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Interview with
J. L. Sherman
March 4, 1976

Place of Interview: Decatur, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
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Oral History Collection

J. L. Sherman

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Decatur, Texas

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing J. L. "Smokey" Sherman for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on March 4, 1976, in Decatur, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Sherman in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II.

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

Mr. Sherman: I was born down here on Denton Creek, kind of southwest of Ponder. I was raised between there and Smokey Ridge School right up here. That's where I got my name "Smokey."

Dr. Marcello: When were you born?

Mr. Sherman: Seventh day of August, 1918.

Marcello: When approximately did you enter the service?

Sherman: Let's see. It was the fifth day of February of '40, I believe.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Sherman: Well, when my daddy died in '40, we had the WPA going on. After my daddy died, everybody I seen said, "Smokey, why don't you do this? Why don't you do that? Why don't you join the Army?" I didn't do that. I went and got me a job with the WPA. I worked up there two hours, and I came back. A lady looked up at me and said, "What do you do?" I says, "I'm a tool pusher, and here's my tool right here." I had a shovel. I says, "I'd like to have two hours' pay." Then I come home.

I went over to my buddy's house, and we got in his mother's Model-T Ford, went up to old Bill Lynch's. We sat there and talked a few minutes. I called Bill outside. I said, "I'm fixing to join the Army. Do you want to go with me?" I said, "Daddy's dead and I don't have nobody. I've been knowing you all my life, and I'm ready to go." So we decided to come up the next morning.

The next morning we come up here and C.P. Dodson was interviewing the boys going into the service. He said, "Well, the only thing I can do is just sign

you up for a year." I said, "Well, if that's the way you feel about it, I think I can see the world." I went out and told Mr. Lynch about it the next day.

We went to Fort Worth to the old post office. We went down there, and this man . . . he was a soldier. Then I didn't know what he was, but he was a corporal. He talked to me a few minutes, and he give me some papers. He said, "If you go in there and fill them out, we'll have another man to talk to you." So I filled them out by myself. Mr. Lynch sat outside in the lobby. Then here comes a lady and her son. I turned my papers in and I made a ninety-five on mine. I didn't know this lady was a school-teacher or anything about it, but anyhow we had a few words. Her and her son come out. Well, he made eighty-five. This captain, when he talked to me after the corporal introduced him to me, told me to be back the next morning at seven o'clock.

I come back the next morning at seven o'clock. There were thirteen of us in there. This old rough-talking . . . he was a bass. Lord, he was a bass! He talked way down deep. He give us a little pep talk. He said, "You've got ten minutes to think it over." He just told us about what we was getting into. He said, "You've got ten minutes to think it

over." He come back in and this corporal that I'd seen first called us to attention. Then that old rough-talking colonel come in there and swore us all in. He says, "You're in the Army now. If you go 'over the hill' and the MP's don't catch you, the FBI will!"

They got us thirteen off over to one side and told us to sit down. I waited just about ten more minutes, and here they come out there with some papers. Why they come to me, I don't know. But they did--to hand me them papers. I looked at them and they said, "Now you give this to the man down there at the depot; you give this one to the man when you get off at El Paso; then when you get off at San Francisco, you give that man this paper; then when you get over there at Angel Island, you give them this paper." All I seen was numbers and names. Out there on the left-hand side of my name was 18038645. I didn't know what the hell that meant or anything about it. We got over there in the Philippines then.

Marcello: In other words, you went straight from Fort Worth to the Philippines.

Sherman: No, to California--Angel Island. We stayed there about three weeks. Then we caught a boat to the Philippines.

Marcello: But you really didn't take any basic training at all.

Sherman: No!

Marcello: That's the way it was done at that time, wasn't it? You normally went to your duty station.

Sherman: That's right. And I'll tell you something else, too. You see how I'm dressed right here?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: I had my cowboy boots on, my hat. I'd never been out in the ocean before. That son-of-a-buck was rough! I'll tell you what, I went up about fifty foot high and dropped down seventy foot, it seemed like. Everybody was getting sick. Old "Smokey" just rolled over and "fed the fish." Everything worked out alright, and I still had on my Levis just like I am right now. We got to the Philippines, and . . .

Marcello: Let me ask you this question. What did you think about the idea of going to the Philippines?

Sherman: Well, actually, to tell you the truth, I really didn't know, but at the time I really didn't care. The only thing I had to live for was two brothers and one sister and me and my mother. Frankly, in the situation that I was in . . . I lost the best buddy I had. It didn't make a damn to me. I was just that bull-headed.

Marcello: Evidently, you and your father were very close.

Sherman: That's right. They don't make them any closer. Thank

God, I got two boys just like him. But anyhow, that's exactly the way I felt.

Marcello: At the time that you entered the service, did you give any thought to the country eventually being in the war? By 1940 things were heating up a little bit.

Sherman: That's right. I kind of had a suspicion, but just like I said, I was raised in the country. When I got to the quartermaster depot there in the Philippines, they tied a tie on me that seemed to strangle me, and I stood there tied up there all night long. I'm putting it to you straight.

Marcello: In other words, you weren't used to wearing that necktie.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: Okay, where did they station you when you got to the Philippines?

Sherman: On Corregidor.

Marcello: You went directly to Corregidor?

Sherman: I went to the hospital in Corregidor.

Marcello: What did Corregidor look like? Describe it as best you can remember.

Sherman: Corregidor is an island. In other words, it's three stories high--Topside, Middleside, and Bottomside. It's 15.8 miles around. They had trolley cars that'd

go anywhere. They had streets that'd go anywhere.
I got stationed at Middleside.

Marcello: Now is this where the huge barracks was located?

Sherman: That's right. I mean old concrete barracks--big ones, good ones.

Marcello: It was supposed to be bombproof wasn't it?

Sherman: Yes, it sure was. How did you know that?

Marcello: I read it someplace. But you and I both know that it really wasn't as bombproof as what they thought it was. That's getting a little bit ahead of the story.

Sherman: There you go.

Marcello: Continue on with what you remember about Corregidor from a physical standpoint.

Sherman: Corregidor is a good place to do peacetime service.

Marcello: Why was that?

Sherman: Well, you didn't have but a few duties to pull. You didn't have but a few iguana lizards. We had eight deer out there that we kind of watched and fed. After the war broke out, and I got two of them.

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying is, after the war broke out and food was getting scarce, you went deer hunting.

Sherman: There you go. There you go. It was a nice place to do duty.

Marcello: I guess you were on tropical schedule, were you not?

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: How did that tropical schedule work?

Sherman: Well, it worked pretty good. It sure does. You'd roll out of the bed, say, at two o'clock in the morning and go pull guard duty. In the rainy season, that's when it's cold. It's about always from sixty to seventy degrees. You get out and walking guard duty, and you've got your rifle. You've got a slicker suit. You know you're going to get wet. If you put that slicker suit on, you know you're going to stink. So I just wrapped my gun up in that slicker suit.

Marcello: I gather that you took your basic training right there on Corregidor.

Sherman: Right there on Corregidor

Marcello: How long did that last?

Sherman: About five months.

Marcello: Incidentally, can you identify the unit to which you were attached? In other words, what was your unit designation?

Sherman: 60th Coast Artillery Antiaircraft.

Marcello: What was your particular function, then, when you got to Corregidor?

Sherman: I was a power plant operator. I had two units, directing

and keeping them going and making electricity for the height finder, director, and the guns. The battery commander and the first lieutenant stayed on the director and the height finder. The captain was on the height finder. The first lieutenant was on the director. Another lieutenant was standing there with a microphone in his hand and giving orders to boys on the guns.

Marcello: What sort of anti-aircraft weapons were these?

Sherman: Well, they used three-inch shells, oh, I guess, about three-and-half feet long, three inches in diameter. They had a fuse setter on there. You'd get hold of that and set in that little deal. He'd match pointers, and when you'd drop it in there, well, it automatically got hold of that projectile, you know, and it had notches on it. You'd set the fuses on that. They brought it back, and another man got it, and he rammed it in the chamber. When he rammed it in the chamber, the breech came true, and the gunner stood there with a little piece of string about that long--like pulling on a rope of a lawn mower--and, buddy, it would talk to you!

Marcello: Were they relatively modern weapons for their time?

Sherman: Yes, they sure was. They were pretty good weapons, too.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about some of the other weaponry on the Island of Corregidor. Now there were all sorts of Naval rifles.

Sherman: Do you remember Admiral Dewey?

Marcello: Admiral Dewey? Yes.

Sherman: Do you know what a sixteen-inch rifle is?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: Do you know what a 40-millimeter gun is?

Marcello: Pretty much so.

Sherman: That's what we had over there. They wouldn't traverse over forty-five degrees.

Marcello: They would only traverse forty-five degrees?

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: Unfortunately, they were all pointed toward the sea, were they not?

Sherman: There you go.

Marcello: And how vulnerable were they from the air? In other words, were they protected from airplanes?

Sherman: No.

Marcello: I didn't think they were. They were just disappearing rifles, were they not?

Sherman: That's right. And where the disappearing rifles come in at was the net--camouflaged net. When they had air raids, the boys threw the nets back, and they just had some of them men who knew how to put that charge

of powder in there about that long (gesture) and then that 750-pound projectile or a 1,150-pound projectile.

Marcello: In other words, they call them disappearing rifles because of the recoil. Isn't that correct?

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: Now they also had some pretty powerful mortars on that island, didn't they?

Sherman: Yes, 155-millimeter and . . . I forgot now what that other one was. That 155-millimeter mortar was a pretty good little gun. Then they had some of them little bazooka deals, you know. They didn't use them too much there on Corregidor because they wouldn't reach long-range. But where we used them . . . see, when I went over, they split us up and made two batteries. The battery that I was in, they matched --the captains did--they flipped to see which one went to Luzon or who stayed on Corregidor. We got to go to Luzon. That's where we used them other little guns.

Marcello: Oh, you ultimately went from Corregidor over to Luzon.

Sherman: Over to Luzon.

Marcello: I see.

Sherman: You know where the depot is here? You know where the courthouse is?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: About half as far as from here to the courthouse.
That's where we went to.

Marcello: In other words, where you dug in on Luzon wasn't
too far, actually, from Corregidor.

Sherman: Hell no! Actually, to tell you the truth, it was
just about a couple of miles.

Marcello: Well, how long did you remain on Corregidor before
you were moved over to Luzon?

Sherman: About six months.

Marcello: During that time did you think very much about the
Japanese?

Sherman: Well, yes.

Marcello: In what way?

Sherman: That's all they talked to us about. They said they
was slope-headed, slope-eyed, and dumb. I've got
news for you. They ain't that way.

Marcello: In other words, the general impression was that
they didn't have very much of an army.

Sherman: That's right. Well, actually they didn't, but they
was pretty good. They was pretty good.

Marcello: Okay, so you must have moved to Luzon, then, some-
where around . . .

Sherman: Just a little while after the war broke out. The
fact is that we was bombed when we was moving over
there.

Marcello: Oh, in other words, you were still on Corregidor when Pearl Harbor was hit.

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, well, then . . .

Sherman: I'll tell you what. They was there . . . right after we got over to Luzon, that's when we heard that Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Marcello: Okay, in other words, you were on Luzon, then, when the news about Pearl Harbor. . .

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: And that would have been December 8, your time in the Philippines.

Sherman: I believe . . . yes. Being as you brought that up, I think maybe that's about when it was.

Marcello: Okay, can you remember the circumstances, in other words, what you were doing and what your feelings were, when you heard about the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor?

Sherman: Well, I don't know. To tell you the truth, I really don't know. We all didn't know. We didn't even know what was going to happen to us. All we thought was about us. Even when we'd get together like eating chow or something, there wouldn't be too much talk about it because we didn't know. We knew that something was popping loose somewhere.

Marcello: Now up until this time, then, you really hadn't had any contact with the Japanese. You really hadn't been bombed or anything.

Sherman: Yes! We'd been bombed twice--moving over there and then one time after we got over there.

Marcello: Well, I'm a little confused now. Where did you hear about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor? Where were you at that time?

Sherman: We was on Luzon.

Marcello: Okay, you were on Luzon.

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, now when did you get bombed for the first time?

Sherman: Well, when we got bombed the first time was when we just had gotten to Luzon, off the barge. We were going up the mountain. We heard the whistle blow, and we got the word, you know. We just left the truck and got off the road and headed for the timber. We could see them up there. After that raid was over with, well, we went on up on the hill and got everything situated. We didn't have another raid until the next day about three o'clock. Well, we was ready for them then.

Marcello: Describe what happened.

Sherman: Alright. There was nine bombers come over Corregidor. Our buddy battery on Corregidor . . . we knew . . . we

could tell . . . we knew where they was at. Well, they hit one direct in the bomb bay, and, buddy, I'll tell you what, there wasn't nothing left of that thing. They come on over. The battery commander was on the height finder and that lieutenant was on the director. When they come over, them old clouds, you know, they went through them. But, buddy, when they come out on them, we got us one.

Marcello: I'm sure that did wonders for the morale, did it not?

Sherman: It sure did. I'll tell you something else. That Louisiana cajun commander of mine, that captain, he was a good egg. He was smart and he had horse sense. He could spot them shots up there, and I'll tell you what, he was good.

Marcello: Well, where did you ultimately situate yourselves, then after war had been declared?

Sherman: Right up there up on top of Black Beauty--on top of that mountain.

Marcello: Is that what it was called--Black Beauty?

Sherman: Yep. It looked like a lady laying there. Some of the boys over there even took pictures, you know. I don't remember the name of the mountain as the Filipinos called it, but we named it Black Beauty.

Marcello: Was this located fairly close to Manila?

Sherman: It was a pretty good ways from Manila, pretty good ways. I don't know how far, but I'd judge about twenty miles.

Marcello: Well, did you ultimately then move back into the Bataan Peninsula with the rest of the American troops?

Sherman: Not until we got orders to move back to Corregidor. After we got back to Corregidor, well, we found out we were going to surrender.

Marcello: Okay, so in other words, you never actually moved back into the Bataan Peninsula.

Sherman: Right.

Marcello: About how long were you over on Luzon before you moved back to Corregidor?

Sherman: Well, I guess about two or three months. I don't remember.

Marcello: Okay, yes, that would be about right. During that two or three month stay there on Luzon, did you have any more contact with the Japanese?

Sherman: You bet we did! We went out with the infantry. See, the 31st Infantry was on Luzon, too. They was getting some Japs coming in behind them. So we had taken half of our troops, everything, equipped, and went into the infantry right behind them. Some of the boys did come in contact with the Japs, but most of the ones I was with did not contact them. We was

up there seventy-two hours without anything to eat or any sleep or anything. The next thing we knew, we was called back to our own place.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going back to Corregidor? In other words, did you feel pretty safe there, or what were your feelings?

Sherman: Well, we knew we'd be safe there for awhile. We didn't know how long. I'll tell you what, they lost just some of their men when they had taken Corregidor. When they had taken Corregidor, they just lost some of them. I didn't know at the time, but anyhow, after we was liberated, I was talking to a newspaper reporter. He was over there when they sent them Japs in there to take Corregidor. Fort Drum was not very far from Corregidor. And listen, buddy, they was loaded for bear! The United States built that battleship on that little old knoll out there with six-foot walls and all that stuff. But when they sent them Japs in there to take Corregidor and Fort Drum, buddy, they lost some of them. I mean, they just lost so many men.

Marcello: Now by the time that you reached Corregidor, were they already cutting the rations of the men and so on there?

Sherman: Oh, yes. Whenever we left Luzon, we was already eating Filipino rations. We was already eating Filipino rations.

Marcello: Which means what? You were on rice?

Sherman: Rice and fish heads, and just nearly anything you wanted. Incidentally, just before we had that . . . oh, I guess it was about a month before we had to leave Luzon, I was on guard duty that night. My captain was the officer-of-the-guard. I heard some racket down there. It was just about 4:30 one morning. I just walked back up there to my power plant. My buddy was laying there asleep. Oh, I'd walked, oh, maybe 150 feet or 200 feet from him and then come back.

I got on the phone to the command post that was up there at the height finder. The battery commander answered. I said, "Captain, I've got something down here I can't figure out. It's making a devil of a lot of noise. My buddy's asleep. If you get a chance, come down." He said, "I'll be right down." He come on down there.

Then directly this old mule blows his nose. I said, "Goddamn, that's either a mule of a horse!" He had a flashlight. We just throwed that flashlight, and sure enough, it was a mule. I said, "Here, hold

my rifle." I had my belt on, you know, pistol, too. I went down there. I took my belt out from my britches and put it in that halter on that mule, and I led him up there. I said, "It's about time for my buddy to get up. Go by and wake him up and tell him to bring my rifle and come to the mess hall. He said, "No, I'll just wake him up and take over here." He says, "I'll bring your rifle, and I'll meet you at the mess hall." And so he did. He went and woke my buddy up and got him awake.

I went on to the mess hall, and I carried that mule down there. That mess sergeant says, "What are you going to do with that mule?" I said, "By gosh, I'd like to have some meat to eat." That's all there was to it. I just tied the old mule up out there with a little old grass rope they had there. They fixed me some coffee and rice and sugar. I ate it and took off back.

The battery commander said, "Wait a minute and I'll go with you." We got nearly back up there, and we heard a .30-30 crack. I just looked up at him just like that. He said, "It looks like we're going to have a mule for dinner." Now buddy, I'm not lying. That's the gospel truth. I can prove that (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, so what sort of rations were you getting when you went back to Corregidor again?

Sherman: We just barely . . . there was rice, a little bit of meat, enough to make a little gravy, and once in awhile we'd get them C-rations. But meat was scarce. Sometimes we'd get that unpolished rice--what you call red rice. That red rice, you barely can digest it like you can that white rice. Some of the boys, they'd get a little bit constipated. Their piles would build up. We'd take salt, mineral oil . . . very little fish we could get, no good steak or meat or anything like that. Whenever we did, we'd have to throw away the biggest part of it because it'd done soured.

Marcello: Now were you on your antiaircraft battery at this time?

Sherman: Yep.

Marcello: Now it was during this period, of course, that the Japanese had already taken Bataan, and I guess they were opening up on Corregidor with everything they had.

Sherman: That's right. And whenever we left Bataan, we had . . . I think there was 140 cases of dynamite. The four buck sergeants and a master sergeant stayed behind--demolition crew. They'd taken sledge hammers and ball peen hammers and beat the gauges off the guns and the directors and height finders and planted

the bombs, dynamite.

The rest of us marched on and caught the barge to go to Corregidor. When we got nearly to the barge on Luzon to catch the barge to go to Corregidor, we could look back behind us and hear and see a big blaze. Every one of them guns had, I imagine, a couple of hundred gallons of gasoline when the dynamite went off. Everything was blazing. That made you have a funny feeling when you were walking along there and saw your guns all blowed up back behind you. Actually, you really didn't know whether that was our guns and stuff being blowed up or the Jap bombs because we could hear motors running.

We got to the barge, and we didn't know whether we was going to have to swim or ride or walk. But we made it. We went to Malinta Tunnel on Corregidor. Did any other boys ever say anything about the Malinta Tunnel?

Marcello: They've never really mentioned too much about Malinta Tunnel--what it looked like on the inside and things of that nature.

Sherman: But anyhow, we went on over there, and the battery commander stayed and went back on the barge to get the sergeants. He stayed there and brought them back with him. Our sergeant we had with us, he just

carried us right on . . . he carried us right on through Malinta Tunnel. We had a little deal run out from the main tunnel, you know. We went in there and spread our bunks out and went to sleep.

Oh, I guess about six hours after that, well, here come the captain and the sergeants from Luzon. They all bedded down. They all . . . you know, they didn't know this, and they didn't know that. They didn't know what was going to happen.

The next morning, well, here come a corporal down there to get us up and take us to where we could get some chow. They fed us and the battery commander was there. He said, "Whenever you get through eating, meet back up there where you stayed last night." A few hours later, here he comes to give us orders what to do. Actually, he didn't know what to do, but he was trying to find out. He said, "If you want to go see your buddies, alright," and this, that, and the other. But he said, "Report here every evening at five o'clock and be here at eight o'clock in the morning. If you go anywhere, be sure if you see anybody sticking around to let them know where you're at and where we can get hold of you." That's what we did.

Oh, I guess it was about three weeks, two weeks,

when the battery commander come in and said, "We're fixing to go up on a golf course. That's on the Topside of Corregidor." He said, "We've got full guns like we had over there on Luzon--height finders and directors and everything." So up there we went. I mean every one of us.

They bombed that golf course. They had holes up there that looked worse than a prairie dog town. We could set this building in some of them. That's where we camouflaged them nets and got our guns and all--in them emplacements.

Right down on the Bottomside down there, we'd go down there and ration with the Navy. Well, now that's the people that got fed good. The Navy, they had the chow. We'd come back up there and work and clean and get ready, and we finally got set up. Everything was going rosey. I had my power plant up there. I had one on each side of the golf course. They had tunnels just about, oh, I guess, four-and-a-half or five foot deep, you know, where we dug out and where we could go down through there.

And this old one-eyed Jap gunner from Cavite, you know, kind of like our 155-millimeter mortar guns, well, he got oriented on the 59th Coast Artillery down there where they had those sixteen-inch rifles

and twelve-inch mortars and all that stuff. Well, they got a cement building over there and one here in the middle and one over here with six-foot walls. That one in the middle was the powder room. Somehow or other he knew about that powder room. He'd send over two live ones and then a dud until he'd cleared through.

And buddy, we had an air raid when he was firing there. That powder room went up. I was laying there with my earphones on--telephone earphones. We had an air raid. There was bombs falling all around us. That dad-blamed powder room blowed up. As far as from me to you--I'm not lying to you--as far as from here to you laid this 750-pound projectile for that sixteen-inch rifle.

The next thing I knew, a bomb hit close. A chunk as big as that stove there fell in there on top of me. If it hadn't been for that, I doubt I could have breathed. After the air raid they start digging us out. I guess I stayed in there about thirty or forty minutes. If that dirt hadn't been so dry and hard and chunks fell in there, I'd have suffocated, just smothered to death. But it fell in there in clods, you know, and it had the air pockets. You could get air down there. I was kind of choking just a

little bit anyhow. But they finally got me out of there.

Now my buddy, he was about six feet behind me. Well, they pulled me out. When they got me to where they could talk to me, they said, "Where's Gray at?" I said, "About six foot behind me." They went down there and commenced to digging. One old boy just started digging, and he seen old Gray's hand coming up like that (gesture). Well, they just stopped and pulled him out, too. All I had was a little scar right across here.

Marcello: Right across your knee or . . .

Sherman: No, on the head. Right across here (gesture). They put me in the ambulance and carried me down there to Middleside to a first aid station. Then they were going to send me over there to Malinta Tunnel. I gave them a little static, and they said, "No, you just get your butt up there in that ambulance! You're going to Malinta Tunnel!" So I did. I went and got in the ambulance, but I didn't stop. I got out on the other side. Them other two boys, they stayed in there and went on to Malinta Tunnel.

They called back over there. This first aid station called up there on the golf course. They said, "One man's missing." The battery commander

wanted to know who it was. They said, "Corporal Sherman." He said, "Wait just a minute." He dialed that little phone. I answered the phone. He said, "How come you ain't at Malinta Tunnel in the hospital?" I said, "There ain't nothing wrong with me!" "Come up here." I went up there. He said, "Didn't you know you can get shot disobeying orders during wartime?" I said, "Sir, you've got a gun on, and I have, too. Just anytime." That's what I told him: "Just anytime." He said, "Well, you was wounded out there." I said, "Yes, sir. If you'll just give me a chance, I'll show you where I was wounded." I walked over there and showed him my head. It was a little scratch about that long (gesture), just enough to make it bleed. He said, "Well, go on." Then he turned around and left. He told the medic to make the call to Malinta Tunnel. I never did go to that darn tunnel.

Marcello: Now while you were on Corregidor, you were subjected to both bombing from the air, and, of course, the artillery bombardment.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: Which was the worst?

Sherman: The bombs up in the air.

Marcello: Why was that?

Sherman: Well, you didn't know which way they was going to

fall. If you've ever seen any bombs come out of an airplane, you don't know where they're going to land. When that one-eyed gunner from Cavite threw over one shell, you knew where he was going to land. You can get out of his way. When them planes come over, you don't know where them bombs are going to fall. When they come out of that bomb bay up there, they'll be end-over-end till they get kind of straightened out, and then their whistling sound starts. And the only way you can get out of the way is just to kind of dig deeper and deeper.

Marcello: Do you ever get used to that sort of thing?

Sherman: Oh, yes, you get used to it. You get used to it. Even when we didn't have an air raid and they was laying over there asleep, directly you'd have to go over there and slap the dickens out of one of them to get him to wake up. He was having one of them nightmares, you know.

On them big guns that they had, they had a rotisserie band. That's what they called them. When that shell is fired, that band comes off. When that band comes off, that set the fuse charge in that projectile, and that started the powder train burning. I've seen that band cut trees down over there that big around (gesture), I mean, just saw it down like a chain saw.

Marcello: Now on May 6, 1942, Corregidor fell.

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: What I want you to do at this point is to talk about the fall of Corregidor, and you might as well start with that terrific preliminary bombardment that the Japanese opened up with and then talk about the actual invasion of the island itself.

Sherman: Over on one end of the island, it was just like that little deal right there at this window (gesture). The vines and things in that roadway was just matted over. It had flowers in it, and they were kind of beautiful. When they made their landing, that's where they come in at, and that's where they put their bombardment.

Marcello: When did they make the landing? What time of the day?

Sherman: Well, they started about two o'clock one morning.

Marcello: Two o'clock in the morning?

Sherman: Yes. We was all . . . well, we had guards out. Even them three-inch guns . . . they'd laid them out horizontal and set the fuse, and they'd bust right over them barges' heads, you know. They'd bust only at a certain distance, but they'd be about eight or ten feet off the water, you know. The shrapnel was what they was getting.

But anyhow, they threwed everything they had at us. That looked like . . . I've never seen a forest fire before, but that's what it looked like-- just where a forest has burned and left everything black.

Marcello: In other words, they tore up that island from one end to the other.

Sherman: Oh, they tore it up terribly. Whole trees there that . . . it'd stand up . . . the trunk would stand up eight or ten foot high . . . just burnt . . . just charcoaled on the sides. You'd see bodies laying all out there. We held there until the battery commander told us we was going to surrender.

Marcello: What time was this?

Sherman: Oh, a day or so. Not long. It's a little hard to remember. But anyhow, it wasn't long. There were seven of us that walked up to the battery commander. We could see up there in the bay and see them ships come up, and then they'd go back, come up and go back, come up and go back. Me and the battery commander were sitting out there. I said, "Captain, something's going to happen." I said, "You sit here and watch as many of them ships up yonder come up and go back." Actually, I think he knew, but he wouldn't tell me. But anyhow, the next day at dinner he called all of

his men together and said, "We're going to surrender at twelve o'clock."

Marcello: What'd you think about the idea of surrendering?
What sort of thoughts went through your mind?

Sherman: Well, we really didn't know. We didn't know whether to stay put or what or what would happen to us. We just got to thinking, "Well, by gosh, they might just kill us all." We talked it over. There were eight of us that sat there and talked it over. There was a Navy boy in the barracks that said, "I know where we can get a PT boat with plenty of gas. We can make it to Luzon."

Marcello: To Luzon or to Australia?

Sherman: No, to Luzon.

Marcello: Luzon?

Sherman: No, thunder no! We couldn't have made it to Australia.

Marcello: Well, the Japanese already had Luzon, though, didn't they?

Sherman: Yes, they sure did.

Marcello: In other words, you were going to try to go up in the hills and hide out.

Sherman: Yes, and we did. We did. We talked it over and went back down there to the battery commander, and we talked to him. It was about eleven o'clock. I remember this definitely. It was about eleven o'clock.

Marcello: In the morning?

Sherman: In the morning. We asked him about it. He says, "The only thing I'd know to tell you, you'd be just counted 'Missing in Action.'" Then he said, "We're very definitely going to surrender because I done got the word."

Marcello: Had the Japanese landed on Corregidor yet?

Sherman: Well, they was beginning to land, but they hadn't never come up where we was at.

Marcello: You were still up at the golf course?

Sherman: Yes, that's right. We asked him about taking off. He said, "That's entirely up to you." We sat there, I guess, twenty minutes. Seven of us decided to leave. The battery commander took his gun off and handed it to me along with all the ammunition he had with the gun. He said, "The only thing, you'll be counted 'Missing in Action.'" He said, "I've got to stay."

And so we went down the hill to where we used to eat with the Navy. This sailor wasn't lying. They had a PT boat down there. When we went across that bay, we went this way and that way (gesture), and them shells were just falling all around us. We didn't stop over there for that sandy beach. That old boy had that son-of-a-gun wide open, and he kept it wide open. We had everything ready. We had

our canteens, a couple of canteens apiece with water, and our C-rations, all we could carry. We got everything on us that we could carry. Then we poured a five-gallon can of gas in that boat. When we hit that island--that sand bar--there on that sandy beach, we scooted, I'll bet you, half as far as from here to my house up yonder. When we got out that sailor said, "Smokey, you got a match?" That boat went up just like that. Buddy, them shells was getting pretty close then.

We went up in the hills to fight as guerrillas. We stayed up there for six months.

Marcello: Well, describe this. This sounds pretty interesting. What happened after you set fire to that boat and took off into the hills?

Sherman: We had just taken off. We didn't no more know where we was going or what we was getting into as a thing in the world. But we knew we was going. We run onto some Filipinos that was nice and that helped us. And they told us where some Filipino guerrillas were. This one Filipino says, "If you'll stick around here, I'll take you in the morning." We didn't know whether to stay or not.

Marcello: I'm sure you couldn't be sure which Filipinos were loyal and which ones weren't.

Sherman: That's right. That's right. So we took off. We was headed in the direction he told us.

Marcello: Were you on a road or in jungles?

Sherman: No, in the jungle. I mean, sometimes we had to take that machete and cut our way through. We run onto that son-of-a-gun! They said, "You went off course. They've already come this way." By that time we was beginning to wonder, so we just followed them. Sure enough, he guided us right. We stayed with them, oh, I guess eight or ten days, you know.

Marcello: How many of you were there by this time?

Sherman: There were still seven of us.

Marcello: And how many Filipinos?

Sherman: I guess there was fifteen or twenty.

Marcello: What sort of weapons did you personally have?

Sherman: I had two pearl-handled .45's--"thumb busters"--and my little rifle--.30-30 bolt action--till we used all our shells up. Then those querrillas, they had some ammunition that we got from them.

We ran onto a busload of Filipino women where the Japs had molested and killed them. It's a little bit brutal to tell you about all that happened to them. But anyhow, we'd taken our infantry shovels and covered them up as best we could, set fire to the bus, and then taken off again.

Marcello: In the meantime, you're getting farther and farther away from the coast.

Sherman: Yes, way back up in the hills. In other words, just as far back up there where they didn't know whether the hoot owls were raising buzzards or the buzzards were raising hoot owls. You know, Frank Buck brought the biggest snake in the world back alive. We just seen some of them up in there where we was at. We walked on a ledge just about that wide (gesture). It must have been, oh, hell, about as far as from here to the courthouse square is the way it looked. I was scared! Man alive!

Marcello: What did you do all of this time? Were you just kind of moving and so on?

Sherman: Yes, just like Jesse James does--just moved on from one place to the other.

Marcello: You really weren't looking for the Japanese? In other words, you weren't looking for a fight.

Sherman: No, just looking for something. We didn't know what we were looking for.

Marcello: And you were still with some Filipinos?

Sherman: That's right. We was with Filipinos, and we stayed out there sixty days with them.

Marcello: And all during this time you were just moving around?

Sherman: We lost one man. He took that cerebral malaria. I think we killed him. I think we give him too much atabrine

or quinine. His heart couldn't stand it. We doctored him. I don't think that he could take it, the way he acted to me. I guess we just give him too much. His heart couldn't take it or something. We buried him the best we could and got his dog tags.

Marcello: Now were you suffering through quite a few hardships at this time?

Sherman: You bet! We needed something to eat. In other words, what they called malnutrition. Is that what it is?

Marcello: Yes, malnutrition.

Sherman: Malnutrition, yes. And at that time the day and the night and the year and the months and the weeks and the days, we were beginning to get where you just didn't care what's coming in front of you or what was behind you. You was hungry; you was tired; you was still scared. That's human nature.

Marcello: In other words, even though you were in this lush jungle, there was still not too much food to be found.

Sherman: Not too much. We run onto mostly fruit--bananas, berries, oh, them papayas, mangos, and all that stuff. We got to where we could find . . . what we could find . . . and knew if it was edible.

Marcello: Okay, so you say you decided to surrender. Why?

Sherman: Well, we didn't have no ammunition; we didn't have no food. I think every one of us was sick with malaria fever. We just sat down and talked it over. We walked for three days and never did find nothing but just a few bananas and this, that, and the other. We had one good pair of field glasses. We could see the prison camp.

Marcello: Now this was Cabanatuan?

Sherman: Yes. And we could see it. In fact, this is when they made that death march. We was up there on top of the mountain. The Japs were marching them out to Cabanatuan, Camps I, II, and III. They were starving to death.

They all had told us, "Never drink any water in the Philippines unless you boil it." Well, I guess this is true, but when we was out there with them guerrillas, whenever we found some water that was drinkable, we drank it. We didn't have time to boil it. The only time we boiled it was while we was slowly moving on. That's the only time we boiled it.

We'd sit up there, and when . . . those Filipinos would take that sugarcane with a carabao pulling the two-wheeled cart. They'd drop a stalk off about every five foot. That's what them boys was eating.

It'd come a rain. They'd go up to a water hole, and they'd just lay down there and drank like a cow.

I seen them Japs take a sub-machine gun and just mow them down and leave them dead right there.

Marcello: About how far were you from these guys?

Sherman: Well, I guess, oh . . . really, I don't know. Something like a mile. We was up on top of a mountain.

Marcello: And you had powerful enough field glasses that you could see them.

Sherman: That's right. We watched everything going on.

Marcello: What sort of thoughts did this give you so far as you personally surrendering was concerned?

Sherman: Well, you know, actually we didn't know. We knew we was going to die one way or the other, the way it looked. There was a possibility that they might keep us alive or something. The way it looked down there when they'd walk in two there, they would die out with dysentery and all that stuff, you know. We was sitting up there watching them. When they'd hit a water hole, they was so dry and thirsty, hell, they'd just pull down in there, and they'd just take that machine gun and mow two or three of them down. They'd probably let some drink and then maybe they wouldn't let any drink at all.

Marcello: In other words, it just depended on who the guard was.

Sherman: That's right, the way it looked to me.

Marcello: Okay, so is this getting near the point where you were finally going to surrender?

Sherman: We decided we was going to have to turn ourselves in.

Marcello: Okay, so describe what you did.

Sherman: Okay, we decided we'd turn in. We sat down there and ate all the fruit we had. That's all we had, was fruit. We had taken our guns and tore them up piece-by-piece and threw them four ways to the wind. All we had on us was maybe a change of clothes and a couple of blankets. We shook hands with each other, and we took off. We walked in down there.

Marcello: Now you walked down to Cabanatuan Camp?

Sherman: Yes, Camp I. We walked in down there . . . guardhouse. We could see it. We just walked on in there bigger than anything. Here come these Jap guards, you know.

Marcello: Did you have a white flag or anything like that?

Sherman: Yes, I think we did. And they met us down there. They made us sit down out there.

Marcello: Did they rough you up at this time at all?

Sherman: No, not until I got to talking to a Filipino girl with hand signals. I had more or less turned my back a little bit. One of these Jap guards come out there and hit me across the back with the butt of his rifle. I turned around and hit him with my

fist. Here these other eight more come out there. Then the Jap interpreter came out and wanted to know what happened. I said, "Well, I was just leaning up here at this tree tending to my own business! He come up and hit me in the back with his rifle!" He said something to that Jap guard. He said, "Well, he was talking to that Filipino girl over yonder." I said, "I can't even speak Filipino! I was just scratching here on the ground and mumbling in my beard! He hit me and I knocked the devil out of him!" He said, "You shouldn't do that because you're the guest of the Imperial Japanese Army." I said, "I don't give a damn who I'm the guest of! He ain't going to hit me with the butt of a rifle and get by with it!" So he talked to us there for awhile and here comes a big shot Jap. Then they carried us up, fed us.

Marcello: They didn't rough you up any?

Sherman: No, they didn't rough me up any.

Marcello: They didn't do anything to you when you hit that guard?

Sherman: No, they didn't rough us up at all. In fact, they just carried us up there and fed us, let us go shave, eat, take a bath. They even gave us some rice wine. We sat in there and listened to the record player.

Some of those Japs come in there and talked to us in English, you know.

Marcello: Was this up in the Japanese headquarters?

Sherman: Yes. They let us alone until the next morning. They carried us in. They wanted to know if we knew where anymore Americans was at. Hell, we didn't know! We knew some was out there. We knew that the guerrillas was out there, but we didn't know where they was at! They interviewed us there for two or three days.

Marcello: Did they rough you at all?

Sherman: We didn't know a bit more than we started with. That's when they commenced to roughing us up.

Marcello: What'd they do?

Sherman: Well, they beat us with anything they could get their hands on and throwed us in the dungeon in the Bilibid Prison.

Marcello: Oh, they took you from Cabanatuan . . .

Sherman: That was in Manila.

Marcello: Okay.

Sherman: Into the Bilibid Prison there.

Marcello: I wonder why they didn't keep you at Cabanatuan?

Sherman: I don't know. If you'll remind me later on, I'll tell you something, too. But, anyhow, they throwed us in the dungeon there. There were rats in there,

and I'll tell you what, they was as big nearly as we were! They give us a rice ball and a canteen cupful of soup a day, one canteen cup of water a day. We wouldn't tell them anymore than what we'd already told them, and so they carried us out and put us in Cabanatuan II.

Marcello: Now they took you from Bilibid to Cabanatuan, Camp II.

Sherman: Camp II. And that didn't last long. They started moving the prisoners. After they stayed a certain length of time . . . well, they'd take some out of Camp II and put them in Camp III and Camp I and just moving them around. Finally, they got hold of us and carried us to Camp I.

Marcello: And how long were you at Cabanatuan II?

Sherman: Oh, I guess we was there a couple of weeks.

Marcello: What did you do during this time that you were at Cabanatuan II?

Sherman: I just worked in the garden growing vegetables.

Marcello: Was this very hard work?

Sherman: It was just like planting a garden.

Marcello: Did the guards harass you very much at this time?

Sherman: Oh, some of them did, and some of them didn't.

Marcello: What would be the ways in which they would harass you?

Sherman: Well, they'd beat the hell out of you with a gun

butt. Or if you were using a pick and shovel, they'd take that pick handle and knock the pick off of it and beat you with a pick handle--things like this.

Then when they picked the detail out to go to Cabanatuan, the number one camp, which they made it the number one camp, they had a big deal up over the . . . you know, like "Smokey Sherman's Ranch" --a big sign up there. They had heads of people--two white men's heads and Filipinos' heads hanging up there. We didn't know what the hell we was getting into, but we knew it was the main camp. That's when I run onto my battery commander.

Marcello: Now the seven of you were still together at this time.

Sherman: Six of us.

Marcello: That's right, six of you

Sherman: Six of us.

Marcello: Now how long did you stay at Cabanatuan I? Could you estimate how long you stayed there?

Sherman: Yes, we stayed there till the last . . . oh, I guess the last year of the war.

Marcello: Okay, since the bulk of your time was spent here at Cabanatuan I, let's talk a little bit about this camp because this is evidently where a great many of your experiences took place.

Sherman: That's right. Okay.

Marcello: First of all, describe what this camp looked like from a physical standpoint. I'm referring to the buildings that were there and the fence that was around the place and things of this nature.

Sherman: It was a barbed wire fence, electrical, all the way around. It had hog wire on the bottom plumb down into the ground. One ditch went down through the middle of it. That was the only place you . . . if you could have gotten out, that was the only place you could have--crawling in under the fence. They had barracks there, I guess, oh, fifty foot wide and a hundred foot long.

Marcello: About how many men were in these barracks?

Sherman: I imagine . . . well, they laid up there on about a four-foot strip. I guess, oh, give or take, seventy-five.

Marcello: What were these barracks like on the inside?

Sherman: Just like on a ship--box and plank. Just like laying on this rug and on this hardwood right here. The only thing you had was two blankets.

Marcello: What were these barracks made out of?

Sherman: Just plain wood, just wood. It had double-deck bunks all the way down through the middle.

Marcello: Oh, you did have bunks in these barracks?

Sherman: Well, just boards--just like this floor here. Then up here (gesture), oh, as high as your head, there was another board laid up there for you to lay on.

Marcello: In other words, it was just like platforms.

Sherman: That's right. Just platforms is what they were. No doors on the front, no doors on the sides. It had just an opening all the way around.

Marcello: What sort of a roof did it have?

Sherman: It had a shingle roof, cedar shingle roof.

Marcello: In other words, this had been an old Philippine Army camp, had it not?

Sherman: That's what it used to be.

Marcello: What sort of sanitary facilities did each barrack have?

Sherman: Well, you just had to go outside and dig you a 2 x 6 foot . . . six foot deep in the ground. It had two boards going across it.

Marcello: In other words, it was an open-pit latrine.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: How about shower facilities and bathing facilities?

Sherman: Showers? They had a building there that they had showers. I guess twenty men could go in there and take a bath when they'd turn the water on.

Marcello: How often did you usually get a bath?

Sherman: Oh, I'd get a good bath maybe once a week unless

it rained. I got in that shower one time and just got soaped up good . . . and they had commodes there on the side on this shower, supposedly for the officers. That's how I got the soap off of me.

Marcello: In other words, while you were in there, they cut off the water?

Sherman: Cut off the water. I hit that door right quick. A buddy of mine come in there and had an old tomato can. He poured water on me and held the door open. He got it out of the commode. After I got the soap off of me, I poured the water on him to get the soap off of him.

Marcello: Where did you get your soap? Obviously, as time went on whatever supplies you had were going to give out.

Sherman: Well, in this Camp I there, they had--I don't know --I guess a hundred acres of garden--vegetables. The prisoners worked it. Then one morning they wanted a butcher detail to kill beef, you know. What it was was them brahma cattle and carabao-- water buffalo. They wanted volunteers. That's the only time I volunteered and didn't get lied to. I got on the butcher detail. There was twelve of us prisoners and three Jap guards. We walked off, oh, three or four miles from the camp. Hell, them brahmas,

they're just as gentle as in pictures in that light over there (gesture). We'd go out there, and they'd kill eight of them. They wouldn't let us skin them, but we could gut them and quarter them up and let them lay there. One Jap and I guess about four Americans would stay out there and watch them. The rest of us come back to camp to get a truck and go out there and commence picking them up. It didn't make any difference to them. They just went out there and shot them. Then we'd bring them in. They wouldn't give us time to let the cooks get the meat off of the truck. They made us throw it on the ground, and they come and got it. There was a quarter to each mess, which had to feed, oh, anywhere from 2,000 to 3,000 boys there in the mess halls, you know--one quarter of beef. They eventually got to where they made the Filipinos bring their carabao in. And they cemented this deal down there where we could slaughter them.

Marcello: So for a great deal of time in Cabanatuan I, you were on this butcher detail.

Sherman: All the time I was there. All the time I was there, I was on that butcher detail. I got a scar right there (gesture).

Marcello: On the lower part of your leg.

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: That was from an accident on the butcher detail?

Sherman: In the butcher pen.

Marcello: What happened?

Sherman: Well, I was on the head. I had that carabao . . . you know how the horns are. I had his head up there, and I was cutting down right down his face. Well, his horns slipped and my knife hung in the gristle of his nose and hit me right there. Well, anyhow, this American lieutenant in charge of us, he seen it and he called that Jap guard over there and said, "Send this man down to the medics where he can get his leg sewed up." Well, I fooled around there and went on down there. When I come back, I had five stitches in it. This Jap, he saw that I was really hurt, you know. I guess if I had any sense I could have been hurt. But, you know, if you lived or died, it didn't matter. I come on back up there.

In the meantime, they give us the head for us boys to eat--the butchers. That's not counting what we could steal--the tenderloin and all that stuff, and beef back. I might cut off a piece of meat, and I'd just kick it over. The lieutenant would pick it up and slam it in that five-gallon can over there where he was cutting that head up for us to cook that

meat, you know. Them Japs didn't do a danged thing about what was going on. We'd just butcher it. He'd get on the telephone and call these other guards. Then they'd go in there and get the prisoners, you know. They'd take these quarters down in there to cook. We took a five-gallon can in and cooked it up and eat all we could eat. What we couldn't eat we'd take over to the hospital area to feed to them.

Marcello: Well, if that was the case then, you must have been eating fairly good.

Sherman: I was eating pretty good myself, but these other boys wasn't eating.

Marcello: Now by the time you got to Cabanatuan, that is, Cabanatuan I, had the death rate more or less leveled off?

Sherman: No, the death rate got worse. That was dysentery and cerebral malaria.

Marcello: Approximately how many were dying a day at that time?

Sherman: Well, I know for a fact that some of the boys. . . these friends of ours that we'd give meat to out of our cook pot, they got on the burial detail. I guess they'd run from 150 to 350 a day.

Marcello: How long did that death rate continue?

Sherman: As long as the camp was there. Them old boys--the prisoners--they'd get so bad--and the dysentery, they

couldn't stop it. It was just like a hydrant running. They'd crawl through the fence. Instead of stopping when they'd holler, "Halt," they'd keep on going. They wanted the Japs to shoot them and get them out of their misery.

Marcello: Well, now you were at Cabanatuan I for a couple of years, perhaps?

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: And it was about 350 a day that died?

Sherman: That's right. That's sure right because I helped carry some of them out. A lot of times when the dozer was digging a hole they'd have to get another one to pull that dozer out of that hole because they hit water and would just sink right on down.

Marcello: I've heard it said that when it rained a lot of times . . .

Sherman: Especially in the rainy season.

Marcello: I've heard it said that a lot of times when it rained and after it rained you could actually see the hands and legs and so on sticking out of the holes.

Sherman: We covered a bunch of them up one time down there. I don't know what in the dickens happened. This old boy's head just flopped over like that (gesture). I had the shovelful of dirt, and I seen his eyes looking at me just like you are. I just turned that

shovel up like that (gesture). That Jap made me crawl down in that hole and turn that body over. He was looking at me just like you are right now. Some of those boys, whenever you'd get hold of them, they'd been dead so long that the hide would kind of slip a little bit. If you ever get that scent on you, it was worse than polecat scent. It'll stay with you. And you'd get the wind in the right direction at times, you could smell it. Boy, it was pitiful, especially over in the hospital area.

Marcello: Now was this the area that they usually referred to . . . there was also an area referred to as the "Zero Ward." What was it like?

Sherman: Boy, I'll tell you what. That "Zero Ward" is something else. Anything imaginable, that's what was over there.

Marcello: Now this is mainly where the hopeless cases were sent.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: Who determined who was sick enough to go into the hospital?

Sherman: Well, it was mainly our own doctors.

Marcello: What sort of medical facilities did they have there at the hospital?

Sherman: Well, we just had ordinary stuff till it ran out.

Then we just had to do what they could do with.

Marcello: Was there anything that you could use to stop the dysentery? I know I've heard some of them talk about eating charcoal and things of that nature.

Sherman: Eat everything, eat everything. Hell, I've got hold of charcoal, just old wood charcoal, and eat that.

Marcello: Would that help stop the dysentery?

Sherman: It helped a little bit, yes. It helped a little bit.

Marcello: Now did you actually see cases of people who just gave up and died?

Sherman: Yes, sir, I've seen some of them.

Marcello: What would that be like? How could you tell when somebody had given up?

Sherman: Well, he wouldn't say a word. You'd talk to him, and he wouldn't answer you. He'd just lay there. And the ones that I really was around, when they'd get that malaria fever, they'd get out of their heads. There ain't a thing in the world you can do to them except just manhandle them. And some of them, before they got so far gone that they knew that there wasn't no hope, that's when they'd crawl through that fence. And the Japs would holler at them to stop, and they wouldn't stop. They'd shoot them. There was so many

of them that started doing that that before they'd shoot them, they'd go get them and stand them down just like this (gesture), put a 2 x 4 right in here, and then tie their hands and then tie their legs right around here (gesture).

Marcello: In other words, they would make them kneel. Behind their knees they would put this board--this 2 x 4-- and make them kneel on this 2 x 4.

Sherman: Right there in the sun till they keeled over. There was a lot of them that we'd have go out there and cut the bindings off of.

Marcello: I've heard it said that when a person had given up, they stopped eating, also.

Sherman: Oh, yes. Hell, you couldn't get them to eat, couldn't get them to drink, couldn't get them to do nothing.

They got us--the last eight months of the war-- carried us to Manila, stayed all night in Manila, and put us on a boat. No, we stayed there two or three days. They had a freighter down there that had thirty-five Australians on it. They moved it out of the channel.

We could see them all out there. We'd get up there on them two-story buildings there and see them out there in the channel. That's when we began to get air raids, you know. Well, they dropped a bomb

on that freighter out there. They brought them Australians on into camp there. They stayed there a day, and then they got three shiploads of prisoners and they pulled out. You know where Taiwan is?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: That's where the Yanks run us into--Taiwan.

Marcello: Okay, this is getting a little ahead of the story here because I have a few more questions that I wanted to ask you about Cabanatuan yet. So let's go back to Cabanatuan.

Sherman: Alright.

Marcello: Now let's talk a little about the food that you got here in Cabanatuan. We mentioned that you were working in the butcher shop. You were stealing the meat. What other sort of food were you getting as a prisoner?

Sherman: You know what a sweet potato top is?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: The vine? Well, they made soup out of that.

Marcello: In other words, you were growing the camotes. The Japanese were keeping the camotes and giving you the vines. That was right generous of them.

Sherman: That was right generous. Do you know what masa is?

Marcello: No.

Sherman: Well, as far as I'm concerned, it ain't nothing but peanuts and cooked corn--like hominy. You'd kind of

make a spread. You've seen this peanut butter with the peanuts in it?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: Well, it's similar to that. They call it masa.

Marcello: Now what's it made out of? Is it rice or what?

Sherman: Well, it's got a little rice in it; it's got corn in it; it's got peanuts in it. It's kind of paste-like. You know, if you don't mind eating Japanese food, it is kind of tasty.

Marcello: How often would you get that? Three times a day?

Sherman: Yes, and you wouldn't get very much--just enough to half-way see you through. And soya, that's cooking oil. Those radishes . . . I've seen radishes about this long (gesture) and about that big around (gesture). Some of them was pithy and some of them was just as firm as they could be. Well, you know, in that soup with that "tater" tops, you might get two or three bites of that radish and just plain old dry rice.

Marcello: Did you ever have any ways of supplementing your diet? In other words, I've heard it said that a cat or dog that was unfortunate enough to stray into a camp never made it to the other end.

Sherman: Well, there wasn't but one dog in the place I was at. He stayed there till he got in pretty good shape. A

typhoon one time run us inside the building where the cooks were. This Polack sergeant said, "That sure would go good in the beans." We was cooking beans that we had stolen from the freight yard. Well, anyhow, he was eaten.

Marcello: Now was this back in Cabanatuan?

Sherman: Yes. He was eaten. And rice snakes . . . we didn't know snakes was good to eat.

Marcello: Rice snakes?

Sherman: Rice snakes.

Marcello: These obviously were snakes that were in the rice and so on.

Sherman: Yes. They was edible.

Marcello: But the whole time that you were at Cabanatuan, you worked in the butcher detail. You never got out in the rice paddies or anything of that nature.

Sherman: No, no.

Marcello: I understand that was pretty hard work.

Sherman: No, it was just like raising a garden. They did carry us out on a "honey" detail. Do you know what a "honey bucket" is?

Marcello: I know precisely what a "honey bucket" is.

Sherman: Well, I carried a "honey bucket." They carried us out, oh, about twice a week in the evening when we'd get through butchering. We worked about two or three

hours with the officers, you know. That's the best fertilizer there ever was, I'll tell you what! It takes a man with iron guts, I guess (chuckle).

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about some of the Japanese that were here at Cabanatuan. Now from what I gather, prisoners had nicknames for some of the Jap guards.

Sherman: Alright, we had one we called "Clark Gable." Have you heard of him?

Marcello: No, I haven't heard of "Clark Gable." How did he get that name?

Sherman: Well, he was like a little cocky rooster, you know. He had a little mustache, and he thought he was "it." The Filipinos would bring in vegetables and stuff like that, and fruit to sell. We'd buy it. Well, here comes "Clark Gable" out there. It didn't make any difference to him. He'd just as soon cut your throat as anything. They finally got rid of him. They they got another one in there--old man. I mean, he was gray-headed. We called him the "White Angel."

Marcello: How'd he get the name "White Angel?"

Sherman: Just because he was old and gray-headed. I'll tell you what, I don't know why they nicknamed him "White Angel," but that was a mean son-of-a-gun.

Marcello: What were some of the things he would do?

Sherman: Why, hell, he'd chop them Filipinos up with his sword. I seen him kill two of them right there-- just cut them all to pieces with a sword. I mean he'd pull them down and cut them. He pitched them on that carabao cart and sent them on out.

Marcello: Do you remember one called "Mortimer Snerd?"

Sherman: Yes. "Mortimer Snerd." I got acquainted with him.

Marcello: How did he get the name "Mortimer Snerd?"

Sherman: He was nicknamed before we got there, I guess.

Marcello: And I think another one was "Donald Duck."

Sherman: No, I don't know him.

Marcello: There was "Liver Lips."

Sherman: No.

Marcello: You don't remember him?

Sherman: No.

Marcello: Anyway, there were several of them that they had names for. Do you recall of any guards that were compassionate toward the prisoners?

Sherman: Yes, and only one. His name was "Pico."

Marcello: "Pico?"

Sherman: "Pico." I don't know what his other name . . . but anyhow, we called him "Pico." How come me to know . . . see, he was over here in California going to school at that big college there in San Francisco, I believe it was. But anyhow, he said he got a telegram

from his dad and mother. It said his mother was done dead and his daddy was fixing to die. They sent him money to come home. Why, hell, there wasn't no more truth in that than there is in poetry. He said when he got over there on the docks in Tokyo, the government had him a uniform sitting there, and he just crawled in it. He told me all about it.

Marcello: And you called him "Pico."

Sherman: "Pico."

Marcello: How do you spell that?

Sherman: That's a good question. But anyhow, he was a good Joe.

Marcello: What were some of the things that he would do for the prisoners?

Sherman: Well, when I had malaria fever and I couldn't go out on that butcher detail he'd bring me in some eggs--slip around the fence. He asked if they knew old "Smokey." They said, "Yes." He'd give them eggs and handed them some rice to take to me. If I was sick and couldn't go out on that detail, butcher detail, or if I didn't show up, well, he'd stop and go back and find out why I was gone. I wasn't the only one. He had several boys he kind of watched around.

Marcello: The butcher detail kind of intrigues me a little

bit because I didn't realize that that detail was ever a daily thing or a constant thing. I didn't realize you were getting that much meat.

Sherman: Every day. Well, it was just like not getting any meat at all. You might have gotten one or two bites. You take eight carabao for 140,000 men, and a bite or two is all you get.

Marcello: How many Red Cross packages did you receive while you were at Cabanatuan I?

Sherman: I got two.

Marcello: How important were those Red Cross packages?

Sherman: Listen, if you could get a dozen, or even one Red Cross parcel, and nobody else got any, as far as money-wise you'd be a millionaire. Even the Japs would want to buy some of it.

Marcello: Did you get a whole parcel for yourself, or did you have to split it with some of the other prisoners?

Sherman: No, where I was at we got a whole parcel to ourselves.

Marcello: What was in those Red Cross packages?

Sherman: Cigarettes, chocolate--things like that. Something to eat. Some canned rations.

Marcello: There was some Klim in there, wasn't there?

Sherman: Ham and, you know, stuff like that--just something to eat--a few cigarettes. I did get one partial

box. How come me to know I got it from my mother was that it had a carton of Bull Durham in it. That Bull Durham was old enough that it done turned gray. But anyhow, you could take a sack of that Bull Durham and eat like a king. That's smoking tobacco. Like you'd make you a cigarette out of that old molded Bull Durham and your old hair would stick straight up when you'd inhale (laughter).

Marcello: You're the first person that I've heard that's ever said that a package from home got through.

Sherman: Well, I got mine. There were several boys in this Camp I there that got theirs from home.

Marcello: What else was in the package that you got from home?

Sherman: Well, I got that Bull Durham and, you know, just canned goods--small cans--Vienna sausages and stuff like that. I was kind of afraid to eat it, but anyhow I did. "Corned Willie," you know, corned beef. They quit making that. Just stuff like that.

Marcello: I assume that those Red Cross packages were real lifesavers.

Sherman: Oh, yes, they sure was.

Marcello: When you got a package, did you eat it all at one time, or did you kind of spread it out?

Sherman: No, we had to spread it out. And I'll tell you why. Your body couldn't stand it. It was too rich. You

know this vegetable oil? I've taken a bolt or a knife or something and cut a hole in a can of vegetable oil and poured about an inch of it in a canteen cup and turned it up and drank it. I just drank old pure oil.

Marcello: I would assume that food was the thing that was constantly on your mind.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: Did you sit around and dream up menus?

Sherman: Oh, hell!

Marcello: (Chuckle) What were some of the principal foods that you thought about?

Sherman: We sat there and talked about it, and your mouth would water and slobber.

Marcello: I've heard it said that some prisoners' imagination became so vivid that they could even smell particular foods cooking in the camp.

Sherman: You're not lying. You could. You'd get so enthused on it that you could smell it. That's right!

Marcello: What foods did you particularly have a craving for?

Sherman: I needed a good old T-bone steak or any kind of steak. Your body would get run down. See, I weighed 173 pounds; I got down to eighty-seven pounds.

Marcello: In other words, you lost over half of your body weight, or about half your body weight.

Sherman: Why, sure! I'll tell you something else. Now we're going to go farther, and then we're going to have to back up. When we got to Taiwan, that sugar out there . . . and you know sugar is a fast energy, body-building food. We'd make us some . . . pour water on that sugar and stir it real good and drink it. And directly you'd get sick. And you'd go out there and just work your fanny off about thirty minutes, and then you'd feel normal again. Now let's back up to where we was at.

Marcello: (Chuckle) Okay, we were talking about the Red Cross packages and dreaming of food and that sort of thing. How much of an opportunity did you have to trade with the Filipinos?

Sherman: Well, it was about twice a week.

Marcello: Would the Japanese allow them to come into the camp?

Sherman: Yes, and they'd have a guard out there watching them. Old "Clark Gable". . . they made some invasion money. Do you know what Look magazine is? Do you know what a marriage license is? You'd hold that dollar bill up between you and the light, and it'd say either Look magazine or some kind of magazine. I had a peso bill that said 'marriage license' in there.

Marcello: In other words, they were using recycled paper.

Sherman: That's right, recycled paper and made it look like money.

Marcello: Where did you get the money? Did the Japanese pay you so much for working?

Sherman: We'd get it that way, and we'd do things, and the Japs would give us money. Money wasn't worth fifteen cents. A billion dollars would be worth about fifteen cents.

Marcello: Well, what did you have that the Filipinos would want other than this money?

Sherman: That's all they wanted, the money.

Marcello: What would they trade you for the money?

Sherman: Mango beans, fruit, all that stuff. Lots of times you'd get a certain one to come in, and he'd walk around and bump up against certain boys and hand them a piece of paper, and, you know, we'd get information that way.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that while you were at Cabanatuan you lost about half your body weight.

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: This occurred even though you were working on the butcher detail and stealing food there.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: How do you explain this loss in weight?

Sherman: Mostly in the variety of foods we was getting. See, rice is 90 per cent water. Starch is what it is.

Marcello: Did you have dysentery, also?

Sherman: Did I have dysentery!

Marcello: Well, I'm sure this would have kept your weight down, also, did it not?

Sherman: Yes, and that malaria fever, too. I'll tell you what, I've had dysentery so bad I couldn't even pull it with a puckering string! I'd go down to the slit trenches. Oh, I guess it might be a spot as big around as that cigarette lighter and that's all. Half of that would be blood and rice hulls--that red rice. Rain . . . rain. I never will forget the time I had to get up . . . you'd urinate a whole lot.

Marcello: I understand this is true when you are starving, that the tendency is to urinate a great deal.

Sherman: That's right, a whole lot. And if the Japs would catch you right there at the barracks, they beat the hell out of you. I mean, he'd beat you, too! You had to walk as far as from here to my house or something like that to get to that slit trench. There'd come up this cloud one night and the lightning knocked the lights out. This old boy had to go down there to urinate in the rain. That old clay's just as slick as greased glass, and he slipped in that slit trench down there. Me and my buddy heard him and went down there and pulled him out. And, by gosh,

we liked to slip in getting him out, but we got him out. It kept on raining, and we kind of got him cleaned up. That was a pitiful damn sight. We didn't think no more about it. It was just like you were in a swimming pool, and the wind knocked you off in there with your clothes and all. That's just the way we thought about it.

Marcello: Now I would assume in your particular case you didn't have any thoughts about escaping. You had had your experience outside that prison camp.

Sherman: Well, I'll tell you the reason why I didn't have any thoughts or anything about escaping. Say an old boy escaped. He got out. He's living right back up here at Leo right now with a Filipino woman. Well, he got away, and this ten men to a . . .

Marcello: They had ten-man death squads.

Sherman: That's right. And these nine men was left in that outfit. They carried them out there and made them dig their graves. One of them had a twin brother that was in a squad just under him. He was standing there when they shot them. The Japs covered them up. They dug their own graves, and the Japs shot them. And we had to hold that old boy. We had to hold his twin brother.

Marcello: You actually witnessed this?

Sherman: Witnessed it, that's sure right--that execution right there. They made them dig their own grave--nine of them!

Marcello: So in other words, if one man did have an escape plan, the other . . .

Sherman: . . . the other nine would have got shot.

Marcello: Or the other nine were going out with him.

Sherman: That's right. But this guy, he decided he'd go on his own, and the other nine didn't have no more idea he was going than nothing. But anyhow, he's out here at Leo. I hope he's happy.

And that's the reason. . . well, I just couldn't do it. Then if we all ten would have went, then the rest of them boys back there . . . no telling what they would have done. We never had any dealings like that.

Marcello: What did you do about personal cleanliness? In other words, what did you do for soap?

Sherman: The Filipinos would bring it in. If they couldn't get in, they'd go by and throw it over the fence.

Marcello: What did you do about shaving? What did you do for shaving?

Sherman: Well, you know, what a mess kit knife is?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: We finally got hold of some old sandrock. One of

the boys in the maintenance department--trucks and that--finally got hold of whetstone. We'd take them mess kit knives till we'd get one that was sharp and we'd shave with it. Lots of times we'd get them little bitty old short-bladed scissors and just clip it like that.

Marcello: In other words, you'd reduce the whiskers to a stubble.

Sherman: Yes. Most of the time it was scissors to just keep it down.

Marcello: I would assume that you wanted to keep your hair short, too.

Sherman: We had to, you know. Your head would get dirty, and you didn't have no water to take a bath. Your head would get full of dirt, and the next thing you know . . .

Marcello: You'd get lice and so on.

Sherman: That's right, and all of that. Them begger lice, greybacks, they got pretty popular all around.

Marcello: How'd you get rid of lice?

Sherman: Everytime we'd get hold of some gasoline or that real strong 180-proof alcohol.

Marcello: I understand you get those lice all over your body.

Sherman: Oh, you bet, especially where there's hair.

Marcello: I've also heard that all of the prisoners became scroungers and scavengers. In other words, you became pack rats.

Sherman: That's right. There you go.

Marcello: Anything that might be of some value to you, you'd pick it up and put it in your kit bag.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: What were some of the things that you gathered over a period of time?

Sherman: Just most anything. Anything that, you know, I might could swap for something to eat or something to keep warm with. I've carried a load that was . . . hell, right now I wouldn't carry a load like that for you or love or money. No way! But back in them days, somebody would come along and offer you something that you can get something to eat out of or kind of prosper a little bit with. But not today I wouldn't.

Marcello: How about clothing? After awhile I'm sure your clothing must have worn out.

Sherman: We had patches on top of patches. Then we got down to where we just had shorts. Do you know what a G-string is?

Marcello: I sure do.

Sherman: I wore a G-string right through the big city of Tokyo. That didn't bother any of them over there. If you walked down there stark naked, it wouldn't bother any of them.

Marcello: Okay, I think we're probably ready to leave Cabanatuan I. Like you mentioned, they carried you on down

to Manila and then over to Taiwan. Describe the trip, first of all, from Cabanatuan to Manila. How did you get there?

Sherman: Oh, we walked. Some of them went on a truck, but most of us walked.

Marcello: About how far was that?

Sherman: Oh, hell, twenty or thirty miles or something like that.

Marcello: Was it a pretty rough march?

Sherman: Oh, for some of them, yes. Some of them was so weak they couldn't hardly make it, and they carried them on a truck.

Marcello: Did the Japanese guards harass you at all while you were making this march?

Sherman: Oh, yes, all the time.

Marcello: Was it the usual hitting with gun butts?

Sherman: That's right--just the usual routine.

Marcello: Okay, so what happened when you got to Manila?

Sherman: Well, they put us there in Bilibid Prison.

Marcello: Back in Bilibid Prison again.

Sherman: We stayed overnight. The next morning they marched us down there and loaded three boats. We pulled out there in the bay. We sat around out there, I guess, till "dark-thirty," and then we took off.

Marcello: I'm sorry. I didn't understand what you said.

Sherman: In the bay and just sat around out there till it got dark, what we called "dark-thirty."

Marcello: "Dark-thirty?"

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: I've never heard that expression before.

Sherman: That's when the sun done went down, and you can see just a little bit. Well, we takes off. We was out at sea, I guess, about two and half days. We had an air raid. Boy, they run us back down in the hold of that ship, I mean, right quick. You can hear the bombs falling and all of that stuff, you know. Well, they run us into Taiwan and up the river channel.

Marcello: Okay, now before we get to Taiwan, describe what this ship was like that they put you on.

Sherman: It was just a plain old everyday freighter that had a hold at each end and one in the middle where they put the cargo.

Marcello: How closely were you packed in that hold?

Sherman: Just like my fingers are right there, standing up (gesture). Just about shoulder to shoulder and then they made us sit down. That's the way we had to sleep.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that before you . . . awhile ago you mentioned that before you took off from Manila that

there had been some air raids there in the harbor, also.

Sherman: Oh, yes, right there in the harbor.

Marcello: Were you able to witness these air raids?

Sherman: Yes, sir. We sat up there in the library in that two-story building, and we seen it all.

Marcello: Okay, what did it look like? Describe the air raid.

Sherman: It looked like heaven to us. We didn't know what in the "Sam Hill" was going on. We could see them planes, you know, but we wouldn't have thought it was Japs. We wasn't thinking about them stars being on the wings, you know. I said, "Say, look yonder!" About that time we seen bombs begin to fall, and we commenced looking. By gosh, them was our planes!

Marcello: What did that do for your morale?

Sherman: Oh, that built it up real good, built it up real good.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the Japanese when all the . . .

Sherman: They got meaner. I mean they got mean. They got mean.

Marcello: What did the harbor look like in the aftermath of that attack?

Sherman: Well, it already looked like a graveyard out there.

Marcello: In other words, there were masts of ships sticking up and so on?

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: Incidentally, up to this time had you been receiving any news at all from the outside?

Sherman: Just propaganda. You know, we had Tokyo Rose. Once in awhile some of the boys would go out on a detail. They'd be working, but yet the Filipino would be over there talking. The Jap wasn't paying any attention, you know. You'd get information that way. They'd bring it in that way. Then a Filipino would be walking along, and directly you'll see him throw that piece of paper down, you know. When the Jap wasn't looking, one of the boys would walk by and kind of stumble and reach down and pick it up and stick it in his pocket or wad it up or something like that. We'd get information that way. They watched pretty close.

Marcello: You mentioned that the Japanese got mean as a result of those raids. How did their attitude change?

Sherman: They beat the hell out of us more oftener and harder. When they'd have a navy fight, you know, battles, and the Japs would get the best of the fight or something, well, they'd treat us pretty good. That was very seldom. But when they'd get the hell stomped out of them, by God, that's when we got it stomped out of us.

Marcello: Okay, let's get back to your ship again. As you mentioned, they packed you very tightly in the hold of this vessel, and I assume you were part of a convoy, and you were on your way to Taiwan.

Sherman: That's right, fourteen boats.

Marcello: What sort of food and water did you get on that trip to Taiwan?

Sherman: Oh, watery soup and dry rice.

Marcello: How would they get it down to you? Did you come up on deck?

Sherman: We'd come up on deck and get it in our little old mess kits. We had to eat it and go on back down in the hold. Sometimes we got to wash our mess kit up, and sometimes we didn't.

Marcello: Now this must have been about the middle of 1944 or early in '45.

Sherman: Well, it was eight months before the war was over with.

Marcello: Okay, it must have been about the beginning of 1945 then.

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, did you lose very many prisoners on this trip to Taiwan?

Sherman: Well, yes, we did. Then we pretty near lost a whole boatload. See, they torpedoed us. Unfortunately, they hit one of the prison ships.

Marcello: In other words, there were no markings at all to indicate that these were prisoner-of-war ships.

Sherman: No, there wasn't. I'll vouch for that. But all they had . . . we had fourteen ships when we had taken off. And when they run us back into Taiwan, we had five other ships besides the two prison ships. And we picked up fourteen prisoners on our ship. Then after we got to Taiwan. . . well, I guess we got . . . by the time we got there and got kind of settled, I guess we got about half of the prisoners that was on that other ship. The rest of them was killed or drowned.

Marcello: You know, as you look back on it, it may have been a good thing that they put you on an old dingy ship because it probably didn't make good picking for the planes and submarines and so on.

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: I assume you were being tracked by submarines and so on.

Sherman: That's right. That's what happened.

Marcello: I've heard it said by some of the prisoners that they could actually hear the ping of the sonar off the hull of the ship. Could you hear that?

Sherman: Many a time.

Marcello: That must have been nerve-racking.

Sherman: Whenever you're laying up there on the ship like this (gesture) about half asleep, and everything's

rocking and pretty, then all of a sudden you just kind of wake up (gesture) like that, and then you look out yonder and that old oil tanker just come up like that (gesture) in the middle. Then the ship right up in front of you does that. The next thing you know you've got a bayonet jammed in you and down that hold you go. You've got a little hole about that square (gesture), the ladder, that you go down. When he hit me with that bayonet I didn't stop to use that ladder. I just dropped down and was getting out of the way of some other boys coming down.

Marcello: Did you actually lose very many men in your ship itself, that is, who died along the way?

Sherman: Oh, there was a few of them with dysentery. I guess by the time we got to Taiwan we lost ten or twelve-- something like that. Most of them . . . we didn't get any water. And then when they did get to go to topside, they drank that salt water. Salt water will kill you as poison or anything like that. There was a lot of them would go up and use the latrine, you know. They'd get hold of some salt water. They'd come back and get down there in that hold, and they'd give some of the prisoners that salt water, and, hell, they'd go crazy. The next thing you know they'd just keel over.

Marcello: Did they allow you to take any water or anything like that with you on the ship when you boarded it in Manila?

Sherman: No. All we carried with us was just the clothes we had and blankets. That's all they'd let us carry on board--and then our mess kit, knife and fork, or something like that.

Marcello: Okay, so you got to Taiwan. How long did you stay there?

Sherman: We stayed there a month-and-a-half.

Marcello: What did you do while you were in Taiwan?

Sherman: We loaded sugar.

Marcello: That must have been pretty tough work, considering your physical condition.

Sherman: Oh, yes--them 100-kilo bags. That's 200 pounds. And we had some that was in 100-pound sacks of sugar. That's what I mentioned awhile ago. That sugar, you mix it with water, and I'll tell you what. That's quick energy. And you can get too much, and you get sick. Instead of standing there and feeling sorry for yourself because you're sick, if you'd get out there and just work your tail off, in about, oh, twenty or thirty minutes you'll get to feeling like a man should feel--till you get used to it.

Marcello: What was the climate like here in Taiwan? Now you were heading north by this time.

Sherman: Well, it was just like the summertime here. It was about seventy to eighty degrees.

Marcello: In other words, you still didn't need much more than your G-string.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: What sort of living quarters did you have here at Taiwan?

Sherman: Just the roof over our heads. Just like we had back there in the Philippines. It was just kind of a roof over our heads. Of course, we didn't have an upstairs part. It was all on the bottom. Well, they was just warehouses for sugar cane, was what it was.

Marcello: Now I'm sure that when you left the Philippines you probably knew that they were ultimately going to try and get you back to Japan.

Sherman: We knew that's where we was going.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going to Japan?

Sherman: Well, it's just like I said awhile ago. We really didn't know and, you know, some of us just didn't give a damn. We knew we was going to Japan. But actually, I guess the truth is that we didn't know. We didn't know how to feel, I guess. We had just taken things as they come. That's the only way you could take it, or just go plumb crazy.

Marcello: This brings up an interesting question. Were you living from day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month?

Sherman: Day-to-day, from hour-to-hour. When you were asleep you didn't know what you were living for, but when you was awake you were living for one minute to the next.

Marcello: Did you still have hope that you were going to be liberated?

Sherman: We had hopes.

Marcello: Is this something that was necessary for survival?

Sherman: That's right. You had to believe in your fellow man. There was a lot of boys who said, "Ah, heck, they'll get tired of making money someday and come get us." You heard a lot of them say that. They'd say, "We might be able to borrow some of it when we get back."

Marcello: In other words, some of the guys were getting a little cynical. They figured that there were people back here that were making money off the war while they were suffering as prisoners-of-war.

Sherman: That's right. And you know, MacArthur . . .when he left the Philippines he made it public, "I shall return!" He'd taken his barflies and his maids and all his staff and left.

Marcello: I gather you didn't have a very high opinion of MacArthur.

Sherman: You heard what I said, and I meant it, too. The American soldiers and Marines and sailors made MacArthur.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned that you were on Taiwan for about a month and a half.

Sherman: Month and a half or two months.

Marcello: By this time are you kind of used to the routine? In other words, you learned to roll with the punches when the Japanese hit you. You don't like it, but you learn how to take it and this sort of thing.

Sherman: That's right. And we also did learn if you can take it, stand up. But don't never go down. Of course, sometimes when they hit you in a vital spot you're going down. And, buddy, that's where they want you--when you go down. The hobnailed shoes sure do get rough in your face.

Marcello: Okay, so you're on Taiwan for about a month and a half. Was your health getting any better or any worse, or was it staying about the same?

Sherman: About the same.

Marcello: Okay, so you take off again.

Sherman: We take off and go to Kobe, Japan.

Marcello: What sort of ship were you on this time?

Sherman: It was the same kind of ship we was on. Hell, they never did leave out of there. They stayed in there. Some more come in.

Marcello: Okay, describe the trip from Taiwan to Kobe.

Sherman: Okay. We get on board. We had, oh, eighteen ships --two prison ships. We had air raids along, but we didn't . . . you know, they lost a few of their ships, but we managed to survive.

Marcello: I still say you were surviving because they put you on the worst ships that they had. They didn't make very good targets for the American Navy or the Air Force.

Sherman: Well, I think the Navy and the Air Force had the sense enough to know that something was going on like that. We lost one hospital ship that wasn't a hospital ship. They had it marked as a hospital ship, but it was a prisoner-of-war ship. But we wasn't in that one. But, anyhow, we wound up with five ships when we got to Kobe, Japan.

Marcello: Was this a hard trip to Kobe?

Sherman: You better believe it was hard! It was cold!

Marcello: What made it such a hard trip?

Sherman: Well, the dadblamed Yanks were pushing us around.

Marcello: How were you faring on this trip so far as food and water were concerned?

Sherman: We just barely were eating, period, all the way across.

Marcello: Did they allow you to come up on deck to get the food?

Sherman: Yes, and go right on back down in the hold. They didn't leave you up there but just long enough to get your food and get back.

Marcello: Did the death rate begin to increase on this trip?

Sherman: Oh, yes. They increased a whole lot.

Marcello: What would you do with the dead?

Sherman: They'd pull them up on deck. Then we'd bury them at sea.

Marcello: In other words, they'd just toss them over the side.

Sherman: Just toss them over the side.

Marcello: In other words, they didn't have a ceremony or anything.

Sherman: No, nothing. Just pitch him over. The sharks would get him or whatever.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that as you were proceeding toward Kobe, it was beginning to get cold, too.

Sherman: Yes, it sure was.

Marcello: And you had nothing but your G-string.

Sherman: Just a pair of shorts and a G-string. And when we got to Kobe, Japan, they carried us to what used to be a school. It had a high board fence built around it. Boy, listen, they fed us like we was gods when we got there.

Marcello: Why was that?

Sherman: I don't know. We didn't do a thing in a world for a week. Oh, it was seven or eight days, you know. We stayed on the other side of the barracks and ate. Of course, we ate red rice and minnow soup--fish like we use for minnows to fish with. That's what they made soup out of, and they put that masa and soya in it, you know.

Then one morning the snow was just about ankle deep. Do you know what Jap tennis shoes are?

Marcello: The split-toe jobs?

Sherman: Yes. And they finally give us some of them Jap britches, you know. We put all the clothes we had on one morning and fell out. We had to do a Japanese infantry drill with the Japanese language. If you didn't respond, that cold steel would be jammed against you. We got to where we could understand that pretty good by then.

Marcello: Well, now by this time had the American bombing of Japan started?

Sherman: Yes, it had already started then.

Marcello: What sort of a reception did you get from the civilians when you got off the boat there in Kobe?

Sherman: Well, what kind of reception would you get if your wife caught you out with another woman?

Marcello: There would be hell to pay (chuckle).

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: So what did the Japanese civilians do?

Sherman: They were just like the guards. They eventually began getting better.

While we was in this school building, we had an air raid. Kobe, Japan--that's a manufacturing town. Do you know what them old smokestacks are, you know, in factories where the smoke goes? They called it "Giant Valley." One morning about, oh, around twelve or one or two o'clock--somewhere along there--the air raid whistle woke us up. We were in a two-story building. When them Yanks got through with that, you could sit there looking out through that window . . . didn't have nothing on the window--just the window glass. You could see the insignia on them dive bombers when they dove down there. And when daylight come, you could see a .30-caliber hull or .50-caliber hull or projectiles laying around in the compound.

They got us up, fed us, got us out. They split us up and shipped us out to different places. I went to Maibara, Japan. That's the freight yard.

Marcello: Before we get you out of Kobe, there is something that I want to ask you. I'm getting back to those Japanese civilians once again. When you got off that

ship there in Kobe, did they throw any rocks at you or spit on you or anything of that nature?

Sherman: They'd try that. They did that . . . you know . . . I mean. . . everywhere you'd turn. But the Jap guards, they kind of pushed them back.

Marcello: Okay, so you stayed at Kobe just a short time, like you mentioned.

Sherman: Oh, I guess we stayed there at Kobe about two weeks.

Marcello: And you didn't do anything during the whole time you were there.

Sherman: No, we just sat there till the last part, and then we had to take that infantry drill in their language, you know.

Marcello: This was more or less just a form of harassment. There was really no reason for them to put you through those infantry drills.

Sherman: No reason at all.

Marcello: Okay, so now they shifted you into this camp, and it was located where?

Sherman: It was in a school building right there in Kobe. Let's see. I don't know. But anyhow, it was just where they had school. They knew we was coming, and they built a high fence around it just like a prison compound, you know.

Marcello: But then after the air raid they moved you.

Sherman: Yes, just as quick as that air raid was over with, they moved us right quick the next morning.

Marcello: And where did they move you to?

Sherman: I went to Maibara. I guess there was, oh, fifteen or twenty details. Maibara is a big freight depot.

Marcello: And what did you do when you got there?

Sherman: Unloaded boxcars. That's when I ate my first dog.

Marcello: You might describe this particular incident.

Sherman: Okay. Did you ever unload any soot?

Marcello: No.

Sherman: You know what soot is, don't you?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: It's just old black smoke like is over there in that fireplace. But anyhow, that's when we really put our G-strings on. They had it in bags.

Marcello: What were the Japanese using the soot for?

Sherman: They'd make carbide and stuff like that, you know. You take a flashlight battery--that black thing right up through the middle of it--that's what they're made of. We'd go out there, and it was in paper bags. The bag would be nearly as big as that . . . about half as big as that divan you're leaning up against --about as big around. I don't guess it'd weigh . . . oh, it was just like lifting air. But when we'd get it unloaded, well, your old hair is white as to

what we'd be. Even your britches. . . they look black to me, but we'd be . . . them britches would be white because of the way we'd look. Lordy mercy, darn near had to use GI soap and a steel brush to get it off (chuckle).

Marcello: How long were you unloading these boxcars of soot?

Sherman: It wouldn't take, oh, but maybe a couple of hours to unload the cars they had. We'd load them in trucks, and they hauled them off somewhere else.

Marcello: Now during this period were you still under military guards or were you being directed by civilians?

Sherman: No, we never was under civilian guards--always military guards.

Marcello: About how many men were in this camp that you were at now?

Sherman: Oh, I imagine there were about 500.

Marcello: What sort of living quarters did you have here?

Sherman: Just similar to what we had back in the Philippines-- just a roof over our head. It had walls on it.

Marcello: Were they fairly well-heated?

Sherman: The only heat we had was charcoal. Snow was about this (gesture) deep.

Marcello: In other words, it was above your ankles.

Sherman: That's right. And believe it or not, actually . . . I'll tell you the truth. It didn't get half as cold

over there as it did here. The snow was six to twelve inches deep over there. It didn't hurt, it seems to me like, like it does here.

Marcello: What sort of food were you getting here at this camp?

Sherman: Just still rice. Still rice and a little fish soup.

Marcello: And it was at this point where you ate your first dog, you say?

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: Describe this incident.

Sherman: Alright. We'd get the detail and go out to the freight yards. They had a place there where they cooked rice. This little old dog, it just taken up with us. We'd steal anything that come in in freight cars, refrigerated cars, anything, you know. When we'd steal something, well, somebody would eventually get it to the mess sergeant over there in the kitchen. During the rainy season, there came a pretty rough one, and the Japs run us in over there at the kitchen. Me and the mess sergeant and two or three more were sitting there. That little old dog came in and shook itself, you know. He was wet. I said, "That little old dog sure would go good in them beans." I then just walked on through, came back, sat down there with them. Somebody had made

some coffee. Somebody stole some of that sake, rice wine. The sergeant over there sampled it. I went over there where he was at and helped him. He says, "You know that little old dog that you said sure would go good with them beans?" He said, "He's in there." (Chuckle) He said, "Don't say nothing about it."

But anyhow, it rained and we didn't work any more that day. We just stayed in there till about 3:30, got up, and come on back to camp, you know. Everybody had their mess kit full of rice and beans, mostly beans. We'd bring some in for the boys in the camp. They couldn't get nothing like that. We was walking along, and the old sergeant said, "How'd you boys like that meat that was with them beans today?" One old boy spoke up and said, "It sure was good, but every time you'd chew it it'd get bigger." (Chuckle) Then he told him. He said, "You don't see that little dog following us anywhere, do you?" Some of them didn't laugh, but they didn't say much about it.

Marcello: How long were you in this camp altogether?

Sherman: From the time we left the Philippines until we was liberated, it was eight months.

Marcello: In other words, you remained there.

Sherman: We remained there.

Marcello: And this is where you were liberated.

Sherman: We finally . . . the Jap government was draining a nature-made lake. I guess it'd cover about fifty, maybe seventy-five, acres. Well, anyhow, they got us prisoners . . . and they got them miniature railroad tracks, you know.

Marcello: Miniature, yes.

Sherman: They make them yard buckets out of wood. They'd hold a yard of dirt. You'd push it up on the side and then pull the sideboards off. And then four men would turn it over. Well, we dug a canal, I guess about forty-foot deep, thirty-foot wide, and about, oh, about eight or ten miles long to get to the bay. In the meantime, the Jap government and civilians was tearing down a mountain and hauling it in with trucks and filling in this land where they'd have a rice paddy. There were so many Japs that they had to fill that lake up good and fix them some farming land where they'd have something to eat. But anyhow, they give us ten or fifteen-minute breaks twice a day. Out there in that lake . . . you know them old mussels?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: Fresh-water mussels?

Marcello: I know what you mean.

Sherman: We'd drive down out there and get what we can. Then they'd let one man go out there and . . . oh, we had, I guess, fifteen or twenty five-gallon cans cooking them muscles. They were good eating. Some of them eat it raw.

Marcello: In other words, this was another way that you were able to supplement your diet.

Sherman: Right.

Marcello: Incidentally, was that pretty good duty when you were working around those freight cars? I would assume you might be able to steal a lot of food and so on.

Sherman: Well, we stole just some of that food and stuff and brought it into our main camp. Anything that was edible, we'd steal it.

Marcello: Did the Japanese know what was going on?

Sherman: Well, you know, I kind of believe they did know. But some of them, after it got that far along, I don't think they gave a darn.

Marcello: In other words, they just kind of deliberately turned their heads.

Sherman: And when they were . . . I'll tell you the reason why. We got in a load . . . a carload of rice wine. This Jap guard, now he was a wino, I think. Everytime we'd go in there and get a case and bring out to this warehouse, you know, he'd want us to stumble and

fall and spill it. He grabbed me when I was going by. I said, "You really want me to fall and spill that?" "Yes." Sure enough, I did. I got a whole two of them cases and come out of there. I stumbled and spilled it. It fell down between the dock and the car down on the ground and broke, oh, six or eight quarts, you know. I just reached over there and undone one, turned it up, and started drinking. He jumped down there with me. He could speak a little English. He said, "Let's go right around in there." And he got one of them other prisoners and made him cover over there. He got back up on the dock and showed him where to put that. He got all of that broken glass and everything and put it in there. Well, he turned it in that it was damaged in shipping, you know. That son-of-a-gun had all of that other wine, you know, for himself. He come back up there after he had gotten rid of us and got up there and got it, see.

Marcello: Now how hard was the work in draining this lake?

Sherman: Draining that lake was pretty hard.

Marcello: In other words, a cubic yard of dirt is a lot of dirt to move.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: Especially considering the condition you all were in at that time.

Sherman: That's right. And them leeches . . . do you know what a leech is?

Marcello: Yes.

Sherman: Bloodsuckers. The only way we could get him off . . . we could pull him, but, yet, his head would be sticking in there. When you'd pull him off and leave his head there, hell, it'd bleed every time your heart would beat. So we'd take a cigarette and burn them off.

Marcello: In other words, everytime your heart would beat the blood would squirt out where his head had been.

Sherman: Where his head was . . . head is because if you pulled him off, his head would still be down there. But if you take a cigarette and burn him anywhere, then he'll turn loose. And mud was this deep or that deep (gesture).

Marcello: In other words, it was knee-deep, the mud.

Sherman: That's right.

Marcello: Did they give you a quota? In other words, did you have to move so much dirt a day?

Sherman: That's right. Had to move so much, and then if you failed . . . like if you got sick or something . . . I seen them beat one old boy to death because he gave up and couldn't do anymore and was sick. They just beat him to death with the damn shovel right there.

They just picked him up and laid him there up on top till they got ready to go in and carried him in.

Marcello: Now by this time you must have just barely been hanging on.

Sherman: We were. We were just barely hanging on. And right at the . . . well, it just went on every day, every day. About the last, oh, I guess, two or three weeks the Jap camp commander came in and called us all down. He said, "Due to no seeds and no tools to work with," . . . see, it was rice planting time. We'd help plant some rice.

Marcello: In other words, you had drained the lake.

Sherman: No, we were draining on it. He came out there and said, "We don't have no more tools and no more seeds." He said, "We're going to rest." He gave us a big sob story. We kind of figured something was wrong. We didn't say nothing. We just sat around. The next day, same thing. Well, we began to suspicion something. The third day we had to go back down there and pull that track up and load it all on trucks.

In the meantime, I guess we lacked about as far as from here to the house up here getting it over to where it would run out. Down where we started, I guess we left about five hundred foot there, you know, where the water wouldn't come in on us except what seeped in.

Well, we got our track and got our cars all out. Well, they commenced to . . . we noticed them punching holes and sticking dynamite in there, and the same thing way up yonder on the other end. Well, they put dynamite in there. While we was moving out with the trucks, they set the dynamite off. That opened up the waterway where it'd just wash on out.

We come on back to camp and we didn't go out anymore. It was always due to . . . we didn't have no seed or no tools to work with. A pick and shovel was all we needed, and mostly a shovel. We had plenty of rice we could plant, you know.

I guess about the sixth day we was up on top of the barracks to get where we could see out over the fence, you know. We noticed three or four old burly-looking boys coming up there--pretty good-sized. We didn't think much about it. We just thought they were Japs. They had Jap clothes on, you know. We were sitting there drinking and we heard the darnedest racket you ever heard. We jumped off the building. Them Japs got out and called us all out. About that time them three old boys walked down there in the guardhouse right there at the gate. They had guns, you know, but the Japs didn't know it. But, anyhow, they got all the Jap guards.

Marcello: Now who were these three guys?

Sherman: These were American boys!

Marcello: Oh, okay.

Sherman: These were American boys. They was dressed like Japanese soldiers. They kind of raked up all the guards around the camp. We went down there to where they was at. "You boys want a tailor-made cigarette? Camel? Lucky? How about some chewing gum?" Even Hershey bars and all that stuff, you know, that they got out of the Red Cross and American chow.

Marcello: But you hadn't even heard anything officially at this point?

Sherman: Hadn't even heard anything officially. In the meantime, after we kind of got things kind of settled down, they told us that the Japs surrendered and all that stuff, you know. Well, we just took over bigger than Dallas.

Marcello: What sort of feeling did you have when you heard that the war was over?

Sherman: I don't guess there's any words that express the feeling that you had then. But anyhow, some of us left and went back up where they came from.

Marcello: Could you leave?

Sherman: Why, sure!

Marcello: What I meant was, were you told to stay there but you left anyhow?

Sherman: Well, that's right. And in the meantime . . .

Marcello: I guess by this time you were tired from taking orders from anybody.

Sherman: That's right. Didn't nobody give anybody any orders unless that you was my buddy. If I told you to go to hell or something like that, that was okay. That was about all that happened. But anyhow, some of them began to leave. In the meantime, they commenced to looking for us dropping this chow.

Marcello: These were the B-29's coming in and dropping the fifty-five-gallon drums.

Sherman: There you go. Where'd you learn that at?

Marcello: From the other interviews.

Sherman: They couldn't find us. We was back under some trees, you know, and they couldn't find us. Then two or three more boys who had done been down in town there in Maibara, you know . . . do you know what a door mirror is, you know, that's bolted on a door? Down there in this barber shop there was a mirror. So we went down there that day and got that mirror. We were sitting there up on top of the barracks when them planes come over. We got that plane on that sunbeam, you know, off of that mirror. He found us. Lord, here they come! Them little old dive bombers, heck, they didn't have much, but they dropped it all.

Marcello: What were some of the things that they dropped for you?

Sherman: Oh, five pounds of ham and all that good stuff. An old colonel . . . what's his name? I'll never forget that. He said, "If you boys make it back to California there, come see me." He gave us his address and everything. And a buddy of mine, he picked up this package, you know, that had been dropped. He got that note and a five-pound box of ham, three or four packages of Lucky Strike cigarettes, and all that stuff. Say listen, he kept that note. When we got back to San Francisco, we went and looked that gentleman up. Talking about being treated like gods, now we were treated like gods.

Marcello: Incidentally, now that the war was over and you were more or less free, did you go looking for any of your Japanese guards? In other words, were you out for revenge?

Sherman: Let's back up before I answer this question.

Marcello: Okay.

Sherman: Let's back up to just before we quit working on that canal.

Marcello: Okay.

Sherman: We noticed a bunch of planes--ours--coming over in the distance. Well, we'd get out in that tall grass,

and after the air raid was over with, we'd go back to work. This particular day--I'm talking about cold chills running up and down your spinal column and your flesh--we had an air raid. We could hear motors, but we couldn't see none of them. Talk about a raid, buddy! They was making a raid! They was still blowing them air raid whistles. Finally, these Jap guards got us all out in the grass. We was sitting out there waiging. Directly we began to see them. And so help me God, as I'm sitting right here talking to you right now, there was over 500 American planes--big bombers, little bombers, little planes, big planes --and . . . oh, hell. Even your flesh was moving so you couldn't be still, just seeing them babies flying across.

Marcello: In other words, it was the excitement.

Sherman: That's right. And a lot of the . . . the excitement . . . some of them old boys couldn't take it. They squalled like whipped babies seeing them planes go over.

Marcello: What did the Japanese do?

Sherman: Well, now they couldn't do nothing. They was afraid to do anything. I believe they was scared to do anything. Now some of them whipped some of the boys --beat them--a little bit. But a majority of the guards, they didn't do a thing in the world. Then I guess, oh,

a day after that, or a day or two, that's when we quit work. Then that's when this Jap camp commander come in there and said we didn't have any tools and seeds to work with. We were just going to rest that day.

Marcello: Well, what happened to your guards after those three Americans came in? Did they just kind of disappear?

Sherman: Yes, they disappeared fast. Some of them, they carried off with them.

Marcello: In other words, the Americans took some of the guards with them?

Sherman: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, the three Americans shot some of those guards.

Sherman: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: Were these guards singled out by the prisoners as being particularly vicious or what happened?

Sherman: Yes, some of them. Then after, oh, a day or two, if you didn't come in singing in English or talking loud enough in English, you might be left laying right there on the side of the road or a trail where you come in at.

Marcello: I don't quite follow you.

Sherman: In other words, if you wasn't American or talking in English--if it was a Jap talking in Japanese--he got

shot if they could see him. They'd love to use that for an excuse, you know.

Marcello: Were the prisoners ever given any guns or anything of this nature?

Sherman: After them three Americans come in.

Marcello: In other words, you were given Japanese guns?

Sherman: No, we had taken the Japanese guns. They didn't give them to us. We had taken them.

Marcello: Did you have any particular Japanese guards that you were singling out?

Sherman: Do you really want me to answer that question?

Marcello: Of course.

Sherman: I got the sword and the rifle in there to show for it.

Marcello: What had this particular Japanese guard done to you, or was he just a Japanese guard, period?

Sherman: Well, he had beat me a little bit. And he was a Jap.

Marcello: And I would assume that by this time most of the prisoners probably just hated all of these Japanese guards.

Sherman: They wasn't very much in love with them, I guarantee you. Then at about this time, well, you know, they was dropping them fifty-five-gallon drums and all that stuff. They started dropping leaflets telling us to stay put because the debarkation center is too full. They couldn't handle them as they were drifting in. They said there would be a Red Cross

train to come in and pick you up. You can ride.
Just stay put. And so we stayed put.

Marcello: But some of them had already taken off.

Sherman: Some of them, they just couldn't wait. They went to Tokyo and got on . . . I missed the plane by nine hours. I was danged sure proud I missed that plane. I never rode a plane in my life. I was just, you know . . . I was just afraid that son-of-a-gun motor would quit and I'd have to get out and crank it and wouldn't have nothing to stand on. I rode the ship back.

Marcello: Incidentally, in the last days of the war, did the Japanese ever threaten you with death if Japan lost the war? In other words, did they tell you what would happen to you if Japan lost?

Sherman: Yes, sure, all the way through. All the way through it they said, "If we win we'll kill all of you," and stuff like that.

Marcello: On the other hand, if they lost they were going to kill you, too.

Sherman: Yes. There was one bunch when we left the Philippines . . . there was one bunch right before we went over that we heard about after we got to Japan that went to the coal mines. I don't know how true it was or anything about it. But, anyhow, they backed up

them gas tank trailer trucks, you know, and run gas down in that mine that had, oh, 1,000 men or maybe more down in there. They run gas in there and threw a torch to it and just burned them alive down in there.

Marcello: Now after the American teams . . . after you finally, let's say, got back to Tokyo or wherever they were taking you, was it a relatively swift process in getting you out of Japan?

Sherman: Yes. And I'll tell you something else.

Marcello: In other words, they cut the red tape.

Sherman: Oh, yes. They cut the red tape. They cut the red tape, and as you came in they had a roster with your name on it. When you came in you had to go to a certain place. They had just taken that, and if they had a boat there, they'd just commence calling names off. You'd get on that boat.

Marcello: How did they go about feeding you? Obviously, they probably had some sort of a medical program, also.

Sherman: Oh, yes, they did, they did. They sure did. We'd go through that medical line and then right on through the chow line and sometimes double right back through the medical line.

Marcello: What happened when you went through the medical line?

Sherman: Well, the old doc, he kind of questioned you a little bit, examined you pretty good, and if there was a possibility that you were pretty sick, you went to the boat right then.

Marcello: Did they de-louse you and things like that? I'm sure you were a scroungy-looking bunch.

Sherman: Yes, they sure did. The doc did. He was nice about it. He said, "Now if you've got any greybacks, don't be bashful to say anything about it. We're here to help you. If you've got them, please tell me. We'll just go right through this line right here. You can just jump in there and take you a bath, get out, come over here and get you another bath, and then come back in here." You know, they were nice about it.

Marcello: How did they go about feeding you? Obviously, they just didn't give huge amounts of food at one time.

Sherman: No. They'd just make you go through a line. They'd just give you what they thought your body could stand. You'd go through and some of them old boys, it looked like it hurt them not to give them any more, but they wouldn't do it.

Marcello: When did you finally get that first T-bone?

Sherman: When I got to San Francisco.

Marcello: You had to wait that long?

Sherman: Sure did. That other meat was ground up, canned.

Marcello: As you look back upon your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as being the key to your survival? How'd you make it?

Sherman: Actually, I really don't know whether I can answer that. I don't know if it was the faith I had in the good Lord or the faith I had in my fellow man. Actually, I don't know.

But I'll tell you this. I wouldn't go through it again for no amount of money and they guaranteed me to come out. And me not knowing whether I would or not. But you know what I mean. I wouldn't take nothing for the experience right now. There's a lot of things that happened that has just crossed my mind several times, you know, that has happened but that I haven't said anything about as we were just talking, you know. Things just run through up here that's happened that I haven't even mentioned. It doesn't make any difference who the man is. If you get to talking to someone like you are to me, there's things that run through his mind that he hasn't mentioned. It'd take from now until doomsday, I guess, to tell you everything that ever happened.

Marcello: And I'm sure that after I leave here, you're going to think of all sorts of other things that you probably should have told me.

Sherman: Oh, yes.

Marcello: One last question. Did you have very much trouble adjusting to civilian life once you got back to this country and got out of uniform?

Sherman: Well, yes and no. See, when we come back . . . when we got in California and got off the boat, they had a . . . we was sitting on an old barracks bag with the clothes that they'd give us over there before we come over.

Marcello: Had you regained your weight pretty fast?

Sherman: Well, a little bit, yes. When we got California we had mail call. We was sitting there on them barracks bags, and when they called your name, you'd run up there and get your mail and go back and sit down. I was sitting there reading my mail.

Directly this little old Wac come up and sat down beside of me. "Mind if I join you?" "No, be my guest." I was reading my mail, you know. We sat there till we'd get bored, you know. Directly, they said, "Well, we're fixing to load. As we call your names, well, go to the bus." They told us where it was at--just right up there on the street. And, sure enough, that little Wac would help you up there on the bus. She'd sit you down, and then she'd sit right there beside you. That's the way

they did all of us.

The first place we went to was the quartermaster. We got our clothes. Then that we had in the barracks bag, they kept them. We got outfitted out-and-out. Then we went into the tailor shop. Them old big blouses, they made Eisenhower jackets out of them. They measured us, cut our trousers down and everything-- OD's, that is, and our khakies. And them old fatigues, you know, it didn't matter about them. They just give us one suit of them. When we left the tailor shop, we went by the showers. We had our razor blades and underwear, you know, and them fatigues. That suit we had on when we landed, well, we dropped them, took a shower and shaved, cleaned up. If some needed a haircut, well, they got a haircut. If some didn't, well, they didn't. Then we went by the payroll and signed for money.

Marcello: How much back pay did you have coming?

Sherman: Oh, God! I forget now. I got one that was nearly \$1,000. Then later on I got some more. We signed up one time in the Philippines while we was waiting for the boat to come on home, after we got from Japan to the Philippines. Oh, I guess I had around five or six hundred dollars that I got in Japan, and I signed up for some more.

After we signed payroll there in California, we went to the mess hall. This Wac went right along with us, you know. We sat down to eat. We got through eating, and to the barracks we went. She said, "Now this evening about five o'clock I'll be back over here, and I'll have your uniforms and everything." She'd just go with us and put us to bed if we wanted to go to bed, told us where the beer joint was and how far it was from us. "Go down there and drink all the beer you want." I had a canteen book, you know. She'd sit there, and you could drink all the beer you wanted to. They wouldn't punch the card, but all you was about to drink was three cans, you know. And sure enough, about five o'clock, well, here she came. She had my uniform and everything all ironed up, cleaned, pressed. She said, "Well, let's go take the town." Well, okay, we'd go take the town.

The next morning reveille, and they were waiting to come to Texas, you know. They'd call out a bunch of men's names, you know, to go to certain places, you know. Finally, one day they called my name. Damn, I was a happy man. San Antonio, here I come!

We got the train coming to San Antonio, and they already had the roster of whoever was coming,

you know--radioed it, I guess, or something. They had a medical line. They had trucks waiting on us at the depot. When we got off the truck, we got right to the line. The sergeants out there were calling our names off to line up. They gave us a quick examination. Now if you had any fever at all, you went to the hospital. If you didn't have any fever, you answered a bunch of questions, signed a little piece of paper, and they'd give you some money, and you'd go home. I had two suitcases and one barracks bag.

I had taken off on foot, and directly here came a car, you know--'46 Ford. It had five men in it. One old boy hollered, "Hey, 'Smokey!' How about going to Fort Worth?" They started toward me, and I said, "I'm ready!" They said, "It'll cost you a twenty-dollar bill." I said, "Hell, I've got it!" They came on over there and stopped. I opened the "turtleback," threw my barracks bag in there, and put my suitcases on up top.

Marcello: Now what kind of a car was this?

Sherman: '46 Ford. We had to go back downtown then. That's when tires were rationed. We went back down into town and got his papers, you know, and whether he had a flat or anything. This buddy of mine

said, "'Smokey,' we need something to drink."
I said, "Hell, yes. Let's go down there to the liquor store and get us something." I started to hand him some money. "No, I got the money!" We went down there and got three fifths of whiskey and brought it back. Here comes this driver. We done had this whiskey under the seat, you know. This driver said, "I don't care how much you drink, how much you holler, just so you don't get in a fight or get scuffling and cutting up or bothering me while I drive because we're going to Fort Worth, Texas."

And buddy, I'll tell you what. That was five of the happiest men you ever seen in your life. We got in that car, and I said, "Son, do you know how to drive this thing?" He said, "Well, I've been driving a pretty good while." I said, "If you don't know how, let me under there. I think I can handle this job."

We got about half-way, crossed the danged railroad tracks, and had a blowout. We stopped and had to get all the stuff out of the turtleback and get the spare tire and jack out, throw it all back in there, and pulled into the first filling station we come to, and, sure enough, he had a tire. It cost us \$27.50. In the meantime, we got that tire

and filled up with gasoline, tried to get him to drink. "No, no, no." Well, we got us something to eat there while they was putting that tire on, you know. We paid for him something to eat.

We came on into Fort Worth about four o'clock, and the cafe was just open right across the street there. He said, "You boys go over there and get you some breakfast. I'll have you a cab waiting on you when you get back." We just went on over there and got our breakfast. We were pretty tired, but anyhow we was wide awake, just a little noisy. We got some bacon and eggs, ham and eggs, and all that good stuff. We got up when we got through and went up there to pay. "No, you don't owe us nothing." That driver called over there and told that old boy not to charge us for what we ate. He'd pay for it. When we got back over there, he had a cab for every man over there. This cab asked me where did I want to go, and I told him.

I went to my brother's house over there at 2613 Hale Street. I knocked on his door. He come to the door, and I said, "Does Raymond Sherman live here?" He said, "My God! There's 'Smokey.'" This cabby, he got out and got my suitcase and barracks bag and brought them up there to the porch. Hell, I

got everybody up. So we got up and got in his car and came to Decatur.

In the meantime, a bunch of boys that went through that line and mess down there in San Antonio, a lot of them got on a train, you know, and come through. And when we got up there, this passenger train was switching there and letting a freight train come by. They was on the siding, and one old boy had the . . . well, all of them had the windows down. I got out of the car, and he recognized me. I didn't notice him being in there, and he hollered at me. He said, "Hey, 'Smokey,' do you want a drink of whiskey?" I said, "Yes!" I walked over there, and it was the same bunch of boys that got on the train after they got through that medical line. Well, they was sitting there, and, hell, we sat there and drank whiskey till that train pulled out. My mother was sitting up there in the car just cringing because I was drinking whiskey (chuckle).

Marcello: What lasting physical effects have you had a result of having been a prisoner-of-war?

Sherman: Oh, bad teeth, flat feet. I've got two ankle bones.

Marcello: Now how did that happen?

Sherman: That's a good question. Nobody knows.

Marcello: But it could probably have come from a dietary deficiency or something of that nature.

Sherman: Yes, it could.

Marcello: Do you have any lasting effects from ever being beaten by any of the Japanese guards or anything?

Sherman: Well, now I kind of think I do, especially in my back. I have a lot of trouble with my back.

Marcello: When we took out break awhile ago, your wife mentioned that you also lost a tooth somewhere along the way.

Sherman: Oh, yes! I forgot about that. That's when the son-of-a-gun beat me with a damn pick--handle and all!

Marcello: Now was this back in the Philippines, or was this in Japan?

Sherman: Yes, it was in the Philippines. He had taken this pick and beaten me in the back. I stood up there and laughed at him. He come around in front of me, and I spit in his face. That's when he hit me in the mouth with a pick handle and broke that tooth off right there (gesture). Hell, I just stood there just like I was a tree post or something. I wouldn't go down. There wasn't no way unless he hit me in the right place and I had to go.

Anyhow, this lieutenant come out there and got him off of me. Well, I had taken off to the medics

because I was bleeding and that tooth was hurting. I got over there, and I told that dentist . . . he took an old pair of forceps. You know what forceps are. They looked like a pair of pliers with this part bent over. I said, "Pull that out of there." I said, "It's killing me." He says, "Now Smokey, I haven't got any novacaine or nothing to deaden it with." I said, "I don't give a damn! Pull it out!" He had taken that knife and stuck those on each like that (gesture), and then he got that pair of pliers--forceps--and by that time that Jap walked in there. He was pulling that tooth out and blood just went everywhere.

He asked that doctor, he says, "I beat that man till he ought to have fell. Why he didn't fall, I don't know." This doctor, he says, "Well, he's just like your boys. They worship the emperor. Well, he worships his President, you know." He finally got the blood out of my mouth.

He reached in his pocket, and a package of cigarettes similar to our Lucky Strikes . . . he just shook out one and, hell, I just reached and grabbed the whole pack and went on in the other room. I could hear him in there talking to that lieutenant about how he beat me and I wouldn't go

down. After he left, that dentist came on in there. He helped me get my shirt off. He kind of rubbed a little salve on my back.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Sherman, I can't think of anymore questions I need to ask you. I think we've more or less covered the field pretty well. As I mentioned earlier, probably after I leave you'll think of some other things we should have talked about.

Sherman: Oh, yes.

Marcello: But I think we did hit most of the important things. I think we got a good interview. You've said a lot of very important things. I think historians are going to find this very valuable someday when they look at this material.

Sherman: Yes, it's just like anything else. You can get a white elephant in anything, any machinery you buy, but as far as I'm concerned, the only good Japs are dead ones.

Marcello: You still have a resentment against the Japanese?

Sherman: Yes, I do. There's a lot of buddies that got beat to death. The Japs beat them to death, and I don't think they should have done it. That's the reason that I said that good Japs are dead ones. Now you can cut the damn thing off.