How did the attitude of the Japanese change after this attack?

Rasbury: Well, after that deal in the water, the ones that did survive and happened to see what was going on, well, they were pretty rough on us. Of course, they didn't do anything on the ship.

There was one other incident the next day. Somebody made a quick move or looked up and pointed or something, and they thought it was another raid. So I think this Jap jumped in the hold. He claimed somebody pushed him in there. I think he broke his leg; it bunged him up pretty bad. A lot of the Dutch and all jumped overboard, and they had to stop and pick them up. It wasn't nothing. The captain gave orders that they wasn't stopping no more. If they jumped over, they'd had it; they'd just have to get out the best way they could. But, you know, we wasn't too far from land, because you could see

the land over there and the mountains.

Marcello: How long were you on this ship?

Rasbury: I think three days. Not over three days.

Marcello: And where did you ultimately land?

Rasbury: Because we wasn't but . . . I believe we was longer than than, because we were about four days out of Moulmein. That's right. We were on there longer than that, because we was four days, I think, out of Moulmein, Burma, when this happened.

Marcello: And you did land at Moulmein, Burma.

Rasbury: Yes, at Moulmein.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens at that point?

Rasbury: Well, they take us off and march us up to that Burma prison in behind big brick walls and assigned us to different barracks and things like that.

There was quite a bit of dysentery at that point because of the food and the situation for the past three or four days on the ship. I know I had dysentery real bad. That's the first time . . . I didn't quite understand why, but I went and reported, you know, that I had it. They gave me a big . . . it was salts tablets. I had to dissolve them in water. They gave me a big dose of salts that night with dysentery.

Marcello: A big dose of salts?

Rasbury: Salts, yes, you know, purgatives, medicine. Epsom salts. It looked like that would make it worse, but they said, no, that

it would flush your stomach out. Evidently it did. I went on into the place they called the hospital--well, they separated us from the others--and I went to a place called Thanbyuzayat.

Marcello: How long did you stay there in the Moulmein jail altogether?

Rasbury: Well, oh, about three or four days or something like that. It wasn't long, just until they could get trains and transportation arranged and things that way.

Marcello: What did you do while you were there?

Rasbury: Oh, just kind of look around and see how many names we could find. The other bunch went through there, and they'd wrote their names on the walls and things that way, so we knew they'd been there.

Marcello: Now, you mention that Group 3 had gone on before you. What was your group designation?

Rasbury: Well, the only thing I ever heard was the International Group. It could have been a number, but I never did hear it called a number. There was a Group 1, 2, and 3, and then when it got to ours, why, the only thing I ever heard was that they referred to it as being the International Group because there was so many different nationalities in the group.

Marcello: Okay, so did you say that you went from Moulmein up to Thanbyuzayat?

Rasbury: Yes. Well, one thing there that I saw and that I had read in books all through my life there in this prison . . . they had a

few Burmese prisoners there. They had a big, old ball on a chain, and they were chained around their legs and their arms. They had to carry around this ball all the time, you know, so they must have been pretty mean characters (chuckle).

But we got to prowling around after we got over in the hospital--right outside this building that they used for a hospital.

Marcello: This was still at the Moulmein prison?

Rasbury: Yes, still at the Moulmein prison. We got to looking out there, and they had one of these guillotines--they had one of those. Then they had a piece of metal with a door on it--just flat metal. Well, we didn't know what that was, but that was a place where they'd hang them. They'd tie a rope around their neck, and the rope would be just the length of whatever the height we were, see. Then when this trap door'd fall, it'd fall in and they'd be hanging below. But they didn't have a thing like we built over here, you know, for the rope, and they'd just drop down through. But the rope was fastened onto this piece of metal that they were standing on. But we was kind of afraid that they might use it (chuckle), but they never did. We looked around it, you know, spent a little time looking that way.

Marcello: Now, some of the prisoners were actually housed in a leper asylum, were they not?

Rasbury: Yes, that's what I heard. There were some of them. This was just right in there where the prisoners were--where I was. Now, it could have been the same thing, and I just didn't hear about it. I was only there one day, and then they moved me out. You could see the Moulmein Pagoda over there. I've got a sketch in there--not too good; I wasn't too good of an artist--but I kind of started drawing it, you know, but then I got too sick. That second day . . . I started drawing on it the first day, and then the second day I was too sick. They moved me out, and I never did get to finish it.

Marcello: So how long were you in the hospital then?

Rasbury: Until they moved us out and moved us into Thanbyuzayat. There was a hospital there. Well, when we went in there, this Dutch doctor said, "Now, all of you that has more than five motions a day go into those barracks, and the ones with less go into the other barracks." Well, I didn't like the looks of the place, and I wanted to get out of there. Shoot, I was going probably once or twice an hour then, but I went the other way.

Sure enough, we got up there, and it seemed like the food was better. They had boiled rice, and they'd chop up the kidneys and the hearts and the stuff, you know, like that and feed us that. Because ours had a little bit of stuff in it, where the ones below, they fed them strictly rice, just boiled

rice, and there wasn't nothing in it. We had one boy by the name of Noel Mason--he wanted to go down that way. He said he'd probably get better food, so he went down. He like to have died in there.

Marcello: Well, how far is Thanbyuzayat from Moulmein?

Rasbury: Well, it took us most of the day to get down there.

Marcello: Did you go by train again?

Rasbury: Yes, we went by train there.

Marcello: And in your group, there were only the sick ones.

Rasbury: There was just sick people, yes.

Marcello: Okay, how long did you remain there at Thanbyuzayat?

Rasbury: Well, that day when we got settled out in our quarters, well, I got to looking around the next day. I told the sergeant that was in there with me by the name of "Little" Offerle . . . he had a brother; they were called "Big" Offerle and "Little" Offerle. There was two of them--two brothers.

Marcello: Was he a member of the Lost Battalion?

Rasbury: Yes, he was out of Battery D. I got to talking to him, and I said, "You know, I think we ought to get out of here and get back in that work camp, because they've got ammunition and gasoline and railroad supplies all around this place." He said, "Yeah, but how are we gonna to get out of here?" (Chuckle) I said, "We gotta get well." So the only thing . . . we didn't have any money, because we'd already spent most of our money

in buying clothes and stuff like that in Singapore for us, you know, on the trip. What little money we had, we could buy tomatoes and eggs and things that way.

So I told him we had to get hold of some more money. I had a watch, and I sold it to a Jap for fifteen dollars. We'd buy eggs and stuff, and we'd go down and get this crust from where they cooked the rice. I'd take tomatoes and onions and fry them up in pork fat, and then I'd break the eggs in there and scramble them up. It was a pretty good dish. We just spread it on there like a sandwich, you know. We just kept eating until we got to where we was well enough to get out of there. We told them we wanted to leave, and they took us down to Camp 18 then.

Marcello: Did your dysentery gradually subside?

Rasbury: Yes, by eating . . . we knew enough by then that if you'd eat charcoal, why, that would help it. So we'd go down and get this rice that they had burned, you know, and we'd eat that. Well, it just seemed to help us. I mean, I never did have no more trouble for a long time after that.

Marcello: So how long were you at Thanbyuzayat altogether?

Rasbury: Not over a week. It was something like that--about a week.

Marcello: So from there you moved down to the 18 Kilo Camp. Describe what 18 Kilo was like from a physical standpoint.

Rasbury: Well, it was rough (chuckle). When I got off that train and I

saw them people marching around and the dust flying--the dry season had already set in--it kind of worried me. They carried the Americans . . . I believe there was just two Americans. I don't remember. Just the two of us is all I remember. There could have been others that I didn't know.

But anyway, they carried us down to our barracks. They already just had blankets laying side by side all the way, and I didn't see no place to sleep. So, being a loner, I didn't have no buddies or anything, and I just went outside and got to looking at the barracks. It was real high, about four feet up off the ground--the floor was that they were sleeping on. So I just got me a rice sack and made me a hammock and swung my hammock underneath and put my shelter half up so the dirt wouldn't fall through on me. I lived under the house all the time we were there.

Marcello: Now, where was everybody? Were they out on the work details when you arrived?

Rasbury: No, we got in there after they had got back. That's the reason I didn't find no place to sleep. See, there was so many in there that I just didn't want to get in there and crowd up in that bunch.

Marcello: Now, were you reunited with some of your buddies?

Rasbury: Yes, they was the same ones that we came over with. But, you know, they were Americans, and we were together, and I knew



most of them. But there wasn't nobody that was really that close . . . that I was that close to.

Marcello: Now, this camp wasn't really back in the jungles yet, was it?

Rasbury: No, it was sort of out on the plains. There wasn't much timber. It was just right out in the hot sun.

Marcello: How big are these kilo camps?

Rasbury: Well, I never did get a chance to go around this one, but there wasn't nobody there but the ones--this group--that came in. I'd say there was around 2,000 in that camp. It was a pretty good-sized camp.

Marcello: We're talking about atap buildings with thatched roofs and so on, is that correct?

Rasbury: Yes. They were pretty new. Of course, it didn't rain any, so the only thing we had to keep off of us was the sun. Well, I didn't work for two or three days in there; I just lounged around the camp, and then I finally started going out.

Marcello: What sort of work was being done in this camp?

Rasbury: Well, they were making a cut; they started in on a cut. They'd take this dirt from this cut and put it in a fill--making a fill from it. Then by the time I got there, they had just about finished with it.

We had to finish this fill on the opposite side of the creek. Well, it was dry then; it was just a dry creek then, but it was a big gulley. Where I worked, you had to carry the

dirt up--it was about twenty to thirty feet high--and dump it back down again toward the bridge.

Marcello: When did a typical workday begin here at 18 Kilo?

Rasbury: Oh, you'd usually get out there around nine o'clock by the time they mustered them all together and got their picks and shovels out, because they had to turn them in every evening. We had one cubic meter of dirt to move per man. In other words, if you had six in a group, why, you had six cubic meters of dirt to move. There'd be so many to dig and so many to shovel and then so many to haul. We'd just kind of switch about on it.

As long as I worked in 18 Kilo the rest of this time that we stayed there out on the road like that, we only had one piece of machinery. It was about three or four railroad cars, and they'd fill it up with dirt on one end of this little old train track, and the elephant would pull it down. Then they'd dump them all, and then they'd put him on the other end and take it back. But he got scared there one day and run off and tore all the cars up (chuckle).

Marcello: Now, what kind of railroad cars are you talking about?

Rasbury: Oh, just little bitty cars they had--like mining cars that come out of a mine--where they'd fill them up and then dump them.

Marcello: So you seem to imply that, if you fulfilled your quota of dirt removal, you were through for the day.

- Rasbury: Yes, we went out in groups of so many. When we fulfilled that, whoever got through first, well, they got to go swimming, go in and take a bath first.
- Marcello: Is it not true, however, that as time goes on, or maybe even here at the 18 Kilo Camp, that the Japanese gradually increased the workload?
- Rasbury: Yes. I don't remember . . . I don't believe they did at 18 Kilo, because I think we finished . . . see, there was about 1,500 working out there. I'd say it took 500 in the camp . . . excluding the sick, it took at least 500 to maintain the camp--the cooks and this, that, and the other. The rest of us was out. It reminded me . . . I would give anything for a picture of the first day that I went out on that fill. Well, it wasn't a fill. I guess you'd call it a fill, too, but we had to go up. It was just like . . . it reminded me of red ants building, you know, and digging for their home and coming out and piling up that dirt and letting it roll down the outsides. They were just going thick just like ants, going and coming--just little trails leading around going up, you know.
- Marcello: In other words, everybody was working rather fast, also, I assume, in order to get done as soon as possible.
- Rasbury: Yes, so they could get through.
- Marcello: I guess you were in pretty good physical shape at that time.
- Rasbury: Yes, like I say, I was pretty busy in that camp. I never

visited the hospital; I don't know whether they had very many sick. I think most of them was just maybe . . . well, I went barefooted, and it didn't bother my feet. Maybe some had sunburns because some of them that hadn't gotten used to the sun at that time, or maybe their shoulders had callouses on them or maybe they had blistered before the callouses had been formed from carrying the dirt. The way they'd carry it--they'd have a rice sack with a wire on each corner, and then they'd run a bamboo pole through. You'd put about three or four or five scoops of dirt and then pick it up--one on the back and one on the front--and take off up the road or up the bank.

Marcello: Which job did you prefer--picking or shoveling or carrying?

Rasbury: Well, we traded out. I started out . . . usually I would start out carrying it, and then we'd work around, and we'd get with different groups. Maybe I'd fill in with . . . since I came late, I didn't have no certain group, so I'd just fill in with this one and that one. I got with one group that had a fellow by the name of Starnes up at Decatur. He'd pick--he was taller than I--and I would shovel right out from under his feet. We could shovel and pick at the same time, which helped us to get it out of there. When we come to things like that where two could work together, well, we'd just leave it that way.

Marcello: You're doing fairly hard physical work here. What was the food

like?

Rasbury: Well, at that time, it wasn't good food, but it was better than what we'd been getting even, you know, coming over and things. They was getting a little pork and was getting some beef. We had people that would go out and . . . as the Japs would bring in a few cows, well, they had people take care of these cows. They killed so many a day. It really wasn't too bad there. Of course, I did a lot of cooking on my own.

Marcello: You were pretty close to civilization here, too.

Rasbury: Yes, it wasn't too far from a place where they could get most anything--eggs and stuff. They'd let them bring eggs and stuff in and sell it to us, you know--sell it through a PX-like.

Marcello: When you say, "They would let them bring it in," I assume you're referring to the Japanese allowing the Burmese civilians or merchants to come in?

Rasbury: Yes. But they didn't like for us to trade with them. If they come out to the camp, they didn't like for you to trade with them there.

I remember there was some of the boys--I don't remember who it was--but they were caught talking to one of these guys, and they was trying to trade with some stuff, you know. So this Jap saw them out there--he was on guard--and he went out there and he talked to them both and wanted to know what they was doing, you know. He wanted to know if he was trying to buy

something or was buying something from them. He told him, "No," so he turned around and asked this Burmese if he bought anything from them. He told him, "No." So he just walked over and kicked the ox real good in the side and said, "Well, somebody's got to get kicked." (chuckle) So that was his way of punishing them; he made the guy go back inside. But he was one of those types . . . well, he was just . . . the Japs didn't have much to do with him either, because he never could do anything right. He was usually on a rice diet, and he'd eat with the Australians most of the time.

Marcello: And this was a Japanese guard?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, a little guard. We all liked him. Even though he was a Jap, you know, we kind of got along with him. One of the Australians kind of fouled him up on his gun. They had these English rifles. His rifle was dirty, and they told him to clean it. He didn't know how, so he thought he'd go down to one of those Australians and they'd tell him how to clean it. They took it apart for him and told him to take it down to the creek and wash it (chuckle). So he really got fouled up. He ate rice and water for a few days after that. They was always punishing him about something.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how did your food compare or contrast with that that the guards were receiving?

Rasbury: Well, theirs was a little more tasty, because they had cooks that

really knew how and had the stuff to make it tasty with. They knew how to use soy sauce, and they knew how to fix their vegetables a little better than we did. It was practically the same food, but they just knew how to fix it.

Now, the only difference was that we got a red rice and they got the white rice, which we found out that it was better in the long run because that was more vitamins and the red rice is a better taste. It's got a taste to it, where your white rice is just starch, is about all it is. I think they didn't know it, but they was doing us a big favor by making us eat that red rice even though it was dirty.

Marcello: Suppose one did become sick enough that he could not go out on the work details. Did that mean that his food ration was cut?

Rasbury: Well, it was supposed to have been, but it wasn't. Overall, they may have shut it down, but we always had plenty.

Marcello: I assume that the prisoners were doing their own cooking.

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, we had our own mess sergeants. The Americans had their own cooks and the English had theirs and the Dutch had theirs. They had three kitchens, is what we had there. They were all together--close together--but they did their own cooking.

Marcello: And I assume that the Japanese controlled the distribution of the rice. In other words, your commissary people would have to go to the Japanese storehouse or warehouse to receive the rice

and so on.

Rasbury: Well, they'd bring it out to them by truck out there, because they didn't have any train running that far. Thanbyuzayat was as far as the train run, and they brought us from there by truck.

Marcello: Generally, when would a typical workday end here at 18 Kilo?

Rasbury: Oh, we'd get through, oh, a couple of hours before sunset.

Marcello: And what would you do then?

Rasbury: They'd go right straight into the swimming hole and take a bath and all and wash your clothes and put them right back on and let them dry on us. . . or wait until we got to the camp. At that time, I'd got down to two pairs of shorts and little skivvy shirts for shirts. So I'd just wash them and put them back on, and then when I got to camp, I'd put my other pair on and hang them up to dry.

Marcello: How long did you remain at 18 Kilo altogether?

Rasbury: I'd have to look at my date on that. I don't remember the date. It seemed like we was there nearly a month or something like that before we moved.

Marcello: And where did you go from there?

Rasbury: We moved from there to Camp 85.

Marcello: Now, this is where things begin to get a little rough, did they not?

Rasbury: Yes. Let's see, I believe we went by truck from 18 Kilo. Yes,



from 18 to 85 Kilo, we went by truck.

Marcello: In other words, there was a road beside the railbed.

Rasbury: Yes, there was a road all the way through where they got the supplies and things up through there.

So we got into 85 Kilo, and the next day I went out on the detail. We was cleaning up the bamboo and stuff on the railroad where the railroad had been surveyed. They hadn't started digging or anything in there. We just went right into this area.

We burned that bamboo off the right-of-way that day and found a little kitten in there. I don't know what it was, but they said its momma got up pretty high. We carried it into camp, but they made us take it back to the jungles (chuckle). I think there was two of them. We fed it some goat's milk. Anyway, they made us take it back.

But that night I was in . . . a change was made in my life then. Like I say, back before we was captured, I worked for Captain Parker in the PX. He came to me in the chow line that night, and he said, "Rasbury, I want to talk to you when you get through eating." I said, "Okay." So after I got finished eating, I went on up. He said, "Now, the Japanese are going to allow us an orderly." Well, we called them orderlies; the Japs called them toban; the Dutch called them . . . I don't remember what the Dutch called them; but the English

called them batmen. So he said, "We're going to be allowed one orderly for four officers." He said, "I don't want you to give me an answer now unless it's 'yes.'" I want you to think about it before you say 'no,' because things is going to get rough--and they're going to get rougher--and every man needs to take care of himself." He says, "I'd like for you to come over and work for me and Captain Taylor and Doctor Lumpkin," and I believe a Lieutenant Morgan was the fourth that I would be working for.

So I talked to two or three that night about it, and they told me I was crazy if I didn't get off the railroad. That's another thing. He said, "It's not just working for us, but it gets another man off the railroad." So I took the job. That was my last day to work on the railroad except when they would catch me after things got rougher on down the way.

But our duties were to keep the officers' clothes washed up, because they had to go out on these working details with these people, with the boys, you know, the others; they were in charge of the groups. So we kept their clothes clean; we'd go get the food. They ate the same food that we ate . . . that everybody else ate. We'd just go down to the kitchen and get their rice--their part of it--and bring it back. The only thing that they didn't have was the lineup. We had three American boys and four Chinese mess attendants that worked as

orderlies for the officers.

Marcello: Now, where did you stay?

Rasbury: We lived in the same quarters with the officers so we'd be there close. We didn't live with the rest of the boys.

Marcello: What did you do during the day while everybody was out on the work details?

Rasbury: Well, that's when we'd clean up, make up their beds, and straighten up their clothes and wash them if they had dirty ones. At 85 Kilo, that's all we did--just take care of them and sort of take care of ourselves.

At that time, I had already wore my two pair of shorts out, and I was wearing a sarong. I wore this sarong around there for about a week, and a Chinaman, an old man--he was about sixty then--he said, "Rasbury, what's the matter? No gottem pants?" (chuckle) I said, "No, I've already wore them out." So he dug in his barracks bag and got me a pair of Dutch shorts. So I wore those shorts for a long time until I managed to get a hold of some others.

But we didn't stay there but about . . . oh, not over a week at 85 Kilo, and they moved us. Well, the engineers, I understand from the boys coming in, were fouled up. They couldn't read. . . one day they'd go out and they'd dig, and the next day they'd fill it up and try to make it higher. Then the next day they'd dig it out again. So that happened

for several days, and they couldn't get things going just right, so I think they pulled off there and moved us back to 80 Kilo and put them working on bridges. They had to work pretty hard there.

Marcello: Here again, at 80 Kilo Camp, I gather that you did not go out on the work details.

Rasbury: No, I never did go out on any there. I just took care of the officers and things that way.

Marcello: In terms of physical make-up, are all these camps just about the same?

Rasbury: Yes, they were all built about the same--out of the same kind of material--and the layout was about the same.

Marcello: They had all been prepared for you.

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, the natives had built these before. I've got diagrams of every camp I was in that I drew a sketch of it, you know, how the barracks were and the layout of it.

Marcello: Now, in May of 1943, the so-called "Speedo" campaign begins.

Rasbury: That was in 100 Kilo. I've got another thing or two to tell that some of the others might forget about. In Camp 85, we had a boy by the name of "Zip" Zummo. He made a statement to one of the Japs that if he'd help him out there and bring him sugar now that he would do the same thing when the war was over and they changed places. Well, he didn't quite understand it--but it soaked through later--and they called him up there,

and they like to have killed him.

Then a few days after that happened, I was going to the . . . I had cut my leg on a piece of bamboo, and it got infected, so I was going over to the infirmary to get some stuff to go on to it. They'd give me sulphur, and I'd mix it with lard--grease or something--and put it on there. I was going over kind of early that morning, and I thought I saw something out in the jungle just off the trail. So I went out a little ways off the trail and got to looking, and there lay a Jap. I couldn't see too much, because the sun hadn't come up--it was just before the sun come up--and it scared me at first. Then I saw his gun laying there, and I thought maybe he was just asleep. Then I got to looking, and I saw a little spot right on his head. There wasn't much blood, but most of the blood went from below. That's where the bullet went in, see. He had one shoe off. I knew he'd committed suicide, so I run back to the camp and told the officers about it.

They went up and told the Japs, because I was afraid they might think I did it, you know. So they went up there with the officers and found him, and he had committed suicide. He put this rifle butt in his shoe and either took his toe and tripped . . . the bullet went in here (gesture)--I didn't go back to see him--and they said it blowed the whole back end of his head

off. But that was one incident I kind of wanted to tell about.

Marcello: I assume that this duty wasn't the best duty the Japanese soldier could have, either.

Rasbury: No, it wasn't. Some of them . . . they said this guy was Christian. They gave him a hard time because he said he was a Christian, and he didn't believe in this thing that they were doing to the prisoners-of-war there. It just got the best of him.

Marcello: Now, let's talk a little bit more about the guards, since you mentioned the subject of this Japanese. Were most of the actual guards Koreans?

Rasbury: Yes, at that time they'd started . . . well, they had brought Koreans in before, but there were quite a few Japs around. The engineers were Japanese, but the guards were all Koreans. The only Jap would be maybe a sergeant who would be over the camp; he would be a Japanese.

Marcello: Once again, without putting words in your mouth, I assume that these guards were rather cruel.

Rasbury: Yes, they could get that way. In other words, the way I have to explain that . . . because I was never treated that way; I have seen it. And they could get real mean.

Marcello: What did you observe these Korean guards doing in the way of atrocities and cruelties and things of that sort?

Rasbury: Well, since I was in the camp and wasn't out on the road, I didn't see much of it; I just saw the effects afterwards. They'd take these boys that was so sick that couldn't . . . you know, and they had ulcers and couldn't hardly walk, and the guards would make them crush rock or whatever they had them doing, you know, and haul that mud from below and carrying it and put it on the road. Like I say, I was fortunate in a way that I didn't have to go through any of that. Even there in 85 Kilo, I never saw the bridge or nothing that they worked on. All I knew was what they told me when they came into camp.

Marcello: Now, since you were in camp quite a bit, did you ever have very much of an opportunity to steal things and so on? I'm referring again to stealing things from the Japanese, of course.

Rasbury: No, there really wasn't anything there to steal. Well, I worked. When I didn't have anything else to do and had my work caught up, you know, I'd go up to the kitchen and help them and do things like that and maybe go over to the hospital and help over there with things. There was always something to do.

I've even gone over and watched them cook those . . . see, they ate four meals a day then. They wasn't too much, but at least they did feed them when they came in at twelve o'clock at night. They'd eat breakfast between seven and eight o'clock, and they'd leave about nine o'clock and get on the job around

nine or ten o'clock. Then they'd eat lunch out in there, and then they'd eat their dinner, and then they'd eat a midnight meal. I've told this a lot, that they kept the butter beans for the midnight meal, because it wasn't nothing but hulls and weevils. That way they didn't know what they were eating (chuckle).

Marcello: I gather that the food was always there when those guys returned from the work details.

Rasbury: Yes, they'd have it ready so they could go right on. See, they were working on the water, and they took their baths before they left, and they were ready to go to bed. They'd eat but, shoot, they'd go to bed, but they wouldn't go to sleep. They'd sing and go on, and the Japs would raise Cain and call and try to make them shut up and go to sleep. But it didn't phase them a bit. They'd hush for a little bit, and then you'd hear them again. It might be two to three o'clock before they'd ever quiet down, you know. Because I'd usually be asleep by the time they all quieted down.

Marcello: I wonder why that sort of activity took place.

Rasbury: Well, they just didn't want the Japs to know that they could get the best of them.

Marcello: We're obviously now talking about that period at the 100 Kilo Camp, is that correct?

Rasbury: No, this was 85 Kilo. They did the same in 100 Kilo after we



got there, too.

Marcello: Was the 100 Kilo Camp the worst?

Rasbury: Yes, when we got in there in the first of May--we walked in-- and it was raining when we got in there. As far as I know, the sun only shined a very few days then until November. It rained from May until November. Everything rotted. We had shelter halves up over us; the roof had already fell in on us. So we would have room to sleep there with the officers; we had this sort of double-decking. A boy by the name of Homer Daniels--from South Carolina, I believe, is where he was from-- and another one from North Carolina--a guy by the name of Dinkins--we slept on the top deck because we were smaller. Or they were, but I wanted up there with them; I wanted up out of the way. We had our shelter halves up over us, and that's all that kept us from getting wet.

Marcello: Now, we're up until May of 1943. You're into the monsoon season, and the "Speedo" campaign has begun. Describe what the "Speedo" campaign actually was and how it affected the prisoners.

Rasbury: Well, to start with, they were moving dirt to finish the fills and cuts through that area in there. Of course, with this rain and ulcers out on the road, they'd get bad. Their feet were wet, and they'd get ulcers on their feet and their legs. They didn't have any medicine for them.

What usually happened to the most of them that died over there, they'd be working and they'd get these ulcers. They'd get to where they couldn't work--just no way. The Japs couldn't even . . . they'd try, but there was just no way they could make them go out. They'd get to where they couldn't wait on themselves and take care of their mess gear. Because if you didn't boil your mess gear, if you didn't drink boiled water . . . and everything you ate had to be cooked. Well, then, there was no way to keep from getting dysentery. Well, once you got dysentery and you couldn't make it to the bath, you know, well, then you was in trouble. Then that would run your resistance down. Then the first you know, why, malaria would hit you. They just couldn't stand the three against them. There was just no way.

That's about the way most of them, you know, went. It started with ulcers and then dysentery and then malaria. Of course, maybe they'd had malaria some before, but not bad. But they didn't have to take it very bad once they got down like that.

Marcello: What were some of the home remedies, so to speak, that you saw being used for tropical ulcers?

Rasbury: Well, salt . . . just hot water was as good a thing as anything if you didn't have salt. But salt would help it. Then I never did see any use them . . . in fact, I'm not so sure they used

that in that camp at all where we were--the scraping of them.

I don't think they ever did use that.

Marcello: Evidently, that was an excruciating and painful experience.

Rasbury: Oh, it was. Like I say, when I was in 85 Kilo, I had this little place here on my leg. It went to about the size of a quarter. It began to make an ulcer, but I just kept working with it. At night I would get up . . . it'd get to hurting me, and I'd get up. I had me a bag of rice . . . we had fires in the hut all the time anyway to keep the mosquitos out, you know. I'd get my bag of rice and put it in my little frying pan that I'd bought from an Australian . . . he made it for me. I'd heat that rice and put it back in the bag and then lay it on there before I could ever go to sleep. Then when I was down at the kitchen, I would hold my leg right at the fire, and I would just burn that thing.

Then when we walked into . . . the night we got into 100 Kilo, it was dark and raining. I wasn't even going to eat, but they came down through there, and they had boiled rice and sugar and tea. Man, that sugar was something extra, so I thought, "Well, I'll go get it." So I went up through there, not knowing the area. Coming back with my rice and my tea and sugar (chuckle), I run over where they'd cut down some bamboo-- a bamboo clump. I fell right in that thing. But I didn't spill my rice and stuff (chuckle). I kind of rolled and fell

on my side. When I got down there where I could see--we had candles, you know; we'd make candles out of rendered grease and stuff and had cans of those setting around where we could see--and my ulcer was just crammed full of mud. Well, I didn't even take a bath. It kind of "teed me off" at myself for falling over that, you know, and I just never even rolled my bunk out; I just laid down right there and went to sleep.

Well, the next day then we moved back in with the officers. But I just kind of got in a little old hole of water there and washed that off real good, and I couldn't get the mud all out of it. So I thought, "Well, I'll just wait and go over and get the medic to do it." Well, things got to happening around that day--this moving and all, you know, and getting ready to set up our new barracks and everything. Well, I let it go, and about two days later I thought about the thing. It hadn't even bothered me. It still had that mud in there, and I thought, "Man, that thing is going to really be bad!"

So I went down there, and they looked at it. Dr. Lumpkin looked at it, and he said that that happened to be clean mud. He said, "That's made a scab. It's healed." In a few days it just fell off, so I never did have no more trouble with that.

But that's the way that most of them . . . there was a Sergeant Shaw, who I was talking about when we were back in Singapore. He took the job as a mess sergeant. Out there one

morning he run into what we called a Y-john, one of the cooking utensils, and cut his leg right there (gesture) a little bit. Well, they doctored it with what they had, and it got infected. It got worse and worse and worse. I seen him . . . they'd take right above his knees and squeeze the corruption out. It just went up under the skin, just ate out everything. They wanted to cut his leg off, but he wouldn't let them. He died in a few days . Well, after it got so bad, it just got in his bloodstream, you know.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that here at 100 Kilo, the morale of the prisoners reached its lowest?

Rasbury: Its lowest. It sure did. My job, which was real good up until that time . . . and then we had so many duties to do. We had to help them in the kitchen besides doing what we normally had to do. We were the burial detail; we buried them all.

Marcello: Describe what a burial detail was like.

Rasbury: Well, the first thing we'd do--we heard about it that morning--why, three or four of us would go over and dig the grave. Then we'd come back, and by that time, the medics had him strapped to a . . . we would make these up in spare time. We'd take bamboo and make sort of a litter. They would take his clothes and everything off, because if you buried him in his clothes, and the natives was standing around looking--if you buried them with a blanket or cloth--why, they'd dig them up that night and

take it off of them. So they would just take a bamboo mat and wrap them in it--the medics would do this--and we'd just pick him up and take him over. About six of us would take him over to a place and have a funeral.

Marcello: Was there any sort of a service?

Rasbury: Yes, one of the officers . . . different ones . . . an ensign by the name of Clark held most of them. Well, he wasn't a preacher or anything like that, but he was pretty well-read and he was religious; he was pretty religious. He held most of them.

Marcello: Was it very hard to dig those graves, considering your condition?

Rasbury: No. Well, at that time, you know, the orderlies, I guess, was better off than any of them, because we'd had better food to eat and we were in better shape. That's one reason they picked us to do it. It wasn't too hard to dig, because seemed like the dirt there . . . it wasn't a sand, but it wasn't a hard dirt like where we had come from . . . a black dirt. It was more of a sandy dirt.

Marcello: Were all of these graves marked and plotted as such?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, as we'd dig them. Then, for instance, one soldier . . . I don't remember who he was; I didn't make a note of it. But we were burying one fellow, and they hollered over and told us to get another grave ready. Well, this guy had died about thirty minutes before then. But before he was cold, we had him in the

grave and orchids growing on his grave. See, we'd go out and get these jungle orchids, and they never knew they was transplanted. It was raining and all; we'd just pull them up and set them right out, and they'd grow on their grave. We marked each one of them. I have a diagram; I made a diagram and numbered each grave as they died and then wrote a list of names at the number. I've got that myself.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever object to doing things of this nature?

Rasbury: Well, they didn't know it. I kept it hid all the time. It's sort of a diary-like that I had.

Marcello: Was there anybody else that was keeping records of these graves that you know of?

Rasbury: Yes, I think the officers were; they were keeping a record. In fact, they kept exact measurements. They stepped it off so many steps from the railroad in one direction . . .and a tree. They made two or three diagrams of it where they could find it later on.

Marcello: If I recall--and correct me if I'm wrong--just about all of those graves were located sooner or later, were they not?

Rasbury: Yes, that's what I hear, because we marked them. Now, ours we marked with teakwood, with teak crosses. I believe the Australians did, too, but I don't remember whether the Dutch did or not. The Dutch had so many more in there. There was 123 in that cemetery.

Marcello: This was the one at the 100 Kilo Camp.

Rasbury: Yes, at the 100 Kilo. There was fifteen Australians and forty-nine Americans.

Marcello: Is it not true that in many cases prisoners simply gave up . . . lost the will to live?

Rasbury: Yes, I know of one instance.

Marcello: Describe how you could tell when a person had given up.

Rasbury: Well, I wasn't with this boy. He had just a small ulcer on his foot. This was after it was all over with--the bad part. The monsoon was over, and they were moving them out and moving them down into Thailand. After he got down there--he was one of the youngest ones in the group from Decatur, named "Babe" Williamson--and he died down there.

Well, we didn't know what happened to him. So after I got down there several months later, I got to checking up and found an Australian that knew him real well and had some of his gear and was keeping it for somebody, you know. He said that he just decided he wanted to die and that he would never get out of there, and that was it; he just quit eating. That's the way he died.

Well, like Sergeant Shaw. I went through there one morning, and I'd managed to take what little money I had and buy some cigars. I carried them down and gave them to the boys, you know, and I wanted to give him one. He said, "No, give them



to some of the other boys. I won't need them in a few days." Shoot, he died about the next day, I think, after that.

They just gave up, you know, and when they did, they were gone. Well, another one for instance. His name was George Hall. He was from Decatur; he was a corporal. He had a brother there that was named Howard--he was a buck sergeant. His brother-in-law, Hampton, was a lieutenant. Well, the lieutenant, I was working for him at the time that he died. He took amoebic dysentery, they called it. The way they explained it to me, your stomach has little feelers, like tentacles, and this germ just gets in there and just eats all those out. Anything you eat, it just goes on through. That's what happened to him. So he died, and then a day or so after that, Howard died.

Well, Hall was . . . I'd say George wasn't over two or three days behind them to where he would have died in another day or two if we hadn't have did what we did. We'd go down there; I bought salt. We had five dollars for a canteen cupful of salt for him to bathe his ulcers. We'd make him bathe those things, and he wanted to give up. We told him how sorry he was and make him mad--make him want to fight--and told him that Wade had died and his brother died and that he had to live whether he wanted to or not to get back to tell his people what happened. Well, he pulled through it. Now, when he got back,

he wasn't in too good a shape, but he's doing all right now;  
I understand he's doing real good.

Marcello: Now, in August of 1943, Dr. Lumpkin died. What effect did  
that have on the morale of the prisoners?

Rasbury: Well, it had a lot. I'd have to compare the dates, but they  
were going pretty fast right after that happened. In fact,  
I believe Dr. Lumpkin died before . . . he or Wade and Howard  
died right there close together. Dr. Lumpkin never did know  
after he took sick. He just lay there in his bed and talked  
to his wife. But he had got hold of some morphine some way  
or another, is what I understand was wrong with him. We didn't  
know it at the time--what was wrong with him. We just thought  
he was delirious from fever and dysentery.

Marcello: I guess the feeling probably would have been, "If the doctor  
died, how can anybody else stay alive?"

Rasbury: Yes, that's what . . . everybody that you talked to, you know,  
that was the opinion that everybody had.

Marcello: Under circumstances like this, do men become more religious?

Rasbury: Yes, they do. In fact, there was some, I think, that are . . .  
I know of one that's preaching today on this. Some do, and it  
is more of an inward religion. They maybe didn't let it show  
out, but they were more religious.

Marcello: I would assume that in circumstances of this nature that  
you see the very best and the very worst in human beings come out.

Rasbury: Yes. You'd see very little trouble between any of the people. But if any trouble did arise between two, it would be because of . . . maybe not what the individual had done or said, but they maybe both were right at the point of breaking, you know. I think that's what caused what little trouble that there was.

I only know of one incident, and it happened back in Camp 18. A sailor was sitting there just on his bunk, and one of the boys came through there that had been working sort of like an interpreter or something to do with the Japanese. (Chuckle) This sailor hollered "attention" in Japanese when he walked by, you know, and, boy, he busted him one. Just something like that, you know, that they were both probably keyed up at the time anyway, you know.

But you didn't see too much trouble after we got into the jungles. More so, I think, there was a little bit in Singapore, because we hadn't gotten to that stage yet, you know.

Marcello: Now, at the 100 Kilo Camp, did you have to go out on the work details?

Rasbury: I only went out when I had to. They had me listed as sick. But then they would line us up sometimes, and they would pick us out and send us out on the work detail if they didn't get enough people.

But we had things that we had to do. Like, if we had a funeral and we knew we had to go, we'd go to the jungles before

what we called the "blitz." We'd go off up in the jungles with the wood party and work with them until this was all over, and then we would come back. The wood party was the one that cut wood for the camp, you know, to cook with and things that way. We'd just go off with them and work with them and stay hid out until this was over with, and then we'd come back and go ahead about our work.

But I went out on a rock detail about two or three times, and I believe that's all I ever went out. I take it back. I did go out on a . . . I don't remember what we went out for. Oh, we was cutting bamboo; we had to cut some bamboo. There was a whole bunch of Dutch, and, as far as I know, I was the only American on it. There was some Australians . . . and we were leading the pack.

Well, there was a truck came by with sweet potatoes on it; well, he slowed down so everybody could get them one. Well, the wood party people had been bringing them in, you know, so I thought, "Well, shoot, it's all right." So I got one; an Australian got one; everybody got potatoes. Well, we didn't notice what the Dutch did. The Dutch threwed theirs down in the ditch and then got them when they come back by. We went by a guardhouse up there, and he lined us all up and shook us down. There I was with that big potato sticking out of my pocket. And an Australian, they caught him with his. We were

the only two that had potatoes. So he made us bash each other a little bit (chuckle)--punishment for it--but he let us keep our sweet potatoes. So they tasted pretty good when we got back into camp.

Marcello: I assume that by this time you can't do very much trading with the natives. They can't get back in to this camp very easily, can they?

Rasbury: No, there wasn't too much in there. They'd bring stuff in for the kitchen once in a while, like eggs, maybe some coffee, tea--we could get tea--and some kind of a brown sugar. Just little things like that was all they could get hold of. In fact, sometimes they'd take us out on a detail there at 100 Kilo and pick greens. That was one of our jobs, too. It was "careless" weeds, was all it was. They'd boil them up, and they'd taste pretty good.

Marcello: What is your situation in terms of clothing at this point?

Rasbury: They had issued us some English stuff, oh, about . . . somewhere around July or August or something like that, after the season had kind of settled down a little bit.

The other barracks that we went into first, the old 100 Kilo, was so bad that they moved us out of those barracks into some new barracks where the Japanese, I think, were for a time or maybe some of the other prisoners-of-war. But it was better barracks when we moved down to another location.

Marcello: What made those old ones so bad?

Rasbury: Well, all the top . . . all the stuff had rotted during the monsoons. They didn't replace them.

Marcello: I guess everything rots during the monsoon season.

Rasbury: Oh, yes, including people (chuckle). If you wanted to take a bath, well, we just had a hole out there where the rain water run in. It stayed pretty clear all the time, and we'd just go out there and dip it out in--we had bamboo buckets--and go from there and take a bath. Usually, you'd just stand out under the drip of the water if there was any running, but eventually it was all going inside, and there wasn't nothing running off the house. Everybody just had their shelter halves and things spread up to keep the rain off of them.

There was one thing real funny that happened there in 100 Kilo. I always was an early riser, and since I was, I would go to the kitchen. Then the other one or two, whatever we had to help bring the food back, they'd come on later. Well, I was up there one morning, and the cook had got up and had already got started cooking. We had some beef, and they'd chop it up real fine the night before and put it in a basket, and they'd just put a sack over it. Then the next morning they'd throw it in these fifty-gallon drums--half fifty-gallon drums--and boil it and then let it boil so until it got done. Then they'd put rice in there to thicken it up, and if they had eggs, they'd

chop eggs up in it. They'd boil them first and then chop them up in there. It made a pretty good meal for breakfast.

Well, when I went in, he was cussing and raising Cain, and he was stirring this stuff. I don't remember who it was; I think it was either Nick Carr or a sailor by the name of Kelly--but one of the two. I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "Well, they didn't cut all the meat up. They just threw a big hunk in there." I said, "Well, do you want me to cut it up for you?" "No," he said, "let it cook awhile, and then we'll take it out." So I sat around there for a little while helping around doing this, that, and the other.

So it come time that he figured it was cooked enough. Well, he got his big old paddle and raked it out, and it was a shoe (laughter). One of them was sleeping up on top of the rice and had his shoes left there, and he'd kicked one of them off, and it fell in the top of this basket. With it being dark, you know, he couldn't see, and he just dumped it all in there. So I didn't eat breakfast that morning (chuckle), but everybody else did. We carried it right on down. The officers ate it and everything else.

Marcello: How did you substitute for toothpaste and toothbrushes and things of that nature?

Rasbury: Well, if you could get salt . . . I used salt and my finger. They didn't have no toothbrushes at that time.

Marcello: Wouldn't some people also chew off a branch or something?

Rasbury: Yes, make them a toothbrush. My teeth . . . I have a problem I've had all my life of calcium building up between them. My teeth are wide apart anyway, and they would get filled up so full that it would get rough in back and make my tongue sore. So I finally got me a wire and sharpened the thing off and made me like a hook, and I'd pry it out, break it out from behind. I told a dentist that one time, and he said, "I don't see how you can have any teeth left." (chuckle) But that's the way . . . and then I could push through from the front side and break it off. It was just like . . . well, you know, it's like this collection of water when you're boiling a tea kettle or something like that; it looked like lime. Lime was pretty good. Take a lime, just cut one and eat it; it would clean it off pretty good.

Marcello: Limes were pretty plentiful?

Rasbury: Not too plentiful. We'd get them once in a while but not too often.

Marcello: By this time, are you supplementing your food in just about any way you can? In other words, are you eating cats, dogs, snakes, and anything of that nature at this point?

Rasbury: Well, even before then. The first time I remember eating any kind of meat other than just beef that I knew about was before Dr. Lumpkin died. He wanted me to go up to the Dutch kitchen.



A friend of his that was a cook up there and was cooking a dog, and he wanted me to go up there and get some of it. He said if he'd come up there, he'd send him back some. He had a Dutch mess kit that would hold about a half a gallon, and I carried it up there with me. I watched him cook it. It smelled good and looked good. The only thing, it kind of foamed just a little bit.

The way he cooked it, he chopped it up into real small . . . he boned it, you know, took all the bones out, and chopped the meat up into small cubes and braised it in pork fat and onions. Then after he did this and got it kind of browned, you know, and cooked and done, then he mixed water in it and rice that had been beat up, and he made kind of a gravy with it.

Boy, it sure did smell good. Of course, he had all kinds of spices and stuff in it that we could get. We could get peppers and stuff that way, you know . . . plenty of onions, garlic, and all that kind of stuff.

I got this half a gallon to carry it down to Dr. Lumpkin and rationed it out to everybody that wanted it. Well, I wasn't really hungry enough to eat it at that time, but I didn't know when I might get that way. So I ate some of it, and I couldn't tell any . . . wasn't anything wrong with it as far as I was concerned. Most of the officers that were there tried it, you

know, and some of them tasted it and spit it out; but they wouldn't eat it (chuckle).

I believe the best thing I got there was a snake. They'd killed a big old snake; I think that thing was about twenty feet long, and it was about five or six inches in diameter. They just cut slices off of that thing, and it was real good. It was a python, was what it was. I happened to know this Dutch--the Dutch is the one that got it--and he brought me some over.

But another thing that made life a little better for us--the orderlies, I'm speaking of--we had these Chinese boys, and they knew how to cook. They was always cooking rice patties and fish patties and stuff like that. Naturally, we'd eat better than the rest of them. I remember one of them cooking a fresh fish. Now, dried fish, why, you'd just hold it over a fire and cook it, you know. You could do that with a fresh fish, but it wasn't too good that way. The way he cooked it, he put it in a small container and then set it in water and kind of steamed it . . . put a cover over it. He put his spice and his salt and pepper and onions and garlic and everything in there and steamed that thing . . . let it cook in its own oil. That was really good; now that was his way to cook it. But he really knew how.

I watched him cook . . . I think some call it tripe; some

call it chitlings. Now, I think tripe is beef, so that's what it was. He took these certain parts, you know, and he cleaned them real good and washed them up, and then he boiled it. He did that seven times. He'd put it in this boiling water and boil it as he would cut parts off of it and throw it away and then put this other back in clean water and boil it again. I tell you, I never ate anything better than that. I knew it had to be clean after cooking it that long. But we were just lucky to have somebody like that that knew how to cook that kind of stuff and help us in our cooking.

Marcello: You know, we're talking about people that probably for the most part range in age anywhere from seventeen to twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five, I guess.

Rasbury: Yes, I think that would catch most of us.

Marcello: Do you mature pretty fast under circumstances like that, or in many cases do you see the prisoners acting like the young men or boys that they were?

Rasbury: Some of them, I don't think, have ever grown up yet (chuckle). But, you know, some did. But there's some of them that you listen at them tell these things . . . and the way I tell it, it's not even funny. But to them, you know, let them tell it, and it's really funny . . . some of the things. Some of them have never had a serious thought.

In fact, there's one thing I can tell you that happened

there in 100 Kilo. They were working down the railroad a ways pretty close to where the Japs' barracks was and all, and the kitchen was there pretty close to the railroad. So they'd go down and make an excuse to go down to get water or something, you know, and they kind of cased the joint. They found out that they had coffee in there in some cans.

Well, they managed to get in there. They'd come and get them on details to do things there off of the railroad, you know. They weren't working too hard on the railroad right then, because it was finished. They were just maybe putting rock on it or cleaning up or, you know, things like that--doing little odds and ends. So he decided he wanted to get that five-gallon can of coffee back in the camp, because it was worth about five dollars for a canteen cupful.

Well, he figured it all out how he could do it, and it all worked out real good. The way he done it, he went down and went through the back, got a can of coffee out, and sat it out in the weeds that morning. Well, then when chow haulers came out, they brought food out in tubs. So then he put it in that, and they carried it back. So that night everybody lined up and had their canteen cups to buy this coffee. Boy, he was going to get rich off of it.

Well, he opened it up, and the Japs must have known what was happening and switched it with nutmeg (chuckle). He had a

five-gallon can of nutmeg. Boy, that really hurt him, you know, money-wise. But a lot of things happened like that.

Marcello: I assume that the Japanese were fair game. In other words, prisoners would go to the limits, so to speak, to put something over on the Japanese if at all possible.

Rasbury: Oh, yes. Yes, they sure would. Of course, they were pretty rough on you if they caught you stealing from them, but now they didn't care if you was stealing from somebody else, you know, from the natives and things that way. We had an old boy there, a Korean, and we nicknamed him "Magen." In Dutch that's "food." Well, he was over the food part. So when things would get kind of low and the cattle didn't have many cows and they wouldn't let them kill any, why, he'd just get his rifle and take off with the three butchers--an Australian and American and Dutch butcher. They'd go out and they'd find a cow, and they'd just kill the thing and skin it and bring it in there. The Dutchman was a great, big Dutchman; he could bring half of it in, and the American and the Australian would bring a quarter of it in. That's the way they'd get meat sometime.

Before, sometime, they wouldn't let them kill a cow or something a day, why, that night they'd slip in there and break one of them's leg. It was cruel, but that was the only way they would let them kill it then the next day.

Marcello: How did you communicate with the outside world? Or maybe I should say, were you able to have any contact at all with the outside world?

Rasbury: Nothing definite. Now, we would get rumors from other camps--passers-by--and things like that and kind of watch the air--the amount of planes that was in the air--and things that way. That's the only way we could tell. I don't think anybody . . . they had rumors, but I don't think anybody had anything for sure.

Marcello: Were the Allies well aware of this railroad being built?

Rasbury: Yes, they knew it was there and knew we were there.

Marcello: In other words, you did see all sorts of air reconnaissance while you were building the railroad?

Rasbury: Oh, yes. Going back to when I was talking about letting fate have its way, well, when I left Thanbyuzayat, they bombed it about a week after I left, and one American got killed. Then when we left Camp 18, they strafed it; and then when I left 105, I think they strafed it right after that. But I won't go no further because of other things.

It just seemed after I'd leave a place, there'd be something that happened. It got to where everybody wanted to make the move that I'd make (chuckle).

Marcello: Did they ever bomb the railroad while you were working on it?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, later on when we get on down the country, why, they

bombed it. They didn't bomb it up there around 100 Kilo when I was there. I don't think they bombed it until years later. They might have bombed there some later on.

Marcello: Were you able to send any postcards or letters or anything of that nature while you were in the jungles?

Rasbury: Yes, they let us write several letters, but none of my letters got through. I think they just read them. But I got two postcards, I think, that came through. One of them was from . . . no, they was both from Burma, I believe. I've got them in there, but they were both from Burma. There wasn't anything much on them. You just marked what you wanted; they already had it written out.

Marcello: In other words, I think you had to indicate that your health was good, fair, poor, or something along that line. If you didn't say it was good, the card probably wouldn't get through.

Rasbury: Right.

Marcello: Okay, I think it was about in October of 1943 that the railroad was finally completed so far as the prisoners were concerned.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Where were you when the railroad was completed?

Rasbury: I was still at 100 Kilo when it was completed.

Marcello: In a way, that was a good day for everybody.

Rasbury: Yes. Of course, they still had to work some, like putting the chat--the gravel--on. Of course, they were already running and

making repairs and things. I believe it was . . . the first bunch, I think, left out of there in November. It was somewhere around January of '44 before we left Camp 100.

Marcello: Did you have any sense of pride that you had finished this railroad?

Rasbury: Yes, in a . . . I probably didn't as much as the ones that worked on it. But I heard them make statements, "Well, we did it. They didn't think we could, but we did." Because that was . . . I mean, I heard the rumor that the English had surveyed that thing out, and they lost too many lives in there, and they abandoned it. In other words, we went in there and did something that other people couldn't do. Of course, it was a real big expense. The old colonel told us we was going to build it if it took a body for every crosstie, and he didn't miss it by much.

Marcello: Oh, you had heard the original speech that Colonel Nagatomo had given.

Rasbury: Yes, I heard that; yes, I heard that. In fact, I've got a copy of it.

Marcello: I have a copy of that speech, too, and I'm still in the dark as to how that copy was obtained, that is, the original speech.

Rasbury: I think it must have been some of the boys in Japan. I'm not for sure, but I think that's the way they probably got it . . . got it before they left Japan.



Marcello: Describe the manner in which that speech was given.

Rasbury: Well, it was at night. They showed us "Pearl Harbor," a movie. Then after that, he got up there and made us a speech that we were the remnants of a rabble army and that we were nothing but slaves for the Japanese army; that America wouldn't last too much longer, because they didn't have any rubber and the soldiers did not have clothes and shoes to wear. Oh, I don't know, it went on that way. When we turned around to walk off the stage, why, the seat of his pants was patched (chuckle). It looked like he was just about out of them himself. Of course, we all got a big kick out of that. But he said that we were going to build the railroad if it took a man for every crosstie.

Marcello: And he wasn't far from wrong, was he?

Rasbury: No, he sure wasn't.

Marcello: This, of course, happened back in Thanbyuzayat, that is, where he gave his speech.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, so where do you go from the 100 Kilo Camp after the railroad has been completed?

Rasbury: Well, they sent all the sick people back to Tamarkan and down into Thailand. But some of the officers that I was working with stayed behind; we were in pretty good shape. We moved to Camp 105 and stayed there for about, oh, two or three weeks;

it wasn't very long. Then they moved us on down to Tamarkan.

This was in March.

Marcello: Of 1944? Yes, it would have to have been 1944, because the railroad was finished in October of 1943.

Rasbury: It was March of '44 when I got into there.

Marcello: Did you go down to Tamarkan by railway?

Rasbury: Yes, we went in gondolas with open tops. When we crossed that one bridge, I was hoping I would never go back across it again.

Marcello: Why was that?

Rasbury: Well, it was so crooked, and they moved about two or three miles an hour . . . just crept across it. The thing would go down on one side; you didn't know whether it was going to stop or not (chuckle). Directly, it'd raise back up and go the other way. It was sort of built right around the mountains.

Marcello: This is the one that was built on several tiers or stories, was it not?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: And, of course, it was all wood.

Rasbury: Yes, all wood--teakwood mostly.

Marcello: Considering the fact that the prisoners deliberately sabotaged certain parts of that railroad, I'm sure that it was a rather scarey experience to have to ride over it.

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, when you get on them high bridges, it'd make us kind of wonder if somebody had sawed some logs in two or something (chuckle)

Marcello: Okay, so describe what Tamarkan looks like.

Rasbury: Well, Tamarkan was different from anything that I've been in. It was huge. I have seen as many as 6,000 to 7,000 people in that one camp the time I was there. I was there from March until, I think, somewhere around November of '44, or maybe a little bit before then. Things was real good for a while.

Marcello: Of course, anything would have been better than the jungles.

Rasbury: Yes, for most of them; but for me, it was worse there.

Marcello: Why was that?

Rasbury: I'd been there about a week, and malaria hit me. I'd never had malaria in the jungles but one time very bad. They didn't have any quinine and nothing to give me for it there. We was completely out, because there was so many other people. I know I run a 105-degree fever several times, and I got down to weighing, oh, probably 100 pounds. I couldn't eat, and I was out of my head for about a couple of days. But I finally pulled through that and got to where I knew what I was doing. I was right in the barracks; they didn't put me in a hospital . . . yes, I was, too. They moved me out--because I was staying with the officers--and they moved me out of the officers' quarters into there.

Well, Captain Parker and them would come up, but there wasn't nothing they could do. They could get food for me, but I wouldn't eat it. I couldn't eat it; it wouldn't stay down.

So they finally got hold of some Atabrine and gave me a round of Atabrine. That kind of pulled me out of it.

Once I knew what I was doing . . . I had a two-dollar bill that a Dutchman gave me for a pair of shoes on this boat that was sunk; I mean, he came off the boat that was sunk and he lost his shoes. So I had an extra pair, and I sold him a pair for two dollars. Well, I gave them to him, and he gave me this American two-dollar bill. So I sent it out and got it exchanged, and it was good for twenty dollars. Well, the guy that got it exchanged, naturally, he got half of it, but I got the other half.

Eggs . . . you could go up to the PX--I could just barely make it up there and back--and I'd get me a couple of eggs. I'd go up while everybody was down at muster, because I couldn't stand up in line long enough. They'd have them ready for me every meal. I'd go up there and get me a couple of eggs and rice. Well, about a week went by like that, and, shoot, I was back in pretty good shape again. I never did have no more trouble after that there in that camp. But I just knew I was a goner there for a while.

Marcello: What were your living quarters like here at Tamarkan?

Rasbury: Well, just about like all the rest of them; they were just huts and things that way. They weren't real crowded; they had plenty of huts.

Marcello: Now did you say you were or were not living with the officers here?

Rasbury: Well, on second thought, I don't think we were, because they had the Dutch, Americans, Australians--all the officers--in huts together. We didn't live with them up there, that's right. I remember now; we were with the rest of the Americans.

Marcello: What sort of work did you do here at Tamarkan?

Rasbury: I was still working for the officers. They tried to get me to . . . but I went out on a rice detail one day. We had an Australian sailor in charge of all the orderlies there. We weren't just under the American rule; we were under everybody there, the "big wheels." They had MP's and everything just like they did if it was outside.

So they wanted me to go . . . I went out on detail the day before and hauled rice, and they wanted me to go again. I said, "Well, now there's more people than me. Why do I have to go again today? I thought we was going to take a turnabout." He said, "Well, you're in a lot better shape than some of the others."

I refused to go. I said, "Well, if you think you're big enough to make me, I'll go," and I didn't go. So they put me on report--what they called a report--the Australian did.

Well, Captain Parker came around, and he said, "I understand you didn't go out on a working detail." I said, "No, I didn't."

He wanted to know why, and I told him. He said, "Well, there probably won't be nothing to happen."

But Major Rogers, who called Captain Parker "Ike," came down about two days later and said, "'Ike,' Rasbury works for you. You take care of this." He was the one that was supposed to dish out the punishment, but he said, "He's working for you. You take care of it."

So, well, it rocked on then for a few days. I was down at the barracks--had got through work there at the officers' quarters--and went back to the barracks, and two great, big MP's came down there after me--English. I told them there was no way I'd go anywhere with them. I said, "Man, we're prisoners-of-war; I'm not going nowhere with you!"

One of them started to catch a hold of me, and when they did, all the Americans that was there just stepped off their bunks. The first sergeant there was Sergeant Schmid. He said, "Don't lay a hand on him!" He said, "Y'all just go on, and I'll bring him up there." They said, "No, we was sent down here after him." So somebody--I don't remember who it was now--said, "Well, you may be sent after him, but you're not taking him! Now if he wants to go, he'll go; but he's not going to be walking between you!" The sergeant said, "Yes, I'll walk with him. You can follow us." So that's the way we went up there.

So we got up there, and Captain Parker was there. I went in and they followed me right on in, and they come to attention and stood there. Captain Parker looked up and told them that would be all. Well, they just got at ease and was going to stand there for the court-martial, I guess. Captain Parker looked up and he said, "I said that would be all! I do not need you people in here! I'll take care of this!" So he dismissed them (chuckle); he said, "You go!"

So after they left, he said, "Well, 'Ras,' I've got to show something here on the books. I'm going to fine you ten days' pay," which was \$2.50. Twenty-five cents a day is what we was getting paid for working. He said, "I'm gonna fine you ten days' pay." I said, "Okay," and he wrote it in the book, you know. I got ready to go, and he reached in his pocket and gave me a five-dollar bill. He said, "Now, you come up here after a while and pay this and then go to the canteen--I've ordered a cake--and pick up that cake." I think it cost a couple of bucks or something. He said, "Don't you tell nobody I gave you this money." (Chuckle) I said, "I won't." So that's the way I got after that.

I'd get tired of sitting around--there wasn't too much to do--and I'd go up . . . they had to pump water. They kept a twenty-four-hour crew pumping water just with a hand pump, you know.

Marcello: This was water for the camp?

Rasbury: Yes, for the pump. I'd go up and relieve them. That way, if you did that, why, you could get a bath any time you wanted to, see. So I'd go up and relieve them; then they'd relieve me; then I'd maybe take a couple of spells on it. Then they'd give me my water, and I'd go take a bath and go on. But just, you know, to have something to do like that.

Marcello: Did the Japanese harass the prisoners very much here at Tamarkan?

Rasbury: No, they didn't. I think there was too many in there. I think they was kind of . . . they'd go in pairs or there'd be two or three of them. They walked outside the fence when they walked guard. They didn't come in very much.

One thing we had while we was there--there was so many people--they did let us take exercise and play ball. We even had a baseball tournament. The group I was with lost one game about half, and then we had to drop back and come back. We went right on to the top and lost the last game. I've got a schedule that we had of how we played and who we played and scores and everything on it.

Marcello: So there was more time for recreation in this camp.

Rasbury: Yes, at this time, because I think this was one of the camps that they used to take details out of to go out on different things that they wanted done, because they was always calling for so many people. Instead of sending all Americans at one



time or all English, they'd take so many . . . they'd pro-rate it. Shoot, it got to where that there wasn't very many Americans in any camp.

Getting back to this ballgame business, the Japs would come down and watch us. Finally, the old colonel said that he had a few boys that would like to play us and play a game of baseball. Shoot, we didn't know whether we wanted to play them or not (chuckle). So the Englishman, the English colonel or brigadier general or whatever he was that was in charge of the camp, he sent him word back that our boys wasn't physically able to play them. He said, "Now, they play themselves, but they don't play that hard." He sent him word back; he said, "We'll be there at two o'clock. Have them on the field."

So they asked for volunteers, and I decided I'd play. Then after they got there, they asked for a volunteer for the umpire. That's the ones that didn't want to take the job (chuckle). They was afraid they might get beat up, you know, if they called it wrong or something. So there was finally a couple of them who took it--one for bases and one behind the pitcher.

We beat them; we beat them bad. They were pretty good sports. It was a rubber ball; man, if you ever connected with that thing, it'd just go out of sight. But when they threw the thing to you, it was hard enough it would sting just like a baseball. We had gloves and everything to play with. I

don't know where they got them. It seemed like they came in the Red Cross; we got a bunch of Red Cross stuff there then-- medical gear and stuff.

Then later on they got to running. They decided they'd have a track and field day. The old Jap colonel that was in charge, he said, "Okay, you set the time, and we'll have a Japanese to participate in every event." He said, "I know that the prisoner-of-war is not in as good a physical shape as the Japanese soldier, so we will give two prizes. We'll give one to the winning prisoner and one to the winning soldier."

So the day came. They had foot races and high jump and tying bamboo to about six peoples' legs and running. When it was about half over, the old colonel got up and left, because we was beating them so bad and everything. I don't think they won anything. We had an Australian officer that just flat outran everything that got out there. We even had horse races, and, oh, they had betting stands. You could bet on any race or anything you wanted to. It was really a big day.

Marcello: Were plays and theatrical performances put on here?

Rasbury: Yes, they had a real nice theatre, and every night they had plays and things put on there.

Marcello: Did you attend those regularly?

Rasbury: I went to a few, but not too many. I kind of got used to them;

it was the same thing over and over. One of the main plays was the "Monkey's Paw." (chuckle) I saw that a half a dozen times. Then some others; I don't remember the others.

We had one American--he lives in Oklahoma; he was originally from Jacksboro, I think--by the name of Ed Worthington. He wrote a play for them, and after I left, they claim they put it on, and it was the best one they ever put on.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that you did receive some Red Cross supplies here. Did you receive any of the Red Cross food parcels here?

Rasbury: Yes, that's where we received them. We got six men to one parcel; I think there was about five or six pounds to a parcel.

Marcello: Were they pretty important?

Rasbury: Well, they were to us, even though it wasn't much. I think we got one or two packages of cigarettes. I didn't smoke, so I traded mine for other stuff. Oh, it seemed like we got a can of what we called "bully beef" and some chocolate and coffee and candy and just different things like that. It wasn't very much, but it was a taste . . . a taste of civilization.

Marcello: What did you talk about in your spare time here at Tamarkan? Surely, you would have bull sessions from time to time.

Rasbury: Oh, yes, all the time. We'd just . . . I don't know, just talk just like you would nowadays . . . about the events that was happening there. Then we might wonder what was happening on

the outside and how much longer we was going to be in and things like that. We would hear a rumor; it would get going pretty good, and people'd talk about that.

Marcello: Was food still a major topic of conversation?

Rasbury: Yes, it always was. Whatever you started talking about, it would wind up with talking about food.

Marcello: How strategic a location was Tamarkan?

Rasbury: Well, they had an ack-ack post right at the bridge. I heard they also had an ammunition dump out pretty close.

Marcello: There was a river here at Tamarkan.

Rasbury: Yes, it was the big river.

Marcello: Were there ever any air raids while you were here?

Rasbury: Not while I was there. Well, there was air raids but not . . . they didn't drop anything around there, but there were planes just going over. When the ack-ack post fired the first night, it like to have scared me to death; I thought it was bombs. Everybody else did, too; they all wound up on the floor or in a hole somewhere or another until they found out what was wrong. Of course, when those things started going off, you know, right there that close, it sounded just like bombs. But the planes flew over that a lot. I don't know why.

Marcello: That must have been encouraging when you saw these planes fly over.

Rasbury: Yes, it was. Really, the best sight that I ever saw was one

day there in Tamarkan, a bright sunshiny day, when we kept hearing a little roaring, you know, and directly we saw a . . . I think the last count--when somebody lost count--there was over 150 planes that had come over at that time. We were scared; we didn't know for sure that they knew (chuckle) we were down there, you know.

Oh, we was talking about things to do. We played bridge, dominoes, cards, or anything we had to play with, you know, to kill time with.

Marcello: Did you start any new business enterprises here at Tamarkan?

Rasbury: No, the last one I had was back at 100 Kilo. The Dutch was cooking bread and getting five dollars a loaf for it, so I started--me and Homer Daniels and Dinkins--the three orderlies--we started getting rice and cooking it and selling it for half that price and about twice as big. So we put them out of business. But that was the last I did; I didn't do no more. I just kind of went along for the ride then.

Marcello: I gather that here at Tamarkan you were passing time, so to speak.

Rasbury: Yes, that's right. We were just there. They were taking details out all the time. One day a boy by the name of Johnny Buck from Decatur . . . they called for details. In fact, they wanted to do the picking; they liked to pick them themselves, you know. This wasn't a real heavy detail. They just wanted some

of them that was . . . you was marked according to the duty, and we were marked "B" in a box; that was our rate on how we were physically . That's what they called it. In other words, we were a light duty people. We were doing light duty work like killing flies; you had to kill so many flies every day and turn them in and stuff like that besides working for the officers, you know.

Marcello: In other words, on the paper, did they have a square box with a "B" inside it?

Rasbury: Yes. I had one of those papers. I had mine for a long time, but I guess I let somebody smoke it. We just went on out like everybody else did, you know, and went through the line. Of course, Buck knew he wouldn't go. He had yellow jaundice, and his eyes was just as yellow as they could be. They'd look at him, and they'd run him off (chuckle) every time. He wasn't a very big guy.

But they took me. They decided they wanted me; I was in pretty good shape. That was after I'd got over the sick spell and everything, you know, and gained my weight back. So I went back and told Captain Parker and Captain Taylor and them, "Well," I said, "I guess I'm going to be leaving y'all. Y'all will have to get somebody else." They wanted to know why, and I told them what had happened; they'd got me out there, and they decided they wanted me to go back to the

jungles with them. "Oh, you don't want to go back to the jungles." I said, "Yeah, I guess I asked for it. I could have got out of it, but I went through just to see if they'd take me."

Captain Parker said, "Well, now we can get you off if you want to, if you don't want to go." "No," I said, "you know, I've left every camp, and everywhere I've gone, when I'd get ready to go, I've always went. There's always something that happened after I leave." "Aw," he said, "there's nothing to that." (Chuckle) So I left, and in about . . . it wasn't over a week after I left that they bombed that place and killed quite a few . . . I'd say about--oh, I don't know how many--fifteen or twenty, something like that.

Marcello: So now where did you go from Tamarkan?

Rasbury: I went from Tamarkan to a place called Kinsayok; it was a ration dump. But we first started working . . . yes, there at Kinsayok we started working cleaning the road; there was a convoy of trucks coming through. We checked the bridges and cleaned the brush and got the road ready for them to come through. Then after we got through there, why, then we went over working in the rations in the ration depot, digging big ditches around it so they could fill it full of water. That way the rats couldn't get over to it. That one had beans in it. I found out; I opened one corner and went in and got me

a five-gallon can of beans out of it (chuckle).

Marcello: What did you open to get in there?

Rasbury: Took the bamboo off at the back of it right opposite . . . they were working on the other side. I slipped around from the guard and got around to the back and opened it up and got me a five-gallon can of beans and carried it down to the boys that was boiling tea. I didn't know how I was going to get it in. That evening some canteen people came by and stopped and wanted us to help them take their stuff in, so we just carried it right on in with it.

Marcello: Now, how far was this camp from Tamarkan?

Rasbury: Oh, seemed like it took us about a day to get up there or something like that.

Marcello: Is it still in Thailand?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: How long did you remain there altogether?

Rasbury: Oh, we stayed there a couple of weeks, and then we went from there to a place called Tamajao. It was, I believe, Camp 135; it was right on the line of Burma and Thailand. It was a wood-cutting camp. I stayed in there nine months.

Marcello: Well, since you stayed there for nine months, let's talk a little bit more about this. How large a camp was it?

Rasbury: Well, it wasn't a real big camp . . .I'd say maybe a couple of thousand; it could have been less. They'd divide you up into



so many to a group; there was six in my group. You'd go out and cut . . . you had fifty cubic centimeters of wood per man to cut, which was no problem for anybody that knew anything about wood. With my group, I was lucky; I had myself, which was raised on the farm; I had an Australian that was a bushman right out off the farm or ranch; I had a boy from Kentucky; and I had two Australian sailors at that time, which were good workers. I don't remember whether they were from the city or not, but, anyway, they knew enough about it. We had an American, a guy by the name of Donald N. Brown, that worked in the supply where they sharpened the saws and axes, and he saw that we got good stuff to work with.

Now, we'd come in every day with the chow at one o'clock. We'd go out there in the mornings with the rest of them, and we'd have our wood cut by dinnertime, and we'd come in. Some of those Dutchmen would come dragging in that didn't know how to cut wood or anything, and they'd come in late.

Marcello: Were you working with axes and saws?

Rasbury: Yes, we had good saws, and we only had one chopping ax and one splitting ax. The splitting ax looked like a wedge. If you could lift it, it'd split it if it ever hit it.

Marcello: Now, by this time, had you regained some of your weight?

Rasbury: Yes, I'd gained all of it back. I was back up to 140 or 145 pounds.

Marcello: Were you getting pretty good rations in this camp?

Rasbury: Yes, we got pretty good food in this camp, but it got to where we didn't eat it.

Marcello: Why was that?

Rasbury: The six of us . . . anytime a working party went out down to the store or little village or went off, we always had at least two of us would be on it. We either bought stuff or stole stuff. We got to eating so good, we just didn't even bother about taking our rations.

We ate all the ducks there that belonged to the Japs . . . we ate about half of them. What we'd do, we got permission to set a trap for wild chickens. We was always the first ones to come in to go down to take a bath, and the ducks was in the water. So we'd knock one in the head and put it in our bucket and put our clothes on top of it. Then when we'd get back into camp then, why, this Australian--boy, he could skin a duck before you could turn around--he'd go out like he was going to go run his traps and go out there and skin that duck and come back, and we'd cook it that night.

I had those beans. They looked like an English pea all shriveled up, but they'd swell up about three times as big. But they were about like bird shot; it was real small. Boy, they was good stuff! We'd put them in there and boil them with that duck, and that'd thicken up the water, you know, and make

real good soup. We'd have the sergeant over, and he'd say,  
"That was really good chicken."

Marcello: This was the Japanese sergeant?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, he liked us pretty good. We didn't give him any  
trouble or anything, and he was just a pretty good guy.

Marcello: How much fraternization was there with the guards here at  
this camp?

Rasbury: Well, they had a corporal . . . I don't know if he treated  
everybody the same, but he sure didn't like me. He was always  
trying to give me trouble.

Marcello: In what way?

Rasbury: Well, I worked out, like I say, in this wood cutting camp  
for a long time there. But at night, I'd come in and I'd  
take tin cans--these five-gallon cans--and cut the bottom out  
of them and make smaller buckets out of what was left. I had  
a little ball peen hammer and a pair of scissors and a railroad  
spike, was what I'd use to cut these and beat them and put  
them together. To make them hold water--to keep them from  
leaking--I'd put rice in--about a cupful of rice--and then  
fill it full of water with water just pouring everywhere. I'd  
set it on a big fire and get the water to boiling, and this  
rice would come all to pieces. I'd let it boil all the water  
out, and that rice would go into those grooves and burn into  
it. It would never leak no more. Then I'd put water in there

and soften it out and scrape out what I could, you know. I'd sell those for two-and-a-half a bucket. People used them to take baths in and put food in or make tea and things that way.

Well, I got to doing that, and I was going up to the tin shop. They had an Australian that was a tinsmith, and that's where I learned to make them. I'd go up there and piddle around with him. He would repair all the cooking utensils for the Jap kitchen and our kitchen and everything. So he took malaria-- got down.

Boy, they come got me then. So I worked there the rest of the time I stayed there in there. This little old Jap would come up there, and he'd want me to make stuff. I told him, no, the sergeant had me making stuff for him (chuckle). He'd get mad; oh, he'd get mad.

Marcello: Where did you have any experience as a tinsmith, or where had you picked it up?

Rasbury: Just watching him and watch him how he'd cut it out and make it. Well, if I ever saw anything done one time, I could usually do it.

Marcello: What sort of items would you be making in this tin shop?

Rasbury: Well, they'd bring their buckets over there, you know, that have holes in the bottom. I'd cut the bottom out and take another piece of tin. I'd roll it just like if it was machine-

rolled and cut the bottom a quarter of an inch bigger than the flange after you turned the bucket out and then cut it a quarter of an inch bigger, or an eighth. Then you turn it up, and then you'd set this down in it, and it'd turn over on it. Then you'd beat it up against the side to turn it up. That way it would hold. The seam . . . I could make the seam from the top to the bottom, and it would never leak. The only place that leaked was right down at the bottom. Sometime where the seam and the bottom come together, it was hard to get that beat in there to where it wouldn't leak. But that seam, you'd bend your tin over one time, and then you'd slide it under it. Then you would bend that up and then make one more roll. Then you'd straighten it out--put it on a log and beat it out round. There's no way it would come apart. It was rolled in there twice just like they make an ordinary bucket.

Marcello: Were you working in there by yourself most of the time?

Rasbury: Yes, it was just a little old hut out there by that kitchen and the guardhouse.

Marcello: I guess this suited you just fine, since you mentioned that you were a loner anyway.

Rasbury: Oh, yes. I made stuff, you know, for the individual Japs. They'd give me cigarettes and candy, tobacco, and stuff that way, and I'd take it and give it to the other boys.

Marcello: Now, were you with Korean guards here, or were these almost all

Japanese?

Rasbury: No, they were Korean guards, but we didn't have but about . . .  
I don't guess we had over four or five guards there.

Marcello: In the whole camp?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: And you mentioned that there were a couple of thousand prisoners  
here.

Rasbury: Yes, because they didn't care for you going outside, because  
they knew you wasn't going nowhere at that point, you know.

Marcello: By this time, do they realize that the war has turned against  
them?

Rasbury: I think that was what was happening then. See, this was in  
. . . well . . .

Marcello: We're getting up into 1945 now, aren't we?

Rasbury: Yes, this is right along . . . let's see . . . I believe we did  
have Christmas dinner there in '44. Yes, it was into January . . .  
yes, January or February, up in there, because I was there nine  
months, I know.

They had dropped circulars. We knew when President Roosevelt  
died, and we knew about Truman.

Marcello: Were you still there at this camp when Roosevelt died?

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: That would have taken us into April of 1945.

Rasbury: Yes, we were still there then.

Marcello: You mention that you celebrated Christmas of 1944 here. What do you remember from that Christmas of 1944? Was there a pretty big occasion?

Rasbury: I don't remember too much. It seems like they had a little extra to cook or something like that. I don't remember. The food was pretty good at that camp. At that time, they began to feed us a little better.

Marcello: What were you getting to eat here other than the stolen ducks?

Rasbury: Oh, it was about the same thing. It was . . . out of there, they would let them cook breads, little loaves of bread about that big square (gesture), you know, like a bully beef can. That's what they used to cook in. They let them cook little loaves of bread for us. They'd have beans and rice, of course. We got quite a bit of beef, probably stew. Nearly all the meat was served in stew. Or they'd let them fry vegetables. They'd take, like, tomatoes and make jam, you know . . . not exactly jam, but something that was sweet--they could get sugar and stuff. I stole them a five-gallon can of oil for them one time and brought it in to them where they could fry stuff. We'd get fish issued once in a while to us.

I did get into trouble in that camp before I started working in the . . . I think I . . . yes, I was still working out in the jungles cutting wood. I'd had a little spell of malaria, and I didn't work that day. I had met a Chinese doctor down at this

little village, and he would send a native up, and I would go out a little way from camp and meet him on a certain date-- it was on a Sunday. He would give me the Bangkok Chronicle, which is a paper published in Bangkok but it was published by Germans. They put the truth in there of what was happening, and that's the way we'd get the news. Boy, it was just nearly a death penalty if you got caught with one of them. So I'd go out and get those, and I only made a couple of trips. About the third trip, why I got caught out there.

Marcello: What did they do to you?

Rasbury: They stood me up in front of the guardhouse for about eight hours at attention. I was making it pretty good. I'd get numb once in a while, and when I'd catch them not watching me, I'd raise up and down on my toes to keep the circulation going and move my hands. If they caught me, they'd holler at me and make me stop.

Finally, the doctor came out there and told them that I wouldn't be able to work the next day--I was supposed to go out and go to work the next day--and I wouldn't be able to work if they kept me up there any longer. So they turned me loose.

Marcello: By this time, am I to assume that there weren't very many people from the 2nd Battalion here?

Rasbury: No. All I can remember right now . . . there were quite a few when I got in there, but they started taking them out, getting



sick, and going different places. Let's see . . . I only know of about ten that I can name there at that place.

But then we had one bombing there.

Marcello: What was there here that was of strategic importance that they would want to bomb?

Rasbury: Well, they didn't bomb the camp; they knew that we was in there, but we didn't know it to start with. This was one real early one morning. There was a train came along--probably a troop train; we found out later it was a troop train. They had stopped at this little village down there to get water. So, oh, I guess, about five or ten minutes after that train went by . . . we were off the railroad a little way; we were, I guess, a half a mile from the railroad.

At that time, I was in the hospital, and I'd had a case of the shingles on my head. My whole head was just covered; it just followed the nerves, you know, like it does. All of this ear and everything on this side (gesture) was pretty bad.

But we were sitting there eating breakfast that morning--me and an Australian--and we heard a noise, motor-like. Everybody stopped and listened at it. This Australian said, "Oh, it's a bloody lorry!" He thought it was a truck, you know, one of those diesels, coming down. So we all went back to eating, and about that time, we heard a "dit-dit-dit-dit-dit." I looked at him, and I said, "That sounded like a typewriter to me!"

(Chuckle) He looked real funny, and everybody jumped up and run out and got in the air raid shelter, you know.

Boy, they strafed that train and bombed it; they really worked it over! They were so low that they'd come right over the jungles, right over our camp. After we got used to it . . . I don't know how many there was--whether there was just one or two or three--but it seemed like there was two or three of them, and they were down so low that it would just vibrate everything, and you could see them in there. They'd wave at us, you know. You could see the little red lights over the dash, and they'd wave at us.

Marcello: Again, I'm sure that this was a real morale booster for you.

Rasbury: Oh, yes, it sure was. We knew that they was . . .it just couldn't be must longer with them coming down and working them over like that.

Marcello: I'm sure that this would be a topic of conversation in the camp for days to come.

Rasbury: Yes. I went out on a work party the next day--and I've got that here somewhere or another--because the wood train was down there that they hauled the wood with. I dug a piece of shrapnel out that . . . that thing was, oh, about that long (gesture), and it had went through one . . . there was two pieces of half-inch metal like that on the train for a bannister to hold in the side or something. It went all the way through one and

nearly through the other one. I dug it out of there, and I brought it with me. I've got it here somewhere.

Then in the camp, they would kick out those shells. I never did get a shell, but I got some of the clips that held them together--those .50-calibers. We had a few souvenirs then.

Marcello: What effect did this have upon the Japanese? What was their reaction?

Rasbury: Well, they seemed to get a little better; they got better toward us.

Now here a while back, I either read it or saw it on television, where this guy was telling about that he was one of many in this camp that survived. They had this big hole dug, and they run them all in there and machine-gunned them and burned them. Some way, he got out; he made it out.

But now that's what their orders was for us, we found out. There was a Jap guard there--one of the Koreans who claimed to be a Christian--and he told us that that's what they were going to do. He showed us the machine gun nests right up there on the hill. He said, "They're going to run you in there and pour gasoline on you and burn you during an invasion." He said, "Don't go in that hole!" He told us where to meet him. He said, "Meet me at that fence, and I'll take you out of here." But it never did come to that. Well, I left that camp before the

war was over . . . I guess it was about two months before the war was over.

Marcello: Where did you go from that camp?

Rasbury: I never did know the name of the place, but we traveled all night. It was right late in the evening when they decided we was going. There wasn't but three Americans on that group, and they came out there before they took us down to the train and made us dump all of our stuff out on the ground. They went through everything; they took up all the paper that they could find. Of course, I had some that they didn't know about . . . and pencils, knives, or anything sharp, razor, or anything like that. I had a Case knife that I'd made into a razor that I used to shave with, and they took it.

They loaded us on that train, and nobody knew where we was going. So we got down to this place in the wee hours of the morning; it was somewhere around three or four o'clock in the morning. They unloaded us right in the jungles. We walked down an elephant trail out to the camp. There was other people there-- Australians and Dutch and some English--and it was a camp where they were building a machine shop. Because they were being bombed pretty heavy in Burma, and they was moving this machine shop . . . going to move it down there. They had holes dug where they could run these diesels into this hole and work on them in case of an air raid or anything. They wouldn't let you cut a

sprig in that camp; you couldn't build a fire at night; and the fence was about fifteen feet tall, barbed wire about two to three inches apart. There was no way you could get out of there.

Marcello: How come they selected you to go to this camp? Was it simply a random thing?

Rasbury: Well, I don't know how come them to do that. They'd just take so many of every nationality, see, and there was not very many there, so they took three--a guy by the name of Donald N. Brown from Jacksboro and Frank Anderson from Virginia and I; we were the only three.

We got in there . . . well, the first thing we did was run a spur from the main track without disturbing anything that we could.

Marcello: It's ironic that you started out building a railroad, and now you're back building a railroad again.

Rasbury: (Chuckle) Yes. But we had a little more help. It wasn't too bad. They didn't work us hard, because there was plenty of us there, you know. So we built this spur.

One thing that I can remember real . . . well, there was two things, but I'll tell this first. We got to the spur, and they had started from the other way. When we came together, well, they missed their measurements, and one rail was about four inches longer than the other. Well, I knew they didn't have a cutting torch. So we was all talking about it, and I said, "Well,

I wonder what they're going to do now? Take it all up and re-do it?" So in a little bit, here comes a Jap with a homemade hacksaw about two feet long. He handed that thing to me and another boy and told us to get down there and saw that thing off. We sawed that rail with that hacksaw.

Marcello: How long did it take you?

Rasbury: Oh, that top quarter of an inch, I guess it took us a good hour or so to get through it. But then after we got through it, it was soft. After we got down to where it started getting smaller, why, it wasn't bad from there on. So we'd just change out, you know; two would saw, and then two more would saw. I guess it took altogether around three hours to saw it.

Marcello: I guess this was not a real big camp, was it?

Rasbury: No, it was small. There wasn't . . . oh, I'd say it had 150 or maybe 200 people.

Marcello: You're still living in the same type of buildings and so on?

Rasbury: Yes, the same kind.

Marcello: Thatched roofs--atap?

Rasbury: Yes. We could get hold of fish and stuff to cook in the daytime. You had to do it in the daytime; you couldn't cook at night. We didn't have any oil.

After we got the railroad built, they started bringing in some machinery, and they unloaded some out there in the jungles. We were out there one day unloading some, and I found this about

a half a can of oil. So I tipped it over and tasted of it, and it looked real clear and tasted real good, you know. I thought, "Well, it's some kind of vegetable oil," so I set it back in the jungle. Every time I'd go in, I'd carry my canteenful of oil in, see. We was still getting five dollars a bottle for the stuff. That went on for two or three days, and a big old Dutchman come down there one evening and said, "Rasbury, do you know what kind of oil that is you're selling?" I said, "No. Some kind of vegetable oil." He said, "It's castor oil." (Chuckle) Then I remembered they did use castor oil for machine oil, you know. I said, "Well, I thought I had the dysentery. I didn't know." (Chuckle) Boy, we'd been smothering them fish in it!

But I was the only American that went out on the road to work. I don't remember which, but one of them--Donald--worked in one kitchen, and Frank worked in another kitchen.

Marcello: Were the rations fairly good here, all things considered?

Rasbury: Yes, they was pretty good rations.

Marcello: Now, somewhere in the back of your mind, you still must have been worrying about what your fate would be if Japan lost this war.

Rasbury: Yes, since the deal up there. And then here we were behind barbed wire and no way to get out. There was a few more guards there than there were at the other place.

Marcello: Were you making any contingency plans? In other words, were you

perhaps stashing away anything that you could use for weapons or anything of this nature?

Rasbury: No. Another thing that made us feel better is that they gave us back all our knives . . . but they kept the pencils and paper. They didn't want us leaving any notes or sending out any notes or anything like that. That's why they took the pencils and paper. But I was helping unload a train carload of crossties, and somebody had lost a pencil in there. I had my pencil anyway, and that's where I kept up my dates and things.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had been able to save some of your records, that is, those that they didn't confiscate when you made this last move. How did you hide those, or where did you have them?

Rasbury: Well, if you remember the old GI officers' ditty bags, it had a flap that came over. Well, behind that, it had another compartment. When they'd get ready to shake us down and, you know, look in our bag that way, I would take it and just throw that flap back over, and they didn't see it. They didn't pick them up or anything; you'd just take the stuff out and they'd look down in it. You know, they didn't look too close. As long as it wasn't in plain sight, why, they didn't bother it.

Marcello: What sort of information were you able to salvage?

Rasbury: Oh, just little old notes and things . . . personal notes, like, when I was in business--bookkeeping, I drew a sketch of every camp that I was in and the name and my dates and cemetery and just



stuff like that, you know. I've got them all in there.

Marcello: Okay, this, I think, brings us up to the point where we can perhaps talk about the end of the war and your liberation. Was it in this camp where this took place?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, it was in this camp.

Marcello: Let me ask just one question before we get to that point. Awhile ago, you mentioned that you did hear the news of Roosevelt's death. Did this have any effect on the morale of the prisoners?

Rasbury: Yes, in a way. They just didn't know Truman well enough to know what would happen then. Then some Englishman said that he knew . . . there was an English doctor in that . . . this was before I moved to this camp, and this English doctor said he had met Truman one time. He belonged to an organization that he belonged to. Well, we got to thinking about what kind of an organization could that be. We figured this Englishman was a Communist, because nobody liked him (chuckle). So we got to thinking, "Well, I guess now if he belongs to the same organization and he's a Communist, why, Truman would be a Communist." You know, it's just how you talk about things that way. That was about all we . . . well, they probably got more news there, but we didn't get nothing in this camp that we were in.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about the liberation then.

Rasbury: Well, we had finished this spur, and we was moving the machinery and unloading machinery. We got up one morning just like normal

and had breakfast, and they was mustering us and getting us ready to go out. All the sudden, they dismissed us. I think this was on the . . . what day was the bomb dropped?

Marcello: It was in August of 1945.

Rasbury: It was the 14th, wasn't it? I think this was the . . .

Marcello: The bombs, I think , were dropped around the 5th or the 7th or something like that, of 1945.

Rasbury: Maybe it was. This was somewhere around the 14th. Anyway, we could tell before then that there was something, but this day in particular . . . the boys that was working in the Japs kitchens, they run them off; they made them go back down; they didn't want them up there no more. They said there was something going on, because they wouldn't let them listen at them talk. So after they turned us loose, we sat around there for a little while.

Then the orders came down for all the sick men to get ready-- get their stuff ready--and the well men would stay. Well, in about an hour or so, different orders come down: "All sick men stay, and well men go." Well, we thought, "Uh-oh! There's an invasion or there's a bridge blowed out somewhere, and they want us to go fix it." (Chuckle) So that's all we knew at that time.

They told us to be ready at a certain time that evening. They told us to be ready, say, at four o'clock in the evening and be down on the railroad. Well, we had all of our gear packed, and

we were there, and that's the first time that the Japs was ever on time for anything. It was a wood-burning train. I said, "Oh, no. We've got a bridge out somewhere or another, and we're going to fix it."

So we loaded on, and we went on and traveled for a while. Of course, there were rumors just flying; it was wishful thinking more than anything. The Japs was real courteous to us and all, and we're, of course, talking about this, that, and the other.

We pulled in at another camp, and instead of refueling this engine, they had another one setting there ready and two or three cars of prisoners there. They just hooked onto us, and away we went again. It was that way all that day.

Marcello: Are you in boxcars?

Rasbury: No, these flat gondolas. They were just burning us up with that old wood and sparks coming out, you know. So that went on until, oh, about the middle of the evening that day. When the trains would stop at these places, well, the guards would fall off . . . they wasn't paying much attention to us. We wouldn't get off; they didn't want us off, and we knew not to get off. And they wouldn't let no natives or anything get around like they normally did and let us buy stuff, you know.

Directly, at one place, there was a little old Chinaman, and he started running on one side. He hit that train and went right

between it, and the guards was right after him. When he come through, he said, "Nippon's finished," and that was the first word that we heard. Boy, he hit the dirt on the other side running, and they was right after him. But he got out of the way; he was gone.

Marcello: What was your reaction?

Rasbury: Well, we was hoping that he knew what he was talking about.

Marcello: Well, you'd heard so many rumors, I guess, that you weren't sure.

Rasbury: Yes, we just wasn't sure. We got into a place called . . . well, it was just below Tamarkan. We went by Tamarkan, and we stopped at the next place. They told us there that the war was finished. You know, this Chinaman that had something to do with the railroad there told us that the war was finished and told us about the atomic bomb and everything. The Japs didn't seem to mind there, but they didn't want it known up the way there. I think what it was, every camp had to give an account of so many men; that number had to show up. They didn't want us to know; they was afraid we might take off or something, and the higher-ups would be in trouble.

So they moved us in a place called . . . oh, I don't remember the name; I've got it written down, but I don't remember the name. There was about 2,000 or 3,000 people there when we got in there. They was just bringing them in by the trainloads and truckloads. I heard there was around 10,000 prisoners in there when I left.

There was twenty-one Americans, was all that was in this one camp. The rest of them were all down the country; they'd already gone down.

They loaded us up after about three or four days and carried us on down to Phet Buri.

Marcello: Now, by this time, do you know that the war is over?

Rasbury: Yes. Yes, we knew it was over.

Marcello: Is there any sort of a celebration, or what feelings and emotions and reactions do you have?

Rasbury: Well, a friend of mine that I had seen up-country, he came in a day or so after I got there. We had sold our blankets and everything. For a suit of khakis, you could get two hundred dollars for them from the natives. I sold my blanket for a hundred dollars. So he and I went . . . they'd let us go out of the camp, but we went down to the river where you'd take a bath. He said, "Let's go see if we can find us something to eat instead of eating what's up there." But they had good food, you know, according to what we were eating.

So we fooled around and went down to a native hut, and we bought a chicken off of him . . . gave four dollars for this little old chicken. Then he sent out and got some whiskey . . . and there was three of us; I forget who the other one was. This woman dressed the chicken and fried it for us and everything, and that was our first celebration we had.

We were really allowed to go out only in numbers and in an orderly manner. In other words, our people had taken over. I spent my time in this camp sewing. It had been a place where they dumped all the Red Cross clothing, and the Japs was making shorts and things out of our clothes for them, because they were about out of clothes. Well, when we took that thing over, why, we went in there and started making our own selves some clothes. It was brand new suntans. I cut the sleeves off of my shirt . . . they issued me a suit, I cut the sleeves off of it and legs, because I couldn't stand them awful legs on there (chuckle) and took the legs of my pants and made me a cap. I made Lieutenant Morgan . . . he was the officer there. There was one officer . . . well, there was twenty-one altogether, was all there was in that place.

Marcello: So when did you meet your first Americans, that is, your American liberators?

Rasbury: Yes, I didn't meet them until we got down to a place called Phet Buri, and that's where we flew out. A guy by the name of Captain Post and a sergeant . . . there was about four or five of us--was all there was there--that I saw. I stayed up all night since I was interested in radio. I sat up there and helped them on the radio all night long--practically all night--until I found out for sure that we was going to be leaving. When they first said we would be leaving, there'd be eight planes to come land

the next day and pick us up and take us out.

Well, then the rumor they got out . . . they come back on the radio and said that they couldn't get the fuel; the English wouldn't let them have fuel in Rangoon. That's where they had to refuel to come on down there. The C-47 was what it was. Well, that kind of interested me, and I just stayed with it until we found out that they flew fuel in from Calcutta . . . enough for those planes, and they came on down and got us. Then they had another load of fuel there by the time we got there for it to refuel again.

Marcello: So they ultimately sent you to Calcutta.

Rasbury: Yes.

Marcello: What sort of a process did you go through when you got to Calcutta?

Rasbury: Well, I thought that they would probably quarantine us and wouldn't let us have . . . feed us a special diet and all this, you know. But we found out that nature would take care of itself. They took all of our clothes and piled them up in a pile and put us in pajamas after we'd had a bath, and then they sent us over to the kitchen to eat. Boy, that food smelled good, and that steak . . . they had chicken-fried steak and all that stuff, you know, ice cream. They'd just load them plates up, you know.

Well, I didn't think I could eat it all, but, you know, I ate about three bites of that, and that's all I could eat. The doctor said, yes, they knew that; he said they knew that you wasn't

going to hurt yourself (chuckle); you just couldn't eat it.

Boy, I hated to throw that food away. So from then on, I just let them put a little bit on there, you know, until I got to where I could eat a little more.

Marcello: Did they give you any sort of a psychological test or anything of that nature?

Rasbury: Oh, we had something like the CIA or something that came in and talked to us and tell us things that we should not talk about for a while. Like, they said that now if you was with a person and you saw him die and buried him, then you could tell that he was dead; otherwise, we weren't to say so.

Marcello: What I was referring to were psychological tests to determine whether or not you were mentally fit to go back into the real world.

Rasbury: No, they just started giving us just the regular GI series of tests. They didn't talk to us too much there about our conditions or anything. They just kind of went from that. If you didn't have high fever or something or didn't have dysentery, why, you got right out as soon as the planes was ready to go. About four or five days was all we stayed there.

Marcello: What sort of a world did you find back here when you returned? Did you have trouble adjusting?

Rasbury: Yes, I did when I got back home. They brought us to New York, and we spent another week there. I went into town one night, and I



wouldn't go back. It just wasn't for me at that time. Of course, New York was a bad place, I guess, to go anyway (chuckle). Well, I said I went once; I actually went twice. They carried us to the Elks Club; they invited us up there the first night we was in New York. Well, it was about fifteen of us that went up there. About two nights after that, I went with one of the boys and his sister and her husband, and I never did go back no more.

In fact, we had free phone calls, and I . . . well, several days went by; I wouldn't even call home. I was so afraid that . . . I knew . . . see, I'd got a letter from my mother while I was in India. I sent a telegram that I was all right. But then when we got to New York, we had this telephone. Well, I just couldn't make up my mind to talk to them, because I was afraid something could happen between there and the time I got home. I thought maybe they was going to fly us, and I was still a little scared about flying (chuckle), even though I'd come all the way from there with no problem.

I found out we was going on a train, and then I decided I'd call. So I called my mother after about three days. Of course, she gave me all the news and all.

Marcello: Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Rasbury: Well, I was real nervous. They brought me from New York to McKinney, and we got in there, say, on about a Thursday. Friday

then, I had called my mother and them from there, and they were over there Friday morning before breakfast (chuckle). So I came home with them; the doctor let us all come home . . . gave us passes to come home. So I didn't go to town at all; we just went right through town. They carried me on . . . my dad lived about two miles out of town. People heard that I was there, and they were coming to check on their boys and all. There I couldn't say nothing, see.

Well, we had . . . well, we got off Friday evening, and we had Saturday and Sunday. I left Saturday night. Of course, my dad and them picked me up in my car; I bought a brand new car before I went over. It was still pretty new; I think it had 36,000 miles on it--a '41 Chevrolet.

So I just couldn't take it, you know, talking to all these people. So I went back to McKinney, and I didn't come back for, oh, two or three weeks. I'd just come back and stay a little while and then go back to the hospital. Finally, they gave me a ninety-day furlough from over there, and I did a lot of running around then. I didn't stay around Decatur very much.

Marcello: This seems to be a characteristic that all of the former prisoners had, that is, they had trouble staying in one place.

Rasbury: Yes. I'm still that way; I've never got over it.

Marcello: As you look back on your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as being the key to your survival?

Rasbury: Living from one day to another, I think. Well, it just wasn't my time to go, either, I guess, if a fellow believes that way-- and I do.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Rasbury, I have no further questions. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to get as part of the record?

Rasbury: Well, there was a lot, but I think we covered it pretty good (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay. Well, I want to thank you very much for having taken time to participate in these two interviews. You've said a lot of very interesting and important things, and I'm sure that scholars are going to find them very valuable when they examine this material and use it in writing about the history of World War II.