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P . J . S m a l l w o o d

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Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Terms of Use: Peg

Approved: P. J. Smallwood

Date: 10-25-73

Oral History Collection

Mr. P. J. Smallwood

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas Date: October 11, 1973

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. P. J. Smallwood for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 11, 1973, in Dallas, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Smallwood in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Mr. Smallwood was a member of the "Lost Battalion," which was a former Texas National Guard outfit, detached from the 36th Division. This particular unit was captured in Java in March of 1942 and subsequently spent the balance of the war in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.

Mr. Smallwood, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me where you were born, when you were born, your education, your present occupation, things of that nature. Be very brief.

Mr. Smallwood: All right. I was born May 20, 1921, in the country about five miles south of Sherman. Up until the age sixteen, I lived in and around Sherman, Texas. About age sixteen, I moved to west Texas where I finished grade school, all of high school except a half year. At this time, I had participated in the National Guard program the summer before that. At mid-term, 1940, we got this famous notice that we were mobilizing into the Regular Army. We went into training, of course, at basic station at Plainview, Texas. We stayed there for a couple of months until they had Camp Bowie in Brownwood halfway through. So we went down there and waded through the mud and saw them finish that up and spent approximately eleven months in that station down there. Then we went overseas from there.

Dr. Marcello: Let me just go back here a minute. Why did you decide to join the National Guard?

Mr. Smallwood: That trip to camp.

Dr. Marcello: Is that right?

Mr. Smallwood: That's right (chuckle).

Dr. Marcello: I think in a lot of cases the National Guard units at that time were kind of considered something like a

social activity, were they not, because a lot of people from a particular home town would join?

Smallwood: We had two fellows from our high school that were members and had been for two or three years. One of them had participated in ROTC. I believe he was a sergeant in the National Guard, A Battery, from Plainview. He got us to go in because they offered a three-week camp to Louisiana. We went to that, and it was a lot of fun. Then when we came back, of course, our commanding officer, Captain McDaniels, was a teller in the bank in Plainview in civilian life. He assured us, of course, when we joined that it was a matter of going to camp, and then we were supposed to attend one meeting once a month, I believe. If we lived twenty-six miles from home station, we didn't have to attend at all, just go to summer camp. He assured us that there was no need to worry about our education and that. We wouldn't have to interrupt that because if we wanted out when we came back from camp, we could get out, which certainly wasn't true in it. You're right, it was sort of a social thing more than anything else.

Marcello: At the time that you joined, did you ever conceive of the idea that the country might eventually be getting

into war?

Smallwood: Well, at that age I'd never thought about it seriously, really, one way or the other. Now the first camp we went to, there was much in the newspaper during that time, during the time we were on maneuvers, that summer, about it. Again, it was like when World War I was declared. It wasn't anything serious at the moment. We really hadn't really given it any thought. But it didn't bother us too much other than the fact, "Well, you know, when we get back, we better get out of this thing pretty quick (chuckle)."

Marcello: Now the first time that you went away to camp, was this when you went to Louisiana?

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: I see. Then the second time was when you went to Camp Bowie.

Smallwood: Right. Now the summer of 1940, we went to camp for three weeks. Then we came back, and then in December of that year, 1940, we got the notice to mobilize. Now we mobilized into our station in Plainview first and stayed there about two months. Then they transferred us to meet the division in Brownwood.

Marcello: Now this meant that you became a part of the Regular Army.

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: You were in a National Guard outfit, and you were now a part of the Regular Army.

Smallwood: We mobilized into the Regular Army, right.

Marcello: You mobilized into the 36th Division, I would assume.

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: Now sometime in that period, that is between the time that you were mobilized and the time that you went overseas, your particular unit was lopped off the 36th Division, was it not? At one time, wasn't it true that the Army was divided into what they called square divisions, and then they made triangular divisions, and when making the triangular divisions, your particular artillery outfit got lopped off the 36th . . . you may have still been a part of the 36th Division, but you were sent overseas, over in the Pacific theater, while the rest of them, I guess, still remained back here for a while.

Smallwood: Now this change in the division's status came about after we had gone overseas. We were a square division, that's right. But what they did was take a battalion from 131st Field Artillery--and they took a great deal of others from other places all over the United States--

to form a brigade to go to the Philippines to back up people there. But all of this business of changing the 36th to a triangular division came about after we'd been drawn and had been shipped out. Many of my friends--some live here in Dallas now that were also a part of that--they moved on to Florida and went to other places. But that came about after we were struck from the division and sent overseas.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about your activities at Camp Bowie. What sort of training did you undergo there?

Smallwood: Well, basic artillery training. First I was in A Battery, which was a firing battery, a gun battery, we called it. We had four guns, and there was about a 105 or 110 of us. We had a captain and two lieutenants pulled _____from the rest of the people. We had the medical detachment, we had the firing groups and all that sort of thing. But we were in a firing battery. After we'd been at Bowie for, oh, four or five months--went there in the early spring, in January--and after we'd been there for three or four months, I asked for a transfer. I transferred to 1st Battalion Service Battery. This

was from Lubbock. Their home station was Lubbock; our home station was Plainview. I transferred to a service battery. Now their function, of course, is to serve the firing battery in food, water, ammunition, you name it, transportation. But that was our function for the rest of the time in Camp Bowie. Now of the eleven months that I spent after going to Camp Bowie, we spent four months of that in Louisiana in 1941 on maneuvers again. This was the big maneuvers, when we had the whole Army down there.

Marcello: Why did you decide to switch from the firing battery to the service battery?

Smallwood: Misunderstanding with the first sergeant (laughter). A misunderstanding, and I knew some of the guys over there. I'd been around Lubbock _____. But I knew some of the fellows over there. I particularly liked that outfit because it just leaned more in my direction. I didn't care about pulling those artillery pieces around and firing them and that sort of thing. I liked the other better.

Marcello: What sort of training did you undergo there? Was it the type of training that would have prepared you for a conflict if it did break out? In other words, was the equipment adequate and that sort of thing?

Smallwood: Definitely not. We didn't know at the time that it wasn't. We didn't know anything about a modern war, really, because when we got overseas, we had trainer gas masks, and we had 1903 Springfield rifles, that sort of thing.

Marcello: I think your artillery was basically the old French seventy-five, was it not?

Smallwood: Yes, we had the split trail, which we considered pretty modern because you could spread it out and make an antiaircraft gun out of it. But we just got those just before we went overseas.

Marcello: Did you ever train with the broomsticks and all this sort of thing? You hear about the Army on maneuvers before World War II having to train with broomsticks and this sort of thing because there simply weren't enough rifles and so on available.

Smallwood: We weren't issued a rifle until we were on the ship going overseas.

Marcello: Had you had any training at all in firing small arms?

Smallwood: No. Pistols. A few times on the range with pistols, that's all.

Marcello: In other words, you weren't equipped in any way, shape, or form, or trained, for that matter, to combat any modern army.

Smallwood: Definitely not. Definitely not. Now what we got in the four months in Louisiana, I suppose, was more of an endurance test than it was training. You eat a lot of dust, and you live in a dense forest along the rivers. This was some help. But as far as actual training to fight, we had had no training to fight. Now perhaps the firing batteries had. I can't say that because they may have been a little better prepared. But if they were, well, I don't think they showed it, I mean where we were. We just didn't have the equipment. We just didn't have all that. They told us when the Japs landed, they told us, "Well, they'll take one look at you, you big six-feeters and your good equipment and all that business and they'll run (chuckle)." They did--right smack at us (laughter). They really did. But no, you're absolutely correct. In the eleven months that we spent--from the time we went from home station till we shipped out from pier fifty-seven in San Francisco on November 21, 1941--there was two things I sure didn't learn: one of them was how to fight a modern war, and the other was how to be a prisoner-of-war. Neither one of these things did I learn. That all came later.

Marcello: Incidentally, what was the name of the camp that you were at in Louisiana?

Smallwood: Gee, I don't remember. We were all over Louisiana.

Marcello: I see. You weren't at any particular Army camp or reservation there.

Smallwood: This was true of both times that I was there. We just kept moving all the while. I can think of maybe twenty towns. But I remember one place very definitely. We were right along that road where Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker were killed.

Marcello: Is that right?

Smallwood: Yes.

Marcello: Incidentally, what were your feelings when you heard that you had received orders to go to the Philippines?

Smallwood: They didn't tell us that. We had orders to go to PLUM.

Marcello: That's right, it was "Operation PLUM," and that's all you knew at the time. When did you find out that you were going to the Philippines?

Smallwood: After we were prisoners-of-war (chuckle).

Marcello: Is that right?

Smallwood: We really didn't know.

Marcello: All you knew was that you were going overseas somewhere, isn't that correct?

Smallwood: Right, you bet. We knew that. You see, it was the 2nd Battalion that went overseas, not the 1st. There was about--I'm going to guess a figure of fifteen--that were transferred from 1st Battalion service to 2nd Battalion service to take the place of those that were a little bit older, a little higher up, that sort of thing, and that had the edge, knew somebody. We replaced that group. They stayed behind. We took their place in the 2nd Battalion and went overseas.

Marcello: So it was just by a quirk of fate, then, that you headed overseas.

Smallwood: Well, they picked the names, of course. They just said, "There'll be a certain number of people. Watch the bulletin board. If your name appears there, you'll be going overseas."

Marcello: You happened to be one of those.

Smallwood: I was one. Jack Moss was one. Emil Sample was one, quite a number of them. Have you ever heard of Sample?

Marcello: No, I sure haven't.

Smallwood: Well, he and Jack were very good friends. I haven't seen Emil since we came back from overseas. I don't think I've seen Jack but maybe once or twice.

Marcello: So anyhow, you were a part of this "Operation PLUM."

As you mentioned, you left from San Francisco aboard the USS Republic.

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: Now at this time were you part of a convoy yet? I know you picked up a convoy later on.

Smallwood: We were by ourselves. We were all on our own until we got to Honolulu.

Marcello: When you got to Honolulu, did you notice any extra-ordinary precautions they had undertaken there for war?

Smallwood: Very definitely.

Marcello: Could you describe these?

Smallwood: We sailed from pier fifty-seven on the 21st. I was very seasick all the way over, as most of the rest of them were. Incidentally, I'd had a little misunderstanding. I wasn't really a very good soldier. It was hard for me to take orders. I don't know why, but it was. But we had an Indian from somewhere out in the western end of the United States. Big John and I were still on the list when we got there. But they did in the last . . . half the people went ashore in the morning the second or third day we were there . . . second day, I guess. Half of us went ashore in the morning and half from four o'clock till

ten in the evening. I was in the last half. Big John and I, we got to go. But this is what I saw in Honolulu. At about ten o'clock in the evening, we were to be back. When we left town, downtown Honolulu was going under martial law. They were actually setting up machine gun nests in downtown Honolulu. You've probably heard this before, but it's very true. We saw them. Soldiers were racing around in jeeps, and for all practical purposes, it looked to me like it was very definitely under martial law. We didn't see too much of it, but we saw this as we came out of downtown back to the ship.

Marcello: When you were finally on your way toward the Fiji Islands--I don't think you'd reached the Fiji Islands yet--when you received word that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor.

Smallwood: We were seven days out, going toward Midway.

Marcello: What were your reactions when you heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

Smallwood: What else is new (chuckle)? You know, we realized it must be true. But I think that you just . . . we had seen so much mock war and heard so many rumors and things like that, we had to realize that it was

true. But at the same time, at that very moment, so we're at war. It'll take two or three weeks to whip them probably.

Marcello: What made you think it would only take two or three weeks to whip the Japanese?

Smallwood: I suppose that, like most people at that time, we really never rated Japan correctly, honestly, realistically.

Marcello: Was your picture of a Japanese the typical cartoon character with buckteeth and . . .

Smallwood: Glasses?

Marcello: Horned-rimmed glasses and that sort of thing?

Smallwood: Yes, yes. Very definitely. With, perhaps like you were talking about, a stick instead of a gun.

Marcello: You made a statement awhile ago to the effect that you were told that because you were big six-foot Americans that as soon as the Japanese saw you, they'd probably run.

Smallwood: Yes, they did. That's right.

Marcello: Well, what particular procedure did this convoy go through after receiving word of the attack? Now quite obviously, you were part of a convoy by this time.

Smallwood: Let's go back just a minute. I say we were alone when we went from San Francisco, but this is not true. We had a Dutch ship, the Bloemfontein, I believe it was, with us. We thought it was crippled. We had a rope that ran from the Republic to the Bloemfontein. When we left Honolulu going over toward Midway, we had a convoy there. We picked up the rest of the brigade. We had some artillery. We had some Air Corps. We were picking up more of them as we went along. I believe we had eight or ten ships in a convoy and one cruiser. But the rest of them were merchant ships and that sort of thing. But we did have a convoy when we left there. Still we had the old Bloemfontein behind us. We had this big old Manila rope running back to it. We made lots of remarks about the ship and everything. But this convoy . . . that was when Honolulu was hit. They announced to us . . . we were sitting on the deck playing poker when we got the announcement, and they said that Pearl Harbor was bombed at seven o'clock in the morning and war had been . . . well, we were in a state of undeclared war with Japan, the way I understand it. We began to chip the deck and began

to paint it battleship grey and that sort of thing. We dug out some . . . we got some rifles (chuckle). We got some rifles, and we cleaned the cosmoline off of them. We got two or three shells. The fellows on the ship, the crew, they broke out some machine guns and mounted them on the rusty rail around the ship and all that sort of thing. They dug the birds' nests out of the old guns on the ship. I'm sure if they'd have fired one, it'd have probably jarred the whole ship to pieces. But it was pretty calm.

Marcello: Incidentally, did you know Frank Fujita at that time?

Smallwood: Oh, yes.

Marcello: What was the reaction toward him when you found out that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor?

Smallwood: No problem. No problem, never.

Marcello: Was he the butt of any kidding or anything of that nature?

Smallwood: Oh, maybe kidding, yes. But nothing serious. You really didn't feel that way. Now you realize at this time, if we'd have had a Negro in there, there would have been some strong feelings, which wouldn't be so now at all. It's all changed. But there was no feeling at all toward him like <u>that</u> that I know of. I mean I certainly didn't. But I knew him. He was in another . . . he was

in a gun battery. We don't see those fellows every-day. As far as I know, there was nothing like that.

Marcello: At that particular time, was there a good deal of closeness in this group?

Smallwood: Our group?

Marcello: Yes.

Smallwood: Yes, definitely. Very definitely. After this, of course, things were more serious. I mean, small groups, people really close friends, you talked a lot about home and, "Sure enough, I guess maybe we are at war. Maybe it is going to be quite serious before the end," and all that sort of thing. But the moment that we realized that we were at war was when we were nearing Australia, and this is when it really hit us point-blank because you realize we passed the convoy that bombed Honolulu. But we passed in the night very close, so we understand. We had to, from the timing and all. But when we got almost to Australia, over the horizon came some men-of-war, I mean really with all the camouflage paint on. For a split second there, we really didn't know whether it was the Japanese or who it was. Thank goodness, it was friends. But there we were just

like sitting ducks, in general quarters, and then here they came. This really made us realize for the first time that, yes, this really is it. We really could be attacked from the air, from the sea. Anyway, up until then we figured that the USS Pensacola, which was our escort cruiser, could whip the whole Japanese Navy single-handed (laughter). We really did. We were naive, I'd say.

Marcello: What would you say was the average age of the people in this battalion? It's hard to say offhand, but where did the ages range from generally?

Smallwood: Well, not as young as you'd think because for the most part, your National Guard were a little bit older people because they were your officers and your non-commissioned officers. You just didn't have a whole lot of enlisted people that were really young, except the ones that had just joined, been suckered in. Then to go with us, we had draftees, and they had to be above twenty-one years of age. Now I suppose that probably Jack Moss and I were probably the youngest men aboard in the group. Incidentally, we were from the same outfit. But like you say, I think he must have been around eighteen or nineteen,

somewhere around there. I know I turned twenty in May and then went overseas. I spent my twenty-first birthday in Surabaja, Java, in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp (chuckle).

Marcello: So anyhow after hearing about the attack on Pearl Harbor, you made for the Fiji Islands first, and you stopped there very briefly to take on fresh water and a few provisions, I think.

Smallwood: An afternoon, and I'm not real sure if we spent the night or not. But it was a very short stop. As I recall, it was a beautiful place with its harbor and all. But we stayed there a very short time. Then we went right on to Australia.

Marcello: Your original destination, of course, was the Philippine Islands. Then certainly after the attack, you were diverted to Brisbane, Australia.

Smallwood: Right. That's correct.

Marcello: What happened when you got to Brisbane?

Smallwood: Well, going in, you have to go up the river an awful long way. Well, it was a great thrill. They'd told us we were going to Australia after we left Suva, Fiji. When we got there, it was in the afternoon. About Midday, I'd say, we went up the river. They told us

that no American soldiers had ever set foot on Australian soil. The Navy had been there, but no American Army personnel had ever been to Australia. We'd be the very first ones. So we went on, and we docked in Brisbane. They took us ashore. We went ashore and we marched a very short distance to Ascot Racetrack. They had little tents set up for us and lots of fat mutton for us to stew up with the hair in it.

Marcello: Really?

Smallwood: You know, that's a little bit different than we . . . but they did have the camp set up on Ascot Racetrack. I remember very well as we marched down the street, there was an awful lot of cheering and, "Oh, the Yanks have come to save us," and all this sort of thing, and there we were with trainer gas masks and 1903 rifles and four shells each, old canvas leggings, and all this sort of thing, and old-style helmets, the British type. Really kind of funny-looking.

But anyway, we settled ourselves in this camp. It must have been about two o'clock when we got there. There was a fence around most of this camp, like a picket fence, a board fence. But there was hundreds

and hundreds of people just lined all around the camp. They wouldn't let them come in, of course.

The first thing we saw in Australia was there was no men. Men between the ages of fifteen and fifty-five were just not there because they were in the Middle East, of course, at the time. We thought, "Well, this is kind of strange." But we hadn't really thought about why this was.

But they were very, very friendly people. The tram, the little streetcar, was running to and from. There weren't very many cars and this sort of thing. There were lots and lots of bicycles.

But we set up our camp. We were there, I believe, about five days. We were there through Christmas, 1941. Then, of course, from there, why, we boarded, of all things, the Bloemfontein.

Marcello: What was it like spending Christmas of 1941 in Australia?

Smallwood: What was it like?

Marcello: Yes.

Smallwood: Well, the people couldn't have been any better to us. They realized that we were a bunch of dumb kids a long way from home. At that time, we'd been fifty-four days

at sea. We hadn't been paid, and we were in a foul mood, and we were lonesome and all this sort of thing. They were very, very good to us. They really were. You'd go on liberty into town, and if at all possible and if you were willing, a family would take you in or take a group of you in. They'd feed you and take you partying, whatever you wanted to do. Just really great, really great people.

Marcello: How long were you at this Ascot Racetrack?

Smallwood: Five days.

Marcello: I assume that you underwent no sort of training or anything else while you were there.

Smallwood: No, no.

Marcello: There simply wouldn't have been time for anything like that.

Smallwood: No, no training.

Marcello: Okay, so you then boarded the Bloemfontein, the ship that you'd been towing all this time.

Smallwood: Well, we towed it all the way across the Pacific.

Marcello: Did you know where you were going at this point?

Smallwood: No. There was a rumor that we were going wherever the 19th Bomb Squadron was to serve as ground forces for the 19th Bomb Squadron.

Marcello: Now the 19th had originally been in the Philippines. Of course, after the Japanese had more or less overrun the bulk of the Philippines, that 19th Bomb Group headed for Java.

Smallwood: Stationed at Malang, Java, at the air base out of Malang, Java. Incidentally, that's something we did while we were in prison camp. We studied Malay. As a matter of fact, at one time, I could speak it quite fluently.

Marcello: I think Charlie Pryor was telling me that, also.

Smallwood: There was a Sergeant Martinez, a Latin American. He lives in Laredo now. Malay, the Malayan language or the language that's spoken throughout the Malayan archipelago, is very similar to Spanish. It was very little grammar and . . . he taught a class. He started a class. I forgot how many started in the class, but there was about four or five of us that stuck it out. There were Joe Rivero from Houston. Joe's a great guy. I believe he's in the liquor business down in Houston, he and his wife. But Martinez stuck it out, two or three others. Charlie might have been one of them. I can't remember. But at one time, Joe Rivero and I used to hammer it out.

We'd go for days and days without speaking English at all.

Marcello: Okay, we'll talk about this a little bit later on and keep it in sequence. So you got aboard the Bloemfontein. What happened from that point?

Smallwood: All right. Now the first thing we did, we did a lot of griping because we figured, "Oh, no. The Republic would be better than this (chuckle)." It was in the afternoon, and we struck out down the river alone in the Bloemfontein. Of course, it was a very, very slow process getting out. We hit the mouth of the river, and it was getting dark. Just after we cleared the mouth of the river, all hell broke loose. Boy, this ship . . . the stern went into the water and this ship was really a runner. We were up to about eighteen or twenty knots in nothing flat. It really was a great ship. We rode the Bloemfontein up to Darwin. We went in in the bay up there. I believe we went in in the morning and maybe left that afternoon or something like that. But we came into Darwin and into . . . I forgot the name of the port up there. But we were there right after an air raid. They had air raid warnings when we were there. We didn't go ashore. As

a matter of fact, I don't even know why we were there. Perhaps we were waiting to pick up a convoy. I'm not sure.

But when we left there, well, of course, we went right on down straight on to Surabaja, Java. On the way down there, well, of course, we were escorted by a number of ships. We still had the Pensacola along. I believe we had the Boise and one or two others. We had some tin cans with us. I know we were in the straits because we could see land on both sides quite clearly, and we were all shooting dice on deck. Suddenly, general quarters sounded, and we were in a submarine attack (chuckle). It was a great show for us. We were scared to death, but it was really a great show because it was all very close up. The tin cans were working. The cruisers moved back, and the tin cans came in. They were really hitting at everything. We had a torpedo somewhere off the bow and one off the stern. But no one got hit except the submarines. They got hit. There were two of them. From one of them we saw the oil slick. That's all we saw. But the other one, I don't know. They reported they got both of them. But it was a great

thing because we couldn't really comprehend how this worked. I think there were about four or five of these destroyers working right around us like a bunch of chickens and an old hen. They were dropping depth charges, and, of course, water geysers were shooting up close enough to hit us with water, spray. But we had our hearts in our mouth. But they took care of us. They got rid of them, and we arrived in Java (chuckle).

Marcello: So what happened when you got to Surabaja?

Smallwood: Well, we docked and I forgot exactly how long . . . by the way, when we docked, there was a couple of tin cans tied up right next to us. It made us feel at home. We weren't the only Americans there. There was somebody else with us. But we docked and some went ashore. I was with the group that stayed with the ship for a couple of days.

Marcello: This would have been about . . .

Smallwood: The eleventh.

Marcello: January 11, 1942.

Smallwood: January 11. We were for the first time close to a great deal of native people. That was our first exposure to a group of natives. Of course, they were

selling everything and yakking and making signs and waving flags and all that sort of business. But we unloaded our ship, which, we later learned, was loaded not much with ammunition and stuff like that but with canned ham and canned milk, stuff like that, and hard candy (chuckle). Five-gallon pails, metal pails, of candy, Christmas candy. We were taking all this stuff to the Philippines, of course. They had the ammunition. We were bringing them milk and candy (chuckle).

Marcello: So anyhow, you landed in Surabaja. Did you go directly there to support the bomb groups that had come from the Philippines?

Smallwood: That's what we understood, yes. And we did. We got our guns off. We got our trucks off the ship. We got everything unloaded. Then we started carrying all the stuff about sixty-five kilometers to Malang, Java. That's where the air base was. It was a big . . . it was a nice barracks just off the airstrip there. I suppose the Dutch Navy troops had been there, but they gave this over to us. We moved in. We started serving with the 19th Bomb Squadron. Now the firing batteries set up their guns. Of course, we all were

on a war footing then. They set up their guns and built pits around them and got set up. They set up the garage, and the mechanics went to work. Then we hauled ammunition and bombs and food supplies. We were working right along with the 19th Bomb Squadron as a ground crew.

Marcello: In other words, you were serving as support troops for that 19th Bomb Squadron.

Smallwood: Definitely, very definitely.

Marcello: Everything from loading the ammunition to hauling the bombs and servicing the planes.

Smallwood: Putting gas in the . . . the ones that were wise transferred.

Marcello: Into the 19th Bomb Group?

Smallwood: Oh, definitely.

Marcello: Well, I know eventually they, of course, got out of Java.

Smallwood: You bet.

Marcello: Incidentally, I think some of the members of the "Lost Battalion" even volunteered to go on some of the missions, did they not? It seems to me I heard that somewhere along the line.

Smallwood: They transferred permanently.

Marcello: I see.

Smallwood: Buck Jones, who went overseas with us, a very dear friend of mine, did this. We double-dated right through school, very close. As a matter of fact, I was going with my wife at the time, and he used to play with her all the time--Buck Jones. But Buck transferred as a waist gunner. Buck was back home . . . he went to Australia. When the Japs landed, after the invasion, well, the 19th Bomb Group flew out. They were based in Australia for a time. Then he was back home before the end of 1942. Now what happened to him after that, of course, he went somewhere else. But he was back home before the end of '42.

Marcello: Well, you were there almost a month, not quite a month, before you finally had your real firsthand experience with war through an air raid. As I recall, the first Japanese air raid that the "Lost Battalion" experienced came on February 5, I believe it was, 1942.

Smallwood: Well, it was about . . . yes, it was about a month after we went there. We had dug some slit trenches. The natives dug them for us. We had it all figured out what we were going to do and all that. We had

the first air raid, and we really didn't put too much stock in the fact that they were really coming in. But this time they did come in (chuckle).

Marcello: Describe what it was like.

Smallwood: Well, I can describe what I was doing and this sort of thing. Anyway, it was terribly hot, and no one likes to sit in the slit trenches. So we were sitting up on the side of the slit trenches. We had mounted a machine gun on the back of a truck. They had this thing setting very, very close to the slit trench. As a matter of fact, it was an ammunition truck, a bomb truck. We just mounted this .50 caliber machine gun right up behind the cab. So I told this fellow, "Gee, let's just get up there and serve on the gun. It'd be a lot cooler up there." So we did. We got up there to serve on the gun in the back of the truck. About five minutes later we wished we were back in the slit trench because they were just strafing the heck out of the whole thing. They played havoc with all the planes that were on the runway and that they caught there.

Marcello: About how many bombers were in this group that came over this first time?

Smallwood: They were attack planes. They were not bombers--attack planes. Very likely I would say twelve or fifteen maybe. I don't think there were any more than that. We saw them when they came in. We thought they were P-40's. That's why I know they were not attack bombers. They were just attack planes. They circled the field, and then they went behind the mountains. We were in just like in a cup. The air base was right in the middle of a cup with mountains all the way around. They circled and they went to the other side of the mountain. Then when they came in, they came in through a pass, one right behind the other. They were on us . . . they were on those planes before they knew what happened. I think we got two. I can't remember. But I would say there was twelve to fifteen in the bunch. They strafed. They did not bomb. They just strafed. They strafed the barracks after they, of course, had worked the planes over. They paid no attention to us whatsoever. They were banging away with these artillery pieces, shooting the jungle down over there somewhere, and the planes were going on by. We were banging away at them with rifles and pistols and

everything else. But they didn't notice that. They didn't pay any attention to it at all. When they got through working the planes and the airport over, well, they did make two or three passes at us. I don't think we had any casualties to speak of. That was our first experience with a real live Japanese air raid (chuckle).

Marcello: What were your own feelings at being under this attack at the time?

Smallwood: I was scared stiff for a moment. You react, I guess, automatically. We did. I know that when you charge this .50 caliber machine gun . . . well, this Joe Rivero was working the gun, and I was working the ammunition belt on the side. No, Joe was working the Browning, and Sergeant Drake and I were working the gun. That's the way it was. Joe Rivero had this Browning automatic rifle. Well, he was over on my left, and I was working the ammunition, and Drake was firing. The planes would be . . . we had a real advantage spot. They'd come in down this runway, and he could pick them up a long way off. He'd start firing, and I'd feed the ammunition in. Then Joe would start firing, and he was on my left. I remember

I kept telling him, I said, "Joe, cut that damn thing off!" Because shells coming out the right kept hitting me in the side of the face, and they were red hot. That bothered me more than anything else. After you get going, well, you really don't notice it too much.

Marcello: Well, how often were you subjected to attacks after this first one? Was it a daily sort of thing or every other day or . . .

Smallwood: No, not that much. They strafed that one time and did a lot of damage. Then one time after that--I can't recall--they came and strafed again and did quite a lot of damage. Then one time they worked the whole camp over with bombers. I was in the hospital in Malang at the time. I had a bum knee, and it had swollen up. I was in the hospital at the time this happened. The air raid went on. We knew that an air raid was on. Now this happened almost daily. You'd get a warning, but you didn't always get planes. But this time, sure enough, I was released from the hospital on that very day and went back. It was about two or three o'clock in the afternoon. The camp just had potholes all over. I mean they really . . . but I'd say maybe we were strafed

a half a dozen times in the next month before we moved out of there.

Marcello: After awhile, do you get used to this sort of thing?

Smallwood: You don't get used to it. But I guess you get to where you can live with it a little bit better.

Marcello: It more or less becomes a part of the routine. You kind of expect it.

Smallwood: Well, yes. You know it's coming and it's . . . well, it's like one day when we were hauling barbed wire. We had the PX set up in camp. We came in to get a load, and we went by the PX for a beer. While we were standing in line at the PX, we were strafed. I know I dived into a . . . they used open, half-round sewers. They're open. I dived into that thing and plowed down the sewer line for about fifteen feet and got soaking wet. But I'd say probably five or six times they caught us like that.

Marcello: What was the standard procedure or routine after one of these air raids? Quite obviously, they did quite a bit of damage. You weren't putting up very much resistance.

Smallwood: Put the stuff back together if they had set something on fire or something like that.

Marcello: Did you not take some of the machine guns out of the planes that were destroyed and set those up around the base?

Smallwood: Yes, right. Around the base and on the vehicles. This is basically what we had. We equipped some jeeps pretty well with air-cooled .50's which weren't too effective. I mean, we couldn't use them too long. But we got some belly plating out of some of the bombers that had been shot up and wrecked and took them to welding shop. We had some shields put on and some guns at the welding shop mounted. They worked pretty well. Later on they were used in sniper fire and that sort of thing. When the Japs would belt themselves up in a tree and things like that, then we'd call in one of the jeeps with one of those shields on them. It was a pretty easy way to get him. I mean, you can drive right up under the tree. But they were pretty effective.

Marcello: Now up to this time, how much contact did you have with either the Dutch or native soldiers?

Smallwood: Not a whole lot. Very, very little as a matter of fact. I'm sure the officers must have met with them a lot. They must have. But we had very little contact

with the Dutch. They'd come into camp once in awhile. They had a women's corps. A motor corps, they called it. I think the British have something like this, where all these women were truckdrivers. They had something like this, and they used to deliver stuff out to the camp a lot. Once they brought a couple of truckloads of mattresses out there and supplies and that sort of thing. But not too many. We'd run into them on occasion, but we really did not have too much contact.

Marcello: Now on February 27, 1942, the bomb groups left Java for Australia. What sort of feelings did you have when you found that they were leaving and you were staying?

Smallwood: Well, we knew they were going, and we wanted to go. I guess the only thing that really quelled a riot was that we were told the orders came direct from Washington, D.C., not to go. You see, our battery commander would not allow anybody in his battery, which was service battery, to transfer. Some of the others did, but he did not. He figured he needed them.

Marcello: Do you know why the government wanted you people to stay in Java? Quite obviously, you weren't going to

be able to stop any Japanese, and they must have realized that. Was this simply a way of buying time and diverting them from Australia, perhaps?

Smallwood: It was one of two things. Either it was a buying of time, or it was more or less a sacrifice.

Marcello: Well, I think the two probably go hand in hand. You were probably sacrificed in order to buy time for Australia.

Smallwood: Because the reason we were firmly convinced of this was the fact that after the landing--during the landing and after the landing--all we did was just race around the island in the vehicles. We had as many vehicles going in as many directions as we could at all times. Because when we went back to a supporting unit, artillery unit, we had nobody to support. You couldn't possibly function with some group you'd never been with before or knew nothing about their tactics or the way they operated or anything else. I don't think you could have, and this must have been that. It's the only thing that we could figure out. We wanted to go with them.

Marcello: There obviously was enough room on the planes that they could have taken you out.

Smallwood: Very definitely. There sure was.

Marcello: Do you recall when the Japanese landed on Java?

Smallwood: Not the date. We were told that they'd landed at three places and that they'd landed something like 30,000 at each place. That's the information they gave us.

Marcello: Well, describe what happened at this point now. Now the bomb groups left. I would assume that very shortly after that or maybe even before that, the Japanese had now landed on Java.

Smallwood: Yes, three places.

Marcello: Was this before or after the bomb group had left?

Smallwood: Well, no. During the landing, this is when the bomb group got in their biggest licks. They are credited with thousands and thousands of tonnage and inflicting thousands of casualties. We actually were because we were working with them. No, they stayed right on through the invasion. Then once they had established a beachhead and started moving inland, then they became less effective with heavy bombing. They had very few attack planes. There was many, many attack planes on the island in crates, but there was a part or two missing. I don't know where it was.

But we had a few attack planes, and then they had some fighters. But they had mostly liberators and B-17's, that type of thing. That's not real effective for jungle warfare. I mean, they didn't really know where they were bombing. So after they established a beachhead and then kicked out, coming inland, that's when the Air Corps went to Australia. That's when we broke camp in Malang, and that's when we moved out to no-man's land. I mean, from then on, we were just drifting.

Marcello: Did you have very much contact with the Japanese during this period between the time that the bomb groups left and the actual surrender?

Smallwood: We didn't as a service battery. Now the firing batteries supported some Australian infantry and some British infantry. But all we did was haul ammunition and haul water, supplies, and that sort of thing. We stood guard a lot and did that sort of thing. But as far as actual contact with the enemy, we had very little. Now the firing batteries split up. They were scattered all around. But they did support some Australian infantry for a time at least. That was very little. There was very little fighting.

Marcello: Well, let's talk about the events leading up to the surrender then. According to the information that I have, the surrender actually took place on March 9, 1942, or sometime around in there anyhow.

Smallwood: March 8th.

Marcello: March 8th. That's when the orders came down--on March the 8th?

Smallwood: March 8th was the capitulation, yes.

Marcello: Okay, describe what you were doing and what your feelings were when you heard that you were going to surrender.

Smallwood: Well, we were on the road at the time in convoy form, as we had been for about a week, just moving around the island. We were pretty close to central Java, pretty close to Bandung. We got the word that the Dutch wanted to capitulate the island and that our orders were to capitulate with them--lay down our arms and this sort of thing. Well, we didn't want to do that. I don't believe anybody did. There was a couple of officers and a group of people that wanted to make one last ditch run because we had a big rumor that the USS Houston was laying off the coast--I forgot the name of the port--but they were going to pick us up

if we could get through. So we made a run for the coast. It was a very disorganized thing, too, believe me. But we did make a run, and we got at least into the mountains, to the edge of the mountains. There was a couple of jeeps that went on out in front. They came back and reported that the Houston had been sunk, and there was nothing but oil slicks and debris on the water, and it was pointless to go on. So there was nothing for us to do but come back. So we came back to the unit and stacked them.

Marcello: Was the rumor going around that the Japanese didn't take prisoners?

Smallwood: Oh, very definitely. We were told that.

Marcello: What did you think about this?

Smallwood: Well, what can you think (chuckle)? They tell you to lay down your arms, and they don't take prisoners.

Marcello: Did you ever think of heading for the hills and going it alone?

Smallwood: Well, we thought about it, but we figured we're not equipped well enough to do it. I mean, we don't speak the language. We don't know where we are. We don't really have the equipment. So probably there was more safety in numbers.

Marcello: Also, I gather that the natives owed their loyalty to nobody.

Smallwood: That's right. Absolutely not. See, they'd already reversed their field. We saw this early in the game. When the Japanese began to show superiority in the air and on the ground, well, of course, then they began to wave the Rising Sun instead of the Stars and Stripes. But it was a very orderly thing, you might say. We were near this racetrack.

Marcello: Another racetrack?

Smallwood: Yes. Oh, they have a lot of them down there. They race a lot of horses over there (chuckle). But there was a lot of equipment parked in this . . . I suppose that the British had been told and the Dutch had been told to stack all their vehicles and everything at this racetrack.

Marcello: Now was this in Surabaja?

Smallwood: No, this was in Bandung, Java, in central Java. This is in the highlands, the highest part. But for several days there, we were parked along the road. We didn't see any Japanese, except they'd occasionally come by. But we were supposed to muster once a day and not to run away and not do this sort of thing.

But we were to cook our own meals, and buy food from the natives and continue on as you are. But there was no supervision from the Japanese other than they'd take our officers in to a conference periodically. I don't know if it was daily. I didn't pay that much attention to it. But we kind of wandered around for quite some time, just parked along this road near this racetrack. We even stood guard. We even stood guard well after March 8th with a loaded rifle. We guarded our vehicles.

Marcello: You had no contact whatsoever with Japanese soldiers or anything of that nature?

Smallwood: No, not at this time. The officers did, but we did not. We would look after our equipment, our trucks and the rest of our equipment.

Marcello: Well, I guess at this time then, the idea of surrendering must have looked like a pretty good idea.

Smallwood: Well, actually, it was very--like I say--a very orderly, a very quiet thing. We really didn't know what was going on other than the fact that we had capitulated. We were prisoners-of-war. We were on our own along the road in Java. Now this lasted for about a month, I would say. Pretty close . . . maybe three weeks.

But then we did realize that we were prisoners then because at that point, they had solved their problems--what to do with us. They gathered us up, and they took us to the Bicycle Camp in Batavia.

Marcello: Did you go straight from the racetrack to Bicycle Camp?

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: I know some of the people went first of all to Tanjong Priok, did they not?

Smallwood: Yes, I believe so. But we didn't.

Marcello: Then later on, they went to Bicycle Camp. But you went straight from the racetrack to the Bicycle Camp.

Smallwood: To the Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: Well, describe your first encounter with Japanese troops.

Smallwood: Well, when they came after us, then we were placed under guard. We were put in trucks and hauled. Oh, we'd walk some and we'd ride some. They guarded us then. They had their rifles and their bayonets. From that day on, we . . . that was it.

Marcello: Were you subject to any harassment at this particular time yet?

Smallwood: Not until after we were put behind barbed wire, no.

Marcello: I was wondering if, during this initial contact, they looted you or anything of this nature.

Smallwood: They told us they would, but they never did. The Japanese never took from me personally any of my personal possessions. Now they did others. They took watches, and they took pictures and things. I don't recall the Japanese ever taking anything from me.

Marcello: Were these front line troops at this particular point yet?

Smallwood: Right, at first they were. Very definitely.

Marcello: I assume that you were, generally speaking, treated much better by the front line troops than you were by the rear echelon people.

Smallwood: Very definitely. They were business-like. Our first guards were definitely very business-like. They expected you to do what you were told, and you did. Now but for the most part, during the rest of the time we were prisoners, we had Korean guards. No Japanese.

Marcello: We'll come back and talk about those buggers a little bit later on.

Smallwood: They were not Japanese.

Marcello: Now when you went into Bicycle Camp, then, I gather that you had virtually all of your equipment. You

had your canteen, your mess kit, perhaps even a couple of blankets or something of that nature?

Smallwood: Yes.

Marcello: They may have taken your helmets, did they not?

Smallwood: No, they did not.

Marcello: You still had your helmets.

Smallwood: We probably dropped it by the wayside. I don't think we retained them.

Marcello: Well, anyway, describe what Bicycle Camp looked like from a physical standpoint.

Smallwood: It was a Dutch Army camp, is what it was. It was a Dutch Army camp, regular Army. It was tile roof barracks with strange little bunks built out of boards and ropes and that sort of thing. It was what you would see in a regular army camp of that nature. The latrines, of course, were Dutch-type latrines. No commode or anything like that. Just a hole and a place for two feet to sit down. They used . . . what they call that is "Batavia, the land of liquid toilet paper (chuckle)." That's where we were first exposed to a roll of toilet paper in a Dutch latrine--a bottle of water (chuckle).

Marcello: I'd never heard that expression before, "Batavia."

Smallwood: "Batavia, the land of the liquid toilet paper (chuckle)."

Marcello: What else do you remember about this camp?

Smallwood: Oh, lots of things.

Marcello: I'm speaking now from a physical standpoint.

Smallwood: Well, it had concrete walks, concrete floors. I forgot what the walls were made of. But the roof was tile, half-round tile. I remember it was rather large, and I remember it had a ten-foot fence around it, all the way around it.

Marcello: Barbed wire?

Smallwood: Yes. They had no doubt installed that. You could have gotten out, no doubt. If you'd really wanted out, you could have gotten out. But there was a big mystery on the other side of that fence. You never really . . . couldn't speak Dutch. You didn't know who your friends were. You didn't know where you were, really. But this is pretty much the way it was.

We were there for a number of days before we ever even went outside. Then one day, they took a work party. We went to the docks. We worked at the docks. In the warehouses, we cleaned up some bombing debris. While we were there, well, some of the fellows

found some White Horse liquor in a warehouse. Some of them had some of it to drink, and some tried to bring it back to camp. Some got caught. That's the first time that I experienced--I actually saw for the first time--torture. That's the very first experience.

Marcello: Can you describe this particular torture?

Smallwood: Oh, very definitely. Very definitely. There was two fellows, and I don't even remember who they were now. But two Americans, I believe they were both sailors. They shaved their heads. They had a bamboo pole about three to four inches in diameter and about six feet long. They'd sit them down. They'd put this bamboo behind their knees, and they'd turn their feet back, straight out. They'd make them kneel down on this bamboo in the hot sun--it must have been 110°--until they'd pass out. Then they'd put them in the shade, revive them, then start again, put them back out there. This went on for almost two days. This was my first experience with the torture. They did that because they had stolen that liquor on the docks.

Marcello: You mentioned that these two men were sailors.

Smallwood: As I recall. Now I'm not positive, but I believe they were.

Marcello: Now when you got to Bicycle Camp, were the survivors from the Houston there?

Smallwood: Yes.

Marcello: What did that outfit look like when you got into camp?

Smallwood: Well, they suffered a great deal. They had really been through it in the battle. There was many of them that had been wounded, burned. Some of them lost a lot of skin, things like that. But these, of course, that were wounded, we were trying to care for them the best we could. But for the most part, they were a bunch of battle-fatigued people.

Marcello: A lot of them had no clothing, isn't that correct?

Smallwood: That's right. When they came ashore, they had a pair of shorts. That was about it. So we divided with them as best we could. But, yes, they joined us. They were right there in the camp with us. I believe there was about 300 of them, survivors, I believe, that finally joined us.

Marcello: How would you describe the treatment in general that you received at the hands of the guards in this camp? You mentioned this one incident involving the torture of these two sailors. In general, how would you describe the nature of the treatment that you received here from the guards?

Smallwood: When the guards came inside camp . . . and they did this only on occasion. I mean they did not just walk around inside the camp all the time. They didn't do that. But when they came in, it was normally to muster or on occasion for some other reason. I don't even recall what. But when they came in, you'd been instructed that when a guard came by, you were supposed to get up and bow. If you did this, they passed their way. In this particular camp, I don't recall any guard starting a ruckus of any kind. We were mustering one day, and a couple of guys in rank got in a fight, and one of them knocked the other one unconscious (chuckle) right there in line. The guard got pretty upset at that. He brandished his rifle and his bayonet, but he didn't do anything really. But he did get pretty excited because here was this guy laying on the floor. He couldn't understand why the other guy'd want to hit his own friends and that sort of thing. But there was nothing real vicious about . . . in this particular camp, there was nothing real vicious about . . . because these were still Japanese.

Marcello: What form would the physical harassment usually take? Would it simply be hitting, pushing, shoving, things of that nature?

Smallwood: Well, basically yes. Slapping, rifle butts, this is what you'd usually get from the guards.

Marcello: Did you ever witness this sort of physical punishment being dished out among the Japanese troops? In other words, what I'm leading up to is that I gather a great deal of their army life was based upon this sort of thing, even among their own troops.

Smallwood: Yes, very definitely. I'll give you an example. Many, many, many months later, we were working at Tan Son Nuht Air Base, which is in Saigon, the big air base outside Saigon. We were working there often. They brought in a bunch of kamikaze pilots, and they had simulated training there. They'd go up. All they did was go up, circle, and land. We were working on the runways all the while, packing, extending, rebuilding, that sort of thing. We would see . . . we were working right near where these pilots were training. They'd have the officers review . . . like a reviewing stand. These pilots would run out, get in their plane, then take off, and land. The officers would grade them. If anything happened, like they lost a landing gear or something, crashed landed when they came in, well, they'd have . . . apparently

they already knew what was going to happen. They'd jump out of the plane, and they'd run over to the reviewing stand, and they'd stand at attention while the officers slapped them around. Then they'd go back and get in the plane and start all over again (chuckle). Yes, this is true. This was a part of it, I suppose, their disciplinary action.

Marcello: You also mentioned awhile ago you had volunteered for this work detail. Did you volunteer to relieve the monotony?

Smallwood: Yes.

Marcello: I gather that there wasn't a whole lot of hard physical work that was done in this camp.

Smallwood: At that point, that's right. No. There was no work. Exercise, that was about the only thing. Cleaning up, wash the dishes, cook, sweep the floor, keep things tidy. But no real physical work. We played volleyball a lot. Now again, this was when we first went into camp. This was in the Bicycle Camp in Batavia, Java.

Marcello: That's where we're at right now, the Bicycle Camp.

Smallwood: Okay.

Marcello: What was the food like at Bicycle Camp?

Smallwood: Well, for the enlisted people, it was pretty much run-of-the-mill. Lot of rice, stuff like that.

Marcello: You say a lot of rice. You mean a lot of rice with each meal, or you had rice at every meal?

Smallwood: Yes, rice every meal (chuckle). Rice and whatever you had to go with it--stew, fish heads, that sort of thing. But here the officers lived separate at this time. They had quarters in the middle of the camp. They had a little officers' quarters all by themselves. They had an officers' mess all by themselves. They had an officers' orderly all by themselves who took care of them. They lived pretty good because they had the money. They had the pay box, and they kept it. They were allowed to buy food. The Japanese let the officers buy food. Now whether or not--I would not say--whether or not it was the understanding of the Japanese as a whole that this was for all the men in the camp or not, I would not say. I would not say. I had many officer friends, and they _____. But nevertheless, it was not shared. They lived high on the hog, very definitely, in Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: Did this cause any resentment?

Smallwood: Oh, definitely. You bet.

Marcello: Did any of the enlisted men ever have an opportunity to buy food from the native traders and this sort of thing?

Smallwood: No, we didn't, no. In this camp we didn't go outside, except on rare occasions when you went outside on working parties, and that wasn't often. There wasn't much work that went on outside that camp. But they took the officers out on buying parties a couple times a week.

Marcello: They were using company funds?

Smallwood: Military funds, the payroll. I believe they had a million dollars. I believe they had a million dollars in gold. That's the way I understand it.

Marcello: Did you personally usually volunteer for these work parties when they came along?

Smallwood: Yes, sir.

Marcello: Why?

Smallwood: Because I'd just rather get outside. You'd just walk around the camp. You'd take a shower, or you'd play basketball or something. If you went outside, you could see what was going on outside. You could see people. You could see things going on. What we did

out there was not real slave labor. We went one time . . . we went to . . . the Japanese would collect all of the automobiles in the country, and they'd stack them up. They'd find a place like a racetrack or a ball field or something like that, and they'd put thousands of cars in there. Then they'd take the batteries out, and they'd stack those in one place. They'd do this and do that. This is kind of what we did. Now when we went to the docks, why, we'd clean up. We'd maybe sweep the warehouse where it'd been bombed or strafed or something. It had a lot of debris, dust and stuff on the floor, boxes in disarray, and all that sort of thing. We'd do things like this. It wasn't real . . . it was hard work. You got some good exercise. But it was a lot . . . to me it was a lot better than just that monotonous camp everyday.

Marcello: Did going on these work details present an opportunity to steal some food or something of this nature?

Smallwood: Well, it could have. Like the "hooch." But at that time, we didn't find it . . . the Dutch didn't want to talk to us. There were Dutch civilians and some Germans and lots of natives. But they didn't want

to talk to us. They had strict orders not to, I suppose. They didn't trade with us, and we didn't try to trade with them, really. We knew that all the time . . . they knew it, too, that we had a buying party that went out to the market every so often. So we really weren't expected to come in with stuff. At that time, the food wasn't all that bad. I mean it just wasn't really all that bad where we were desperate. We didn't do it.

Marcello: At this stage, in other words, you were not resorting yet to eating anything that walked through the camp (chuckle)?

Smallwood: That's right. That's right. Because after all, we'd only been there a short time.

Marcello: Was your weight holding its own, or were you gradually losing weight at this time yet?

Smallwood: Not at this time, no. No. This was March, April, May, someplace like that.

Marcello: In other words, prison camp wouldn't have been too bad if these conditions would have persisted until the end?

Smallwood: If this had persisted as far as the barracks was concerned, if we'd had a reasonable amount of medical supplies and a reasonable amount of basic food, no, not at all.

Marcello: What were the medical facilities like at Bicycle Camp?

Smallwood: Well, of course, at this time, we had ample left over. I mean, we still had it. They did not take this. But we still had our medical orderlies. We had sick call inside the camp just like we would have if we'd have been . . . if anyone needed an aspirin or a bandaid, they made sick call and got it. We still had medical supplies at this time.

Marcello: What sort of bathing facilities were available at this camp?

Smallwood: Oh, great big concrete vats. You'd just go out there with a bar of soap and your mess kit or your canteen, and you'd soap up and dump the water on you--the native style.

Marcello: Were there any sort of articles that the Japanese took from you here at this camp, such as razors or things of this nature?

Smallwood: Not from me. Not from me. I didn't shave anyway (chuckle). I didn't need a razor at that time.

Marcello: Did most people grow beards here at this camp?

Smallwood: Oh, yes. Beards, mustache, sure.

Marcello: How often did the Japanese pull sneak inspections of the barracks?

Smallwood: Pretty often. Now they did that.

Marcello: What were they looking for?

Smallwood: Oh, I'm sure they were looking for weapons, radios, and things like that.

Marcello: I assume that you were receiving no news from the outside world at this point.

Smallwood: Not at this time.

Marcello: Did you still think that the war was going to be of relatively short duration?

Smallwood: Oh, six or eight weeks, anyway (chuckle). Six or eight weeks anyway. You can't believe a war's going to drag on for four years.

Marcello: I'm sure that the camp was one big rumor mill.

Smallwood: Do you really think any of them would have made it if they'd have thought it'd been four years?

Marcello: No, I'm sure they wouldn't have. This was brought home to me some time ago by a man that I plan to interview in the very near future. He was the American officer who was in charge of liberating the prisoners in Japan at the end of the war--going into the camps and bringing them out. He recalls having heard one prisoner saying to another, "You see, I told you they would come and get us." I think this

was the attitude that all of those who survived had. They had to have this particular attitude, that sooner or later the American forces were going to come and get you.

Smallwood: I can tell you without any reservation whatsoever, I did it one day at a time. I mean just that. I went to bed at night, and tomorrow was a new ball game, and tomorrow'd be the last day we'd be there. That's the way I lived. I really mean that. I couldn't imagine being there another month. I just couldn't.

Marcello: For the most part, what sort of discipline was being maintained in this camp? In other words, were the enlisted men still obeying the officers and this sort of thing?

Marcello: This was never . . . I think this stemmed from . . . it was never that rigid. We weren't really professional Army. Our officers were not professional Army. Maybe two or three that had been come in. But the National Guard officers were more like your next door neighbor. He just happened to have two bars on his shoulder. He might be a bank clerk, he might work at the feed store or something like that. But because of this and because of the situation, there was none of that

rigid stuff. Sure, there was an amount of respect and things like that. But as time went on, well, the ones that did not earn respect certainly lost it because of some of the things that took place. But there was none of that rigid business. They just sort of mingled with the people.

Marcello: Now I would gather that in this camp the nationalities were segregated more or less, that is, there were separate quarters for the Australians, there were separate quarters for the Americans, and there were probably separate quarters for the Dutch.

Smallwood: Only Americans were in the Bicycle Camp. Only Americans.

Marcello: There were no Australians there at all?

Smallwood: No.

Marcello: They must have passed there before you got there.

Smallwood: Could have been, yes. Could have been. Or after, because there were only Americans there at the time we were there.

Marcello: Were there any funny things that happened in Bicycle Camp while you were there, or did most of the humorous things take place in later periods?

Smallwood: I think that in the Bicycle Camp, the few months that we were there, that it was more . . . no, there wasn't

. . . we weren't really adjusted to being in a prisoner-of-war camp, I don't think. We were just kind of getting oriented to it and learning to do nothing or go on work parties or keep from being too idle during the day--things like that. We'd wonder what went wrong, what the heck happened, why we were there in the first place. But nothing really took place in this camp.

Marcello: I gather that for the most part, this was a transit camp.

Smallwood: It really was. It was a transit camp, and we were just marking time until . . .

Marcello: Until they could find some place where you could do them more good.

Smallwood: . . . they could launch these work projects at different places. Very definitely.

Marcello: Well, in October, I guess it was, of 1942, you left Bicycle Camp, and you headed for Changi Prison Camp in Singapore.

Smallwood: Right. Now I thought it was in September, but it was in October?

Marcello: Well, it may have been September. You got there, I think, on October 11, 1942.

Smallwood: Well, very definitely, it was in the fall. I was thinking that it might have been as early as September. But I guess October's when it was.

Marcello: Well, first of all, let me ask this question. Was this a rather unnerving experience to have to pull up roots and leave Bicycle Camp and face the unknown once again? Quite obviously, you'd been there for several months. You must have been more or less into some sort of a routine and had been getting used to the place.

Smallwood: We were. I don't know if it was all that nerve-wracking. I couldn't say that we looked forward to it because we certainly didn't know where we were going. We didn't even know we were going to Singapore when we left camp. We were just informed, and we didn't all go at one time. I mean, they didn't take everybody.

Marcello: Some of them didn't even go to Changi.

Smallwood: That's right. But the ones that were I guess elected or appointed or however their numbers came up . . . incidentally, over time now, we'd been assigned numbers that you wore. I suppose this <u>might</u> have had something to do with who was selected. I'm not sure. But anyway, I went.

Marcello: Did they give you dog tags, or was it a little wooden block or what?

Smallwood: No, it was a little number that you wore. It was kind of like a little . . . not a wooden block. As I recall, it was a patch of some kind. You wore it on your . . . but it had a number on it. But I was on the first group. I remember that our first sergeant . . . we fell in and we were told that we'd be going, which officers were going and which men were going, and this sort of thing, and when we were going. We were to march to the _____ and get in the trucks, and we'd go down to the coast, down to the docks, and board the ship. Of course, we weren't told where we were going or even that we were going on a ship, but we figured we were. But I know that the first sergeant addressed the group. He wasn't going. He bade us all good-bye, and everybody else did. We fell in with our gear and here we went. We went down and loaded onto the . . . I believe it was the Dai Nichi Maru. That was the ship.

Marcello: What was it like?

Smallwood: Oh, gee. They loaded us on the ship. There was a little "coonie" [Cajun] from Port Arthur, Texas--Ray LaBove. You may have sometime or other heard about him.

Marcello: You called him a "coonie?"

Smallwood: Oh, yes, he's a "coon-ass," no doubt about it.

Marcello: Oh, oh, I see, okay (chuckle).

Smallwood: No doubt about it. He's from Port Arthur.

Marcello: I see. We'll call him a Cajun in our . . .

Smallwood: They called themselves "coon-ass." But there was a number of those folks from Port Arthur and Beaumont. Ray LaBove and two or three others were from down there. They were inducted into the Army. They didn't come in through the Guard. But anyway, I had known him since we were in Camp Bowie together. But we'd never . . . we'd "hi" each other and that sort of thing, but we had never been what you'd call friends. Well, when we boarded the ship . . . they put us on the ship, you know. You'd go on the deck like this (gesture), and here's this big square hole in the middle. You walk over there, and you look down in the hold, and there's people down there, just like flies, that's boarded this ship, finding a little niche, place. Now this is a ship that they used to haul cavalry, horses. Yes. It's about this deep (gesture) in manure and all that sort of stuff.

Marcello: Are you serious? You say it was about a foot deep?

Smallwood: Well, yes. Hay and stuff like that to protect the deck from horses walking on the deck, like you do in an arena, anyplace like that. Yes, they had just taken the horses out probably and put us in. So anyway, I'm standing looking down in there, and "Coonie" LaBove said, "Throw her down here, Smallwood." I had everything that I owned in my pack rolled up in a blanket, so I threw it down and he caught it. I climbed down and joined him, and from that day until we were liberated, Ray LaBove and I were just like that [close] right on through prison camp. Anyway, it was terribly hot on this ship, and it was terribly slow.

Marcello: Did you have to sit down with your knees perched up?

Smallwood: It was like sardines in a can--just way too many people. Some people didn't even have enough room to sit down. Some people were pretty sick, too. Some people got seasick a little bit, heat, that sort of thing.

Marcello: Generally speaking, you had not really lost anybody at this point yet, had you?

Smallwood: No, no. I don't believe that we'd had . . . I can't recall that we'd had a death yet. So we got on this ship, and we went to Singapore. I don't even remember

how long it took. The next thing I really remember about the trip is the barracks, the camp--getting off in the city and marching out to Changi Barracks. That was a great British three-story barracks, open-type style barracks, out on the end of the island. A beautiful place!

Marcello: Well, getting back to this trip once again, was it a matter of days?

Smallwood: Probably a couple of days, I'd say.

Marcello: Were you ever allowed to go up on deck at all?

Smallwood: Only just in rotation, moving around. Yes, they'd . . . I don't know if they gave us permission or not. But we were just kind of like ants, moving around to get as much exercise as we could.

Marcello: How did they feed you?

Smallwood: I've forgot. But probably with lines. They probably passed it down, and we served it right there in the midst of all of us.

Marcello: Do you recall if they closed the hatches while you were on this trip, or was the open space still there?

Smallwood: I believe they left it open. I believe they did. Now they <u>may</u> have closed it. They did one other time. I'll talk to you about that some other time. But I

don't believe they did here. They might have, but I think the hatch was open.

Marcello: Well, before I interrupted you, you were describing what Changi Prison Camp was like.

Smallwood: Well, like I say, I don't recall too much of the boat trip down there. It could have been two days. I suppose from Java down to Singapore, it must have been a couple of days. The ships are not all that fast. But it was a twenty-four hour day stint, I know that. Of course, we docked and they put us ashore. It was quite a long hike out to Changi Barracks. But when we got out there and put our gear in and were assigned barracks and everything, this was a real relief because we were right on the beach. There was a road and then the beach. There was a fence between. You didn't spend any time on the beach, but it was there anyway. But it was a beautiful place. We were not crowded. The British very definitely were crowded. They were right next door to us.

Marcello: I gather that they were a sorry lot here at Changi.

Smallwood: Oh, gee. I believe they told me that there was 100,000 of them taken prisoner there. They're not clean people.

I surely wouldn't want to be in the same camp with them. I dreaded to follow them, and we did a few times, you know, from camp to camp. You really had a clean-up detail to do. The latrines and things like that were terribly filthy.

Marcello: I gather their morale was very, very low.

Smallwood: Very low, yes.

Marcello: They apparently were still blaming their officers and so on for the capitulation of Singapore and that sort of thing and for the predicament that they were in.

Smallwood: Yes. You're aware of the fact who these people were? The British, I'm talking about.

Marcello: A lot of them were Indians, of course.

Smallwood: Well, yes. Well, for the most part, these were people that were kicked out of Dunkirk. Did you know that?

Marcello: In other words, these people had been defeated wherever they'd been.

Smallwood: Oh, gosh, yes. They came to Singapore, remember. They had been defeated everywhere. They were regular Army. Many, many of them came through Britain and never never even saw their families and went right on to Singapore because the country was ashamed of them. They'd quit. So there they were. Now I'm told--I

don't know how much truth is in it, and I've seen the guns--they told me that they didn't have a gun that would cover the causeway. Have you heard that?

Marcello: Yes. All the guns were pointed toward the sea.

Smallwood: That's right. Fifteen-inch guns, none was pointed toward the causeway. Couldn't fire a lick. This looked like it was true. So there was about 90,000 of them there. They had a big hospital. There was quite a number of British nurses and women in this camp. Then 90,000 soldiers were over here in this camp. They were still doing their bit every day. They had reveille, they'd muster, they took their calisthenics. They did everything by the book, except maybe, well, actually practice war. Other than that, they had their drills, their short-order drills, and inspections. They saluted everything that came by and all that sort of thing.

The British had planned to insist that we do the same thing. As a matter of fact, they threw a couple of our guys in irons in Singapore for not saluting, and we had to go down and get them.

Marcello: I would assume that relations between the American troops and the British soldiers was not the best in the world.

Smallwood: No, no. Absolutely not.

Marcello: Did this ever break out into actual fighting and this sort of thing?

Smallwood: Well, not a lot of that--a skirmish here and there. But it was more the British officers who wanted more than their share of respect from the Americans. You passed them on the street, and we didn't think about saluting. We didn't salute our own. I mean, why should we salute them? This is what these two guys . . . they ran afoul of a colonel or something. He really had them put in the stock.

Marcello: I gather that there was also some sort of hassle about the fact that Americans were stealing the king's coconuts or something of that nature.

Smallwood: Taking the king's monkeys?

Marcello: I didn't hear those stories. Do you want to put those in the record?

Smallwood: Well, I was in on the monkey chasing. We decided we'd have some monkey stew. So it was about four of us, I guess, and we began to try to chase these monkeys down. We were free to roam inside the fence. We chased these monkeys the better part of the day. We finally caught one of them. At the moment . . . well,

we didn't know that we'd been observed, of course, all day. These British officers really did raise hell with our officers over it.

Marcello: By this time the monkey was already in the stew?

Smallwood: You're not supposed to collect the king's monkeys. You're not supposed to collect the king's fruit and all that sort of thing. But to me, this was just another funny incident. Well, we caught the monkey, and we made stew out of it, but it wasn't worth eating (chuckle).

Marcello: I assume your officers ignored the British protests.

Smallwood: Oh, yes. Yes, the officers led a party down to that prison and got those two guys out. They did that.

Marcello: Well, on the other hand, I gather you got along pretty well with the Australians, in particular.

Smallwood: Oh, very definitely. We got along pretty good with the Scotchmen in the British Army. But the Australians were a lot like us. The Dutch, I didn't care too much for those folks.

Marcello: Why was that?

Smallwood: Well, we looked at the Dutch probably in the wrong light. In the first place, the Dutch we saw--the white men, the real Dutchmen--were planters by trade

or businessmen in Java. They were businessmen first and army officers last or by . . . I don't know how you would describe it. They certainly weren't cut out to be army officers. But they were soft. They had big stomachs and long pipes and drank lots of beer in civilian life and in the army. We didn't have too high a regard for them. They more or less treated us like coolies. I mean, we really weren't on their same level because as they saw us, we were soldiers like the British. Now they were seeing the British because British were strictly professional soldiers. Well, they saw all soldiers like that, I guess. They were merchants and planters and wealthy people for the most part. But we got to know them later on, and this eased a bit. As a matter of fact, I made good friends with a number of Dutch people. But in general, the British and the Dutch I could pass. The Australians and Canadians, poor old people.

Marcello: What was it about the Australians and the Canadians which more or less made you like them?

Smallwood: They were like us. They were straightforward. They stated their opinions straight. They were clean, easy to get along with, easy to live with.

Marcello: This cleanliness, I gather, became more or less a fettish with Americans because I suppose you realized by this time if you weren't clean, you were liable to get wiped out.

Smallwood: You had to practice that. That was extremely important. It really was.

Marcello: I think this probably came home here at Changi because I gather that for the most part, there was a big difference between Changi and Bicycle Camp.

Smallwood: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Most of the prisoners eventually were quite glad to leave Changi.

Smallwood: Oh, yes, definitely.

Marcello: A rather sorry place.

Smallwood: I've been in British facilities while they were using it and immediately after they left it. It's just terrible. I mean, it's just hard to explain how filthy it really was. I mean, it's like you never flushed the commode or something like that. It's that bad. No pride. I mean, there's really no pride. Now this is something you had to guard against. This is what I described as giving up because when you give up, then you're as good as dead

right there. They did lose a lot of people. They lost many, many more than we did.

Marcello: And what the Australians lost.

Smallwood: Right. Absolutely.

Marcello: What was the food like in this particular camp?

Smallwood: Changi Barracks?

Marcello: That's correct.

Smallwood: Well, it was bad. Lots of watermelons and melon stew and things like that. We had a lot of mutton. Now where this came from was probably out of some cold storage or cans. I don't know. But it was terrible. You would put it in a pot and cook it and all the . . . it was just fat on top of the water. It was kind of like . . . I would describe it as tasting like dirty dish water with some grease on top. But it was pretty bad. We had watermelon rind stew and things like that. We had something that was kind of like cauliflower and some of the others of the melon family. But the food was getting pretty bad.

Marcello: How was it quantity-wise?

Smallwood: Well, quantity-wise, at that time, we had lots of rice. The stew was measured by how much water you put in it.

Marcello: Did it take your cooks very long to learn how to cook rice to where it was palatable?

Smallwood: Oh, yes (chuckle).

Marcello: What was the product like when they first started to cook it?

Smallwood: Like you'd get it raw, or you'd get it burned up (chuckle).

Marcello: Or sometimes I heard it was kind of like a big gelatinous ball or something.

Smallwood: Really, it was like gum. Sometimes just balled like you described it. Sometimes it was like soup. They had put too much water in it.

Marcello: You weren't getting the best quality rice in the world either.

Smallwood: Oh, well, no. But it was dark rice, and it was unhusked rice, which, I think, is the best really. It has more in it than the other. But, yes, it took awhile. There's an art, I guess, to cooking rice. They didn't have the facilities that we have here. Here you put in so much water and you bring it to a boil, and you dump it in, and you put the lid on, and that's all there is to it. They had to build a fire, and you had a pot like Mama used to wash clothes

in, except shallow. I'm sure that it took some doing to learn how to cook it.

Marcello: Did you ever have the opportunity to get much meat or anything of that nature.

Smallwood: No, very little. Not much.

Marcello: Maybe some fish on occasions?

Smallwood: Fish, we had quite a lot of. Dried fish and salted fish, that sort of fish. Not fresh fish. Well, they were fresh, too, but not like . . .

Marcello: What sort of work did you do at Changi?

Smallwood: Now the only project we worked on was gardening. We cleared a jungle and planted a garden.

Marcello: Was this pretty hard work?

Smallwood: Well, we cleared out a whole . . . we thought we were clearing out a fighter strip. It was that big. We cut all the coconut trees down and this long, level runway a couple thousand yards long, maybe even longer--quite wide. We really planted a garden. We tilled it and were raising melons, that sort of thing. Of course, we weren't there too long, about four or five months.

Marcello: Was all this under Japanese supervision?

Smallwood: Oh, definitely. There were not a bunch of them with us, no. The guards would go and they'd . . . we called

them engineers, meter misers. They'd go along with us with a yardstick, a couple or three of them, and they'd tell us what to do, measure out and lay out our project and that sort of thing. But we went in parties--so many men and an officer. We worked pretty hard at that. We liked to climb the coconut trees when the guards weren't watching too close and get the coconuts. Chase the monkeys and all that sort of thing and plant the garden. It was better than being in camp.

Marcello: Here again, I gather that the guards weren't exactly that strict at Changi for the most part.

Smallwood: We had no really tough guard problems as far as guard problems went until we really went to the jungle.

Marcello: How would you compare the guards at Changi with those that you had had at Bicycle Camp?

Smallwood: About the same. I think they were probably still regular army.

Marcello: In other words, there was very little physical harassment at this camp.

Smallwood: No. They stayed outside that fence for the most part unless they were coming in on some specific errand. They stayed outside. As a matter of fact, you might

go for twenty-four hours without seeing one. Some of us did sneak through the fence and set out a trot line while we were there. A couple of the guys got caught. We were catching pretty good fish, too, by the way.

Marcello: You were able to sneak outside the fence?

Smallwood: Well, there was just a wire fence right along the beach. Yes, there was a little pier of some kind that went out on this particular place. We found some fish hooks in an empty barracks. Remember that the British had had an army there, and they had a lot of things. There was a lot of gear left back--mirrors, shaving equipment, stuff like that. Well, we found some fish hooks. So we got the idea that we ought to set out trot lines, and we did. We got us a big weight, and we rigged us, I think, about four or five hooks on this line. We tied it onto this pier, and we caught ourselves some grasshoppers, and we threw it out in there. We caught some fish. The first two of us, I believe we caught two pretty nice fish, like three or four pounds. Then we turned the line over to two other guys. When they went out to fish, they got caught (chuckle). This sergeant walked right up

on them. I'm sure he was putting on an act. I don't think he had any intention of cutting their heads completely off for fishing, but he really made them believe. Those guys still tell the story today. He had them down on their hands and knees. He gave them the opportunity to pray before he cut their heads off and all that sort of thing. This first guy and I had a good fish fry (chuckle). Then we told the other guys where the line was, and they went to set it out. They got it out all right. But when they went to run it, well, they got caught.

Marcello: Now as you look back on your stay at Changi, was the health of the prisoners still generally good, or was it beginning to deteriorate by this time?

Smallwood: Well, it was beginning . . . then it was beginning to show. Guys began to get sick.

Marcello: In what ways?

Smallwood: Well, they picked up malaria. They began to pick up the malaria, and they began to get dysentery and things like this. I think when we went to Changi Barracks and were exposed to this camp, this was really the turning point. Because people began to . . . we'd been in there about six, seven, eight months now.

Marcello: You mean as a prisoner altogether?

Smallwood: Right, yes. We'd been in about eight months. We began to say, "Well, gee, it's been eight months. We didn't whip them in six weeks like we thought we would." I think people began to get sick. We'd had a couple little accidents. People had broken bones and things like that, or they'd got some pretty bad lacerations working or whatever. Then one guy had appendicitis and things like that. A few guys had contracted malaria and some got dysentery. It was just a beginning of the breaking down of it after that length of time.

Marcello: This is really where you saw the first evidence of that beginning.

Smallwood: Right. Yes, it is.

Marcello: Now what sort of medical facilities did you have here at Changi?

Smallwood: Well, I was a very fortunate person. I was sick very, very little while I was in prison camp. I can't evaluate what it was really like because I wasn't there. I wasn't sick. I saw people ill. I heard people grumbling about no medical attention, no medical supplies, or anything like that. I'm

sure we must have had something left. But I was just very fortunate. I didn't need medical attention. I was very fortunate. I needed very little all through.

Marcello: I gather then at this point that your health was pretty good, considering.

Smallwood: Perfect. Perfect. When I was taken prisoner, I weighed 190, and I was twenty-nine inches in the waist. I wore a forty-two long jacket, but I had a twenty-nine inch waist. I was in absolutely perfect health. I could run five miles and not even breathe hard. I smoked lightly. I did not drink much, on occasion. And I was young, extremely young. I just did not suffer like a lot of people did.

Marcello: Did you ever notice that perhaps the bigger fellows did suffer more than the smaller ones?

Smallwood: Oh, very definitely. Very definitely.

Marcello: How do you reason this out? Was it because the bigger men needed more food than the smaller men or exactly what?

Smallwood: I really don't know, unless the bigger you were, the more energy it took, and the more it took to feed that energy. I don't know, but this is absolutely true. The bigger they were, the harder they fell and the faster they went down, as a rule.

Marcello: What made me think of this was the fact that you said that you weighed 190 pounds. You were a pretty big fellow at that time.

Smallwood: Well, I was not big like "Big-foot Ryan" or like one of these other guys. You know, really, really a big man. He was from Jacksboro or some place. We all had various nicknames.

Marcello: I see. Well, anyhow, you left Changi prison sometime in January of 1943, or maybe near the end of December.

Smallwood: We left in January, early January.

Marcello: In January, 1943?

Smallwood: 1943.

Marcello: I would assume that here again that you were kind of glad to get out of Changi.

Smallwood: Right. I was.

Marcello: Whatever came next had to . . . may have been better than Changi.

Smallwood: No, from this day on . . .

Marcello: Well, what I mean is, that in your own mind at this time, you thought anything . . .

Smallwood: Well, we were going somewhere. But from this day on, it was tough. From the day we left . . . it was tough there--boredom, that sort of thing. But from

this day forward, from that day until we were liberated, it was a rough, rough road. From then on, that's where we really lost the people, after we left this deal.

Marcello: Well, describe your leaving of Changi.

Smallwood: Okay. We crossed the causeway, and we boarded the train.

Marcello: We might explain that this causeway divided the island of Singapore from the mainland.

Smallwood: It divided the Malayan peninsula from the island of Singapore. It's not very far across there. But we marched across that causeway and boarded a train. This was like a cattle train. It was very much like you'd see here, the slatted deal. Very crowded. Way too many people to the car. But we took that train and we went to Kuala Lumpur, which is on the seacoast.

Marcello: Now these were not enclosed boxcars but actually cattle cars with slats on them.

Smallwood: Some were. Some were enclosed boxcars, very definitely. We were in a slatted boxcar. They were very dusty. I think it might have been better to be in one of the ones that was closed in, if they'd have left the door open, anyway.

Marcello: I would assume it'd be terrible in those cars, especially if people had dysentery.

Smallwood: Yes, well, this is true. We did have quite a bit of it. But I forgot how long it took, but we went to Kuala Lumpur by train. I don't know how long we spent there. Maybe we got right on the boat. I'm not sure of that. But we went that far by train, and then we boarded a boat. We went from that point to Moulmein, Burma, in a boat. We went right up through the Bay of Bengal.

Marcello: Now this was a rather interesting trip, and I think you need to describe it from the time you boarded the boat.

Smallwood: Yes, it was. Again, I don't remember the name of this ship. But there was three of them, three Japanese ships. They kind of broke it down this time. We were in the back. We were in the rear ship. In the middle ship was a bunch of Dutch and all of the Japanese engineers. The Japanese engineers were going to Moulmein, Burma, to run this project. Then in the front one was mostly Australians. But they had this kind of broken down this time. Oh, we had some Australians with us. We got on this ship--

I don't know if we got on at night or in the afternoon or morning or whenever it was--and we struck out. The next thing I remember, of course, was being bombed.

Marcello: What were conditions like on this particular ship?

Smallwood: Same as they were in the other. This was a horse . . . this was a cavalry boat, been moving horse cavalry from one island to another again. Eight to ten inches of fodder, hay, manure, stench. We were increasing our number of sick people then. I mean, they weren't all that healthy anymore. A number of them weren't.

Marcello: An increasing number of sick people, but not really any deaths at this point.

Smallwood: Not yet. We hadn't lost anybody at this time. But they were getting frail and weak. But it was very much the same as the other ship. We were bouncing along through the Bay of Bengal, and suddenly . . . here I know we were allowed on deck on this ship because I was standing right on the bow of this ship when, without warning . . . I had no idea. These Liberators came over and started bombing us. They missed us the first time, and they hit the ship in

the middle, the one right in front of us. It was close enough and strong enough that it blew us down on the deck of the ship.

Marcello: In other words, the concussion knocked you down.

Smallwood: You better believe! That ship was gone by the time we got up. Just debris and people on the water.

Marcello: You were actually able to witness this?

Smallwood: Oh, yes. The ship wasn't more than across that creek down there (gesture).

Marcello: About how far away was that?

Smallwood: A hundred yards. We was one right after the other--right in line. They hit that one square in the middle. They killed most of the engineers, the Japanese. They didn't have a half a dozen. What was left of the Dutch . . . and there was quite a number of those, too, so they must have been in different . . . I'm sure they were in different compartments. They circled and they came back, and they started bombing us. We had, oh, I think four, real near-miss bombs. Oh, the shrapnel was just cutting the ship to pieces every time they'd drop one of these things. We had a few people hit--not real bad, but hit.

Marcello: You were still laying low up on deck?

Smallwood: I was on deck. Yes, I was on deck. But these fellows down in the hold were the ones that was in real danger because they were at waterline and below. That's where the shrapnel was coming through. They were working the front ship over and our ship. They didn't sink us, but they damaged the ship so badly until about twenty-four hours later, we finally got into Moulmein. We were listing at about a forty-five degree angle. The Japs had gone over the side and took toe sacks and little wooden pegs and hammers and drove these rags and sacks into the shrapnel holes to stop the water. So we made it in. They lost some Dutch people in that middle ship. I remember very well we picked up the survivors.

Marcello: It's surprising that they picked up the survivors. They must have really needed the manpower on that railroad.

Smallwood: Oh, they did. Yes, they did.

Marcello: Otherwise it'd seem to me that they'd have just let them drown.

Smallwood: But there was a red-headed Dutchman and a red rooster. Now where he got that rooster, I have no idea. But he had that rooster, and when he hit that water, he

had that rooster with him, and he brought that rooster aboard our ship. I never will forget that. But he was a great, big 230 or 240-pound Dutchman, and he had this Rhode Island Red Rooster with him when he came aboard. But we made it to Moulmein, and we moved into the mortuary.

Marcello: Incidentally, I assume this simply crowded your ship all the more.

Smallwood: Oh, yes, definitely. We were extremely crowded. But we only had about another . . . I think it was in the afternoon, and we got into port the next morning. We wouldn't have made it very much farther. We were dragging water like nobody's business. I mean, it was fixing to go down. But we made it in. We made it in to shore, and they unloaded us.

We went to the mortuary to live. We went into this . . . that's what it was. They had the place set up. There was a huge burying ground, cemetery, outside the place. But this was all set up to embalm people and this sort of thing. It was a school, really. They actually, I guess, had on-the-job training there. That's the way they did it.

Marcello: Well, they must have separated you when they got you

to Moulmein because some of the people, I think, were put in some sort of a jail here, also.

Smallwood: Right. This was very close together, though. Yes, some went in this jail on one side of the street, and we went in this camp on the other side.

Marcello: I'd never heard of anybody that was in the mortuary.

Smallwood: Oh, yes, we were really there. That's where we were encamped. There was a Catholic school nearby, too. I remember that. But I was never in this prison. But it was very close to us, on the same block. But this was like a school--a whole bunch of cubicles. Then in the courtyard they had all these vats and sloped places set up where they worked on the bodies and all this. There were little drains down the side, the whole works. I think this was more of a school than anything else, or had been.

Marcello: They didn't keep you there very long, did they?

Smallwood: Oh, no, no, no. About a week, I think. Five days to a week, and then we moved out to the 15 Kilo Camp on the railroad. That's where we started our stint.

Marcello: Now was there anything at all that took place in this approximately one week that you were at this mortuary?

Smallwood: Nothing outstanding that I remember. I mean, just rice and stew and getting ready. We knew what we were going to do. We knew the project in front of us was building a railroad. We knew that already.

Marcello: Did you get this information from the Japanese?

Smallwood: The Japanese, oh, yes. They told us what we were going to do. We were going to build this great railroad from Moulmein, Burma, to Bangkok. It had to be built on a certain day, a certain time. The timetable was very tight. The emperor expected us to do it, and sure enough, we were going to do it.

Marcello: Okay, so from Moulmein, you moved to the 15 Kilo Camp.

Smallwood: Fifteen Kilo Camp.

Marcello: Now would that be beyond Thanbyuzayat?

Smallwood: That name doesn't ring a bell to me.

Marcello: Well, a lot of people went through Thanbyuzayat. It was a rather large camp, I think, pretty close to Moulmein. At one time they had a hospital there and . . .

Smallwood: No, I didn't go there. I know where you're talking about now. This is where we lost our first man at this camp. It was not an accidental death or illness.

He was killed in a bombing raid. Had you heard about that?

Marcello: There were some people who were at Thanbyuzayat, and they had a bombing raid there.

Smallwood: It was us. He was a very good friend of mine.

Marcello: Okay, but you were again not in that group that went to Thanbyuzayat.

Smallwood: I did not go to that camp.

Marcello: Then you probably had no contact at that time with Colonel Nagatomo?

Smallwood: No.

Marcello: Had you ever heard that name before?

Smallwood: You better believe it!! This is the guy that executed the Australian engineers. This is the same . . . what was he, a colonel?

Marcello: I think he was a colonel, yes. I believe he was in charge of this whole project on the Burma end of the railroad.

Smallwood: This is probably headquarters.

Marcello: His headquarters was at Thanbyuzayat.

Smallwood: There was a hospital there because that's where Ed Wilson was. He was in the hospital. They had this air raid, and they went out to the slip trench. He

wouldn't get down into the trench. They dropped a bomb, and a piece of shrapnel got him. But Ed and Slim Wilson, his brother, were from Plainview, Texas. They were in the original A Battery that I was in. I'd known them long before I even came to Camp Bowie.

Marcello: So anyhow, you went from Moulmein and the mortuary directly to the 15 Kilo Camp.

Smallwood: Fifteen Kilo Camp.

Marcello: We might explain for the record that each one of these camps was referred to as a particular kilo camp, depending upon its location as the work on the railroad progressed.

Smallwood: From Moulmein.

Marcello: That's correct.

Smallwood: From a starting point. Maybe it was that base camp. I'm not sure. But it had a base point, and every camp was listed from that, going toward Bangkok.

Marcello: How did you get from Moulmein to the 15 Kilo Camp, and how great a distance was it approximately?

Smallwood: Well, I can't recall. But I was under the assumption that probably it was fifteen kilos from Moulmein. But maybe it was fifteen kilos from that base camp. Having

not been in that camp, maybe that's where it all was measured from. That was 15, and then the next camp I went through was 60, 80, 85, 100, 105, 114. Why 114, I don't know. I believe that's as far up as we went. Then we jumped on up beyond the bridge on the River Kwai to Bangkok. . . I mean, to Thailand, anyway.

Marcello: Okay, so you got to the 15 Kilo Camp. What did it look like? Describe what the camp was like.

Smallwood: It was just a whole bunch of barracks made out of bamboo, bamboo driven in the ground or set on the ground. Then they'd go up about three feet off the ground, off the deck, and they built decks. These camps were all built by native labor. They just put in a floor of split bamboo, and that's it, and then they put a thatched roof on top.

Marcello: What sort of bunks did you have?

Smallwood: That's it. I mean, that bamboo was it. The floor was the bed. We had a blanket. Most everybody had one blanket.

Marcello: This is what you had retained from the time you were captured?

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: This was not Japanese issue.

Smallwood: Oh, no. This is what we had. Whatever you had, you put on that bamboo, and that was it. That's what you slept on. By the way, that camp was cold. It got cold in that camp at night. I'm sure it got down to forty degrees once or twice because we had some people that had pneumonia. It really was cold at forty degrees, forty, forty-four degrees. At night it got real cool. But that's the one camp that I remember that it was cool.

Marcello: Now all these camps had been prepared in advance, and they were ready in some form or another by the time that you'd got there.

Smallwood: Right. Well, each camp was really . . . they moved people into all these camps simultaneously from one place or another. They just skipped over. One would move out today to some place, and then somebody'd move in. But we followed some group in every camp we went to. Sometimes we'd jump over two or three camps, and probably they'd do the same thing for us or with us.

Marcello: When you went into this first camp, what sort of a pep talk or exhortation did you get from the Japanese commandant, the colonel?

Smallwood: Well, they gave us the schedule. They told us the necessity for building the railroad and what the emperor really expected of us, what they expected. They were under a mandate to finish this railroad. They also outlined our pay, our day off, all this sort of thing. They gave us a schedule. We were to work ten days and have a day off. We were to get . . . I think we started out at fifteen cents a day and worked ourselves up to a quarter a day, that sort of thing (chuckle). But this they would pay us. Everyday off they'd pay you. They'd allow you to spend that money because native people would come through and sell eggs and tobacco and stuff like that. They controlled this, but they let you do that. At the same time, they were going to supply us plenty of rice and fish and stew and stuff like that. Then on occasions when we first started--on occasions--we would get some kind of horsemeat or something on occasions. But they outlined what we would do, that we would be working in parties of so many people, with an officer and an engineer and so many guards and all that. We had an assignment of work, and when we did that assignment of work, we'd come in. When we did our assignment, that was it.

Marcello: In other words, you were to move so many meters of dirt per day.

Smallwood: Right. Now that's where we got this meter miser thing. He had a forty-inch stick, like the British carry their sticks. He carried a forty-inch meter stick. But that's where the Americans goofed. They were too ambitious, too energetic, because the first day we went home right after lunch, and the next day we got a meter and a half (chuckle).

Marcello: In other words, they kept increasing your quota until you were there a full day.

Smallwood: You bet. They taught us a lesson just real quick. Now the British and Dutch went out, and they worked till dark and didn't get theirs. The Americans went out, and they did their quota and came home at two o'clock the first day. Of course, the minute that that officer saw what happened, the next day we got a meter and a half (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, describe what work was like on this railroad. Let's take a typical day from the time you got up in the morning until the time you dropped into your bed at night.

Smallwood: Okay, we got up early in the morning, we fell in, we counted. We went to breakfast. We had about thirty

minutes to finish our meal. We fell in again in groups. We had our engineer with us, our two or three guards, whatever went with each group. We went right out on the railroad, and they staked out . . . we were either making a cut or we were making a fill. At this point, there was no tie laying, tie cutting, rail laying, or anything like that. We were doing the roadbed. We were either cutting through a deal or we were filling. We might be doing the same thing. We were making a cut and a fill there. But we got assigned so many cubic yards or meters of dirt to move each day.

Marcello: Now did each man have a particular quota, or did each group have a particular quota?

Smallwood: Well, a group. A group. Fifty men, fifty cubic meters. They laid it out on the ground. Whenever you got that done, supposedly you were supposed to go. Well, we learned quick to take it easy. But that's what you were doing every day.

Marcello: What sort of equipment did you have to either make the fill or make the cut?

Smallwood: You had three things. You had a pick, a shovel, and a burlap sack with a bamboo pole (chuckle), a rice

sack. A rice sack weighs a hundred kilos, and that's 200 pounds. They had a wire on each of four corners, looped over it, and then you had a bamboo pole about seven, eight, ten feet long, that big around (gesture), two men to the bag.

Marcello: When you say that big and round, that's about maybe three or four inches in diameter.

Smallwood: Three inches in diameter, something like that. You had two men, your choice. I mean, you could change. You could pick awhile, shovel awhile, and then you would carry awhile. But we'd rotate back and forth. But this is where health really paid off because doing this kind of work, as long as you weren't really strained too much, this really builds you up. I mean, it really hardens your muscles and really puts you in tip-top physical shape as far as it was allowed to do. I felt great working like that every day. It didn't bother me a whole lot. But that's the kind of work we were doing and doing it every day.

Little incidents occurred on the line. Somebody'd go to the bathroom and stay too long. Or you'd have a little incident with guards that got bored and started chunking rocks at the guys working, and either

somebody'd lose their temper and . . . little incidents like this. There were arguments over the amount of work, if it was laid out wrong and this sort of thing. This was about the only change of pace during the day. You did your work. You went back to camp. You took a bath. You went to bed, or you visited, or you did that. Then there was lights out at a certain time. After that, no talking, no smoking, no nothing.

Marcello: What sort of sanitary facilities and bathing facilities were available at this particular . . . at any of these camps in general?

Smallwood: The bathroom facilities were trench-type, and exactly that.

Marcello: Open-air?

Smallwood: Right. You finished one, and you covered it and dug another one. Now the natives dug most of those. We didn't. We did later on. But to begin with, the natives dug most of those. Their floor was bamboo. Then they just had little squares in them, and they were wide-open. On occasion, depending on who you had as an officer in camp, they might put up a little baffle or something around one, something like that,

dress it up a little bit. But that was only at the choice of the sergeant in charge. Or maybe every once in awhile you might have a lieutenant, a second lieutenant in your camp.

Marcello: Describe what the guards were like at this camp, so far as who they were and what their conduct was like.

Smallwood: All right. When we left Moulmein, for the first time we acquired Koreans as guards. It appeared that they were . . . we noticed it. It was very noticeable a thing, that the Japanese didn't really trust them. They didn't associate with them very closely. They weren't very friendly. Of course, the Koreans looked quite different in their dress. They weren't sharp. Their uniforms weren't as sharp. They certainly didn't look as intelligent as the Japanese people. They were very slothful people in a way. They did these little incidents that I mentioned before. This is what they did. I'm sure that they felt inferior and were treated badly probably, and they took it out on us.

Marcello: There was now somebody below them on the pecking order.

Smallwood: Right, and this is the way they had of passing it on. They'd just simply make your life miserable, if they could. They'd create little things on work parties

and this sort of thing, to get you all steamed up so they could box you around or something like that. I don't think they would dare just out-right shoot you out on a working party or something like that. It'd be too hard to explain. But they would go right up to that point--rifle butts and things like that. They'd beat the heck out of you or box you around. They knew they could get away with that. But they didn't want to lose a prisoner actually out there on the work party.

Marcello: What were some of the more extreme forms of punishment that you witnessed? Now obviously the hitting and the beating and that sort of thing was rather common. What were some of the more severe forms of punishment that you witnessed?

Smallwood: Well, probably planned, really a planned deal, was raw rice and hot tea. Eating raw rice and drinking hot tea. Putting cigarette butts out on you, on your flesh. Of course, rifle butts, knocking people around with a rifle butt off of a high porch or platform or something like that. This was prolonged things. Now just a momentary thing of anger or something like that, maybe a slap in the ribs with a stick or a rifle

butt. Or just stand up and just get angry and just beat the heck out of you. Just slap you real long and hard and cut you up pretty good, things like that.

Marcello: You mentioned the rice and the hot tea awhile ago. Was the purpose of this to make you keep swallowing rice so that you would swell up?

Smallwood: Yes, right. Now this was if you were . . . if you'd done something, if you'd broken a rule or law or something, this is what normally would happen. They didn't do this unless you had either done something or they thought you had done something. Many times this was carried out by Koreans but at the directive of the Japanese. Now this was . . . like you'd stay in for a whole day. This would take place all day, like that, and not so much as being out on a working party and just somebody'd get mad and maybe beat up on you or something like that for just a few seconds or a minute or something.

Marcello: Were you personally ever subjected to any of these beatings?

Smallwood: I was hung on the fence by my thumbs a couple times.

Marcello: Can you describe what this was like? You hadn't mentioned this before.

Smallwood: Oh, yes, they just put a strap on your thumbs. You'd stand on your tiptoes and they'd measure you up and put you there with your back against the barbed wire fence. Yes, I've stood that way a couple times.

Marcello: What did you do to deserve this honor?

Smallwood: Well, I figured I was trying to live. I stole some stuff.

Marcello: You stole some food?

Smallwood: Not food. Medicine, cloth, stuff that would sell for a high stake. Because I readily admit that when the going really got tough, well, then you had to gamble. To me, it was quite obvious if you'd just go your way, it was just gradual death. So what's the difference? I mean, it was a gamble. It was a big gamble. But it was worthwhile as far as I was concerned. So what I did, I laid everything else aside and I started trading because food was dear. You didn't have anywheres near that much money. So I was ready and willing to take anything that I could find to turn it to cash, and take any kind of risk that it took to get that medicine and to get that food that it took to live. That's the way I felt about it. It didn't take me long to convince myself that this was true.

By the way, I'm pretty much a loner and I was then. I didn't . . . only one person did I ever enter into any planned program with at all, and that was with LaBove from Port Arthur. He and I pretty much felt the same way about it. We paid for it at times--he did and I did. We were boxed around pretty good at times. We were on the wire a few times. We still carry some scars from it. But I'm here. That's kind of the attitude we had. When you're making fifteen cents a day and eggs are $1.00 apiece, or you've got malaria bad, and Atabrine is $10 a tablet, and you're making fifteen cents a day, it's pretty hopeless. Now if a penicillin tablet would sell for $100 on the outside, that made the difference. If cloth was $35 a yard, and you could go to the docks and put forty yards around your waist and put your shorts back on and your tunic and walk through that gate and not be the one to get searched, then you go to the airport the next day and sell that cloth. Then you could pay $1.00 for eggs and $10 for Atabrine and that sort of thing.

Marcello: Well, I gather that you stole this cloth and what have you after you were working at the air base, and this was not while you were working on the railroad.

Smallwood: Well, yes. Now on the railroad, we dealt in other things. We dealt in other things. On working parties, we were able to buy some sugar, some coffee, and things like that. This was dear. You could bring this back to camp. As a matter of fact at one time, Ray LaBove and I lived exclusively for months out of this million dollar fund that I was telling you about--some of it still existed--by selling sugar at $25 a canteen cup and coffee for $50 a canteen cup to the officers in the group. They had the money.

Marcello: Now you would usually get this coffee and sugar and so on from the native traders?

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: You would pay for this out of the wages the Japanese were giving you?

Smallwood: No, no. We started out by selling off our clothes. We had some extra clothes. We started the fund that way. But from then on, it was just a matter of buying it on the outside and selling it on the inside.

Marcello: You sold it mainly to officers because they couldn't get on the outside to buy these things either.

Smallwood: Right, only one to a party went. Some of them never went out there. Some of them never did. It was a form of living anyway.

Marcello: Now I gather that as you progressed on the railroad, however, the number of native traders that you came in contact with kind of declined a little bit, did they not, as you got back into the interior?

Smallwood: No, not necessarily so.

Marcello: How about during the monsoon season?

Smallwood: Well, now this probably did. When transportation was almost nil, it did slow down in times like this. But there was no lessening of native traffic anywhere in the jungle--nowhere. I mean they were just a daily thing. Traders always had it because there was always oxcarts going to and from, up and down, through the line, all over the place. They had the stuff, and they had it for sale. But we were able to trade enough and to buy our way into different working parties that would put you into that advantageous spot. We even made some contacts with some Japanese engineers--we worked on one special project for three months one time--where they, when they would go back to base camp to get their supplies, this guy would buy for us. He was just a poor old guy. I mean, he didn't know what we were doing with it, and he could care less. We did the job for him. He had a project to

do, and we were doing a good job for him. We gave him the money, and when he sent his supply group back--they'd get their ration of food once a week, I think it was--and he would very gladly send our money. If we had the money to send, he would send our money. We'd tell him what to get, and he'd bring it back.

Marcello: Now what kind of money were you using here?

Smallwood: Oh, this was invasion money then or any Japanese yen.

Marcello: You also mentioned awhile ago that you could buy your way into other work parties. In other words, they didn't care who went on a particular work party just so long as they had so many bodies there?

Smallwood: Well, now you had an assignment. Your officers made assignments, but you could always trade--not so much on the railroad, but later on when we were in Saigon for a year and a half and also in Bangkok. But certain parties gave a better advantage. Like we'd go to the docks to get most of the stuff.

Marcello: Now here again, you're talking about the time when you're in Saigon and on the air base.

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: Okay.

Smallwood: Now on the railroad, of course, there wasn't all that big an advantage. Here, if you had a contact, well, you could buy and you could sell. But it was mostly food. It was just basic food--sugar, coffee, tea, that sort of thing. Later on, it was medicine and cloth and stuff that you could really . . . then you were really bartering and selling with the natives themselves.

Marcello: I see. Well, I want to keep most of my questioning at this point to your time on the railroad.

Smallwood: Oh the railroad it was really always food--coffee, tea, sugar, eggs, tobacco, cigarettes, things like that.

Marcello: But you started out selling some of your clothing or trading some of your clothing to the natives for these various items of food.

Smallwood: For cash, for cash. Then we took that cash and bought food, and then sold that food in camp.

Marcello: I see, to the officers.

Smallwood: Yes.

Marcello: In turn, this generated more cash, and the cycle was perpetuated.

Smallwood: Correct. We made a profit. We admit.

Marcello: During your work on the railroad, did you ever supplement your diet by eating some of the strange and exotic things such as snakes and lizards and . . .

Smallwood: Well, yes. We ate a python one time. We tried a python. We tried a female elephant (chuckle). It wasn't too bad. We ate some snakes, smaller snakes. But I never did eat any rats or anything like that. I've heard some did.

Marcello: How did you get the elephant? This sounds like a real interesting story.

Smallwood: Well, we were working with this elephant. We were putting this bridge in over the river. I don't know if you've ever heard anything about how elephants work or not. We were cutting teakwood piling and driving them with this odd-ball pile driver.

Marcello: You might mention this pile driver. I think it's kind of interesting because it again illustrates the type of "machinery" that the Japanese were using to build this railroad.

Smallwood: Okay, I'll explain it in detail. Okay, what they did, they would take a piling, a teakwood piling, fifteen inches in diameter and twenty-five, thirty feet long. With a hatchet, they'd sharpen it on one

end. This female elephant would hold this up in the air. Now this pile driver that they had was like an Indian tepee. It was a bunch of poles together. But when they came together, it had a metal pipe through the deal. That metal pipe . . . they'd have a notch in the top of this piling, notched out with a hatchet. They'd put this pipe down in there, and they'd have this huge plumb deal on it with a hole in it to slide up and down the pipe. Up at the top, they had a pulley and a bunch of ropes--four or five run through this pulley--and they'd get three or four men on a rope. They'd sing, "Ichi, nio, sanyo." Ichi, nio sanyo, one, two, three. When they'd say sanyo, they'd turn the rope loose, and this thing would fall down and drive the pile in the ground.

That brings up another funny story. Charlie Pryor's best friend, Hugh Faulk . . . he was killed last year in an accident on his farm down in the country or somewhere. He was digging stumps or something with his tractor on the farm, and it turned over and killed him. Anyway, Hugh was a rough, tough Marine corporal. He was really a rough, ready-to-go old boy. We were out there one day driving

piling. Maybe you better turn this off when I . . . (chuckle).

Marcello: No, that's okay.

Smallwood: Anyway, everybody was singing, "Ichi, nio, sanyo." Up and down, drop. "Ichi, nio, sanyo." Faulk was in charge. So the engineer was standing over there, and Faulk's singing, "Japanese, piss on you! Japanese, piss on you! (chuckle)" This guy spoke better English than Hugh did. He put up with it for a while, and he finally tore into Hugh Faulk, and he really boxed his ears good (laughter). But little things like that. But that's the way you drove the pile in the ground.

Now the female elephant--back to the eating of the elephant--the female elephants are the workers. The bull elephant does not work. The female elephant would take one of these pilings and the native driver has a little . . . it's a little gig. It's shaped like that (gesture). It has another piece that goes out. It has a short handle.

Marcello: I know what you mean. It has a little hook on it, but the point extends out beyond the hook.

Smallwood: Right, right. Well, the point really comes down like a hook, and the other goes straight out and up a bit.

But they hook them behind the ears like this (gesture) with that little gadget. They always are singing, "Muni, muni, muni, muni, muni, muni, muni, muni," and tap them on the ears to tell them what to do. But this native driver can control this female elephant. She'll pick up this teakwood piling thirty feet long and turn it up, stand it up in the air, and get it ready. Then they'd fit this thing on it and get it started, and then she'll turn it loose. But the females do the work. They're the workers.

Marcello: Well, how did you get to eat this one female elephant?

Smallwood: Okay. We were driving these pilings in the ground right in the river. The elephant broke her leg in the water. She was about to drown. Anyway, she broke her leg in this swift water, and they had to shoot her. She was about to drown anyway. So we got permission to butcher her, and they gave us permission. So we cut out her hind quarter and carried it to camp, and we had some stewed elephant. I'll tell you, it wasn't all that bad, either. Another way we used to get food there, too, is . . . the Japanese didn't know too much about dynamite, but they used a lot of gelignite. I'm sure you know the difference

how it's used and all. But they would pack it in a section of bamboo, a small section, one single section of bamboo. They'd pack the gelignite in it with clay and let it dry, set the fuse out there. We'd go to one of these deep, still holes in the river where just below the hole it was shallow, you know, wide. They'd get us a net. They'd get a bunch of the horios--that's prisoners in Jap--they'd get a bunch of horios down there to hold the net. They'd throw this gelignite into the big hole in the river, and we'd get a whole bunch of fish. They'd take part and give us the rest of them--things like that.

Marcello: So you did have these various ways of supplementing your food?

Smallwood: Oh, yes, we did. We ate elephants, snakes, pythons. Every once in awhile, one of the guards would shoot some kind of an animal, and we'd butcher that.

Marcello: Were poisonous snakes a problem as you were digging these cuts or making these fills?

Smallwood: I don't recall anybody being bitten by a snake. There was a type of snake in the jungle, and I've seen them, but I don't even know the name of them, but they're very small. They're supposed to be the most deadly snake in the whole of the Orient.

Marcello: I think Pryor was talking about these, and when you would encounter these particular snakes, he mentioned that nobody really paid too much attention to them or anything.

Smallwood: We didn't. That's the very snake he's talking about--very small. They're more like a hair than they are like anything else, like a horsehair. But the natives were scared stiff of them. We weren't paying any attention to them. We were running around working barefooted on the railroad. Suddenly these natives are just frozen. We'd run into a bunch of these snakes--supposed to affect your nervous system. I suppose they were very dangerous. I don't recall anybody getting bit by one of them. We had to shoot the python and skin him. Very good. We had filleted python. But snake is very . . . it's a very delicate food. It's very good, as a matter of fact.

Marcello: Of all the camps that you were in on the railroad, where were things the worst? It must have been at either the 80 or the 100 Kilo Camp, I bet.

Smallwood: To me, it was the 80 Kilo Camp because this is the one where we followed the people that had cholera here this one time. This camp was wiped out almost to

the man--British. There was no Americans here. Maybe one or two, I don't recall. But mostly English. Most of the guards were lost too. But in twenty-four hours' time, it was pretty much wiped out. But 85 Kilo Camp is where we lost more people. We buried nine people there in one day. I was laid up at that time. I had an ulcer. I guess you've heard something about tropical ulcers.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about these tropical ulcers.

Smallwood: Okay. They start with scratches. A bamboo cut is the easiest way, I guess, to get one started. They are like . . . they were the quarter horse of the cancer, as far as I'm concerned. You talk about big people! I've seen men weighing <u>well</u> over 200 pounds get this ulcer on their feet, and in just a very short time, a week or ten days. all the flesh would be gone from their hip down, and just leaving skin and bones. In other words, you could just take your hand like that (gesture) on their leg and just strip it down. Of course, they didn't last very long. Now I got a small ulcer on the side of my foot. The only time I was really scared and scared bad was with ulcers in the jungle because I'd seen so many people die with

this. So it really frightened me. I guess for about seventy-two hours without ever going to sleep, I just bathed that foot constantly in hot tea. Just time after time I'd use that hot tea and just keep bathing that foot. I've still got the scar. But it's only very small on the side of my foot, and it never really got very big. It healed. Don't ask me why, but it did. It healed and that was my only stint with tropical ulcers.

Marcello: You mentioned that you used hot tea? Was that sort of thing rather plentiful here in the camp?

Smallwood: Yes. We did have a lot of green tea. Tea was very cheap, and there seemed to be plenty of it. Usually in the kitchen, there was always hot tea. We drank very little water because we knew better. But that was the one time . . . and we lost a tremendous amount of people. At 85 Kilo Camp, we buried . . . we had a lot of amputees at this place. It was just a real mess. It was the worst camp as far as I'm concerned.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had a lot of amputees. I'm sure these amputations must have taken place under the most primitive of conditions.

Smallwood: Hand saws, butcher knives.

Marcello: No anesthetics at all?

Smallwood: Oh, no, no. Yes, an aspirin (chuckle).

Marcello: If you could find one of those, I suppose.

Smallwood: Well, they'd pass out.

Marcello: Well, were most of these operations performed by Japanese doctors?

Smallwood: Oh, no. No, no. No, no.

Marcello: The Japanese didn't provide any doctors at all in these camps?

Smallwood: No, no. Now this camp you spoke of before--and I've never been there--but if you were really bad, and you really had to have a leg taken off, they usually sent you back there. There was a guy by the name of Colonel Coats. Have you ever heard the name?

Marcello: No.

Smallwood: He was Australian, I <u>think</u>. They told me that he handled most of this. He was a big fellow, smoked a cigar, one of those native cigars. But he'd just saw off a leg (chuckle). Very nonchalant. There was a Dutch doctor, too, that did a lot of surgery over there, limb surgery. He came to one of our reunions one time. They brought him here. I can't

remember his name. But he and his wife . . . I met them. It was about three years ago. The battalion group brought him over here.

Marcello: I understand that he had won the respect of a great many of the Americans in the "Lost Battalion."

Smallwood: I can't remember the guy's name now, but he really was very much respected by everybody.

Marcello: How bad did you have to be before you could get on sick call?

Smallwood: Well, I worked several days, day after day, with a 103° temperature. You could get on sick call. But this many times was argued by your own doctor in the medical group, but really a doctor is what it amounted to. Then we lost ours, of course, in the jungle. He died of dysentery.

Marcello: This was Dr. Lumpkin.

Smallwood: Right, right. But after that, it was just an orderly, a medical orderly, and that sort of thing. But you could get on sick call and plead your case, but you didn't get very far. That railroad had to be built. If you could stand up, you usually went out.

Marcello: You mentioned that the 85 Kilo Camp was the worst one for you. What other afflictions did you have besides the tropical ulcer?

Smallwood: Well, malaria.

Marcello: Which everybody had, I'm sure, or just about everybody.

Smallwood: I never had dysentery. I never got dysentery.

Marcello: That's quite unusual.

Smallwood: It certainly is. I never had dysentery the whole time I was over there. Malaria was my biggest problem. Now the reason for the problem was that at the 85 Kilo Camp we hit here right at the beginning of the monsoon. It rained and rained for days on end. It was washing the fill out on the railroad. We were working eighteen hours a day. They were being pressured every minute to get the work done. It was just muck. The more we'd stack up, the more it would spread out. A fill that was supposed to be eighteen or twenty meters across would be forty meters across--that sort of thing. The work was just being undone by the weather. Working in that wet, damp environment all the time, day in and day out, and being wet all day long and all night long, it was just one of the miserable times. But now personally, other than the little stint with the ulcer which was not serious--I mean it was serious to me, but it was not serious--other than that, I had

malaria an awful lot. Other than malaria, I had nothing else.

Marcello: How do you account for the fact that you never got dysentery?

Smallwood: Gee, I don't know. I don't know. I suppose I just never got the bug. You had to get the bug. I mean, you really had to get the bug.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that at the 85 Kilo Camp you were losing as many as nine or ten men per day. Did you ever go on any of the burial details?

Smallwood: Oh, definitely. Yes, sir. Definitely.

Marcello: Could you describe what they were like?

Smallwood: We put nine men in one hole in that one day.

Marcello: In other words, it would be a mass grave.

Smallwood: Well, yes. This was because of the weather conditions. We had a spot to bury the people. We had an assigned spot. They'd bury them on this hill. There was even some effort towards making some kind of a marker, cross. Somebody in camp, some crippled guy, was doing something like this. They were left behind many times. We'd dig it out, and it'd fill up with water as fast as you'd dig it. Then the only thing you could do with it . . . and these guys would die and some of

them would be all drawn up, and the only way you could even straighten them out would be to cut their leaders (tendons) and sit on their legs. We had to do this many times. We'd wrap them in a bamboo mat with ropes or something and just dump them in there. It was a very frightening and tough thing. But we put those nine people in the same hole.

Marcello: Were there records kept of the deaths and things of that nature?

Smallwood: Well, as nearly as we could. The officers kept the tags and their personal effects as much as they could, whatever they had. But you know how that would be. They knew who it was. They knew who died.

Marcello: You've alluded to this on several occasions without actually identifying it. But in May of 1943, they started the so-called "Speedo" campaign. This was also around the time that the monsoons were at their height. I figure that this is when things <u>really</u> were bad. You mentioned you were working as long as eighteen hours a day.

Smallwood: Now, yes, we were because you had your assignment to do. I don't care how hard you worked or how long hours you worked. This was really no fault of the camp

commandant. This was really no fault of the engineers. This was really no fault of the guards. They were under a mandate to do a job, and I suppose they'd lose their heads if they didn't. They knew only one thing to do--to drive us. The weather was against us. There was just nothing . . . everything went wrong. You just couldn't accomplish it. It was impossible.

Marcello: I gather that this is when food was scarce, too, because the roads, I suppose, were being washed out and everything.

Smallwood: They were trying to bring troops down through that jungle. It was terrible. I've seen them come down the road where there'd be five or six Japanese soldiers with ropes over their shoulders, pulling fieldpieces. They were like animals. So they didn't have it all that good either. I'm not taking up for them. I'm just facing facts. I try not to cry about things that are not . . . they couldn't avoid much of that stuff. Sometimes they didn't have enough food to give us. They probably wouldn't have given it to us if they'd had it. They proved that at times.

Marcello: I was going to ask you if the Japanese soldier was living a little bit better than you were food-wise.

Smallwood: Oh, well, sure, they were living better than we were, sure. But you would expect that, I think. On the other hand, they weren't living all that good. They weren't living all that good. It was just one of those times in the jungle. The British said it couldn't be done. The British had previously said it was too expensive to build that railroad, and it couldn't be done.

Marcello: You're referring to the fact that the British had attempted or at least were thinking about building such a railroad before the war.

Smallwood: They certainly studied the feasibility of doing it. From an engineering standpoint, they said it was impossible, impractical. They didn't ever start it, really.

Marcello: Well, it was finally finished in either October or November of 1943.

Smallwood: Now I was not there. I was not there.

Marcello: By that time you'd moved?

Smallwood: By the summer of '43, right after the monsoon broke, we went on to 105 Kilo Camp, went to the 100 and then the 105 and stayed just a short time there. The monsoon was clearing up then. Then we went on into Thailand to a camp . . . I want to call it . . .

Marcello: Kanchanaburi?

Smallwood: Yes.

Marcello: Kanburi it was called for short, I think.

Smallwood: That's it, Kanburi. This is where they built the monument to the people that were lost on the railroad.

Marcello: Do you know anything at all about that monument?

Smallwood: Well, I've seen it. I was there at the dedication ceremony.

Marcello: Describe what this was like.

Smallwood: Well, I can't remember exactly.

Marcello: Now this wasn't at . . . was this at Three Pagodas Pass?

Smallwood: Yes, by the river, by the river.

Marcello: It was called Three Pagodas Pass?

Smallwood: Well, I guess so.

Marcello: Okay.

Smallwood: Anyway, we had this big . . . now this was another tough camp.

Marcello: Without talking about Kanchanaburi, why don't we just talk about the ceremony, and we'll stop there. Next time we talk, we'll pick it up from there.

Smallwood: Okay, now the monument was pretty good-sized.

Marcello: Was this built at Japanese instigation?

Smallwood: Yes, that's right. I think this was done . . . the

Japanese are <u>great</u> people. If they can save face, they'll do a lot of things. They were trying to make amends here. We'd lost 70,000 people on the railroad. You're aware of that.

Marcello: That includes all nationalities?

Smallwood: Right. Enough people to bury under every crosstie from Moulmein to Bangkok. That's a lot of people. They'd lost that many people, that many prisoners-of-war. They built this little monument up there, and they tooted their horn. They had us all . . . everybody that could go--could walk--went to this deal. The Japanese officers came from far and wide. I think maybe there was even a general who came, and they put on a big show and dedicated that to the tremendous task that was done on the railroad. The monument was, like I say, five or six feet wide, as I recall. It was in a little park-like area with trees.

Marcello: Was it made out of concrete or what?

Smallwood: Yes, made out of concrete. It had something on it, and I can't remember what it was. But this was very, very close to this big camp, this big staging camp, that you called . . .

Marcello: Kanchanaburi.

Smallwood: Yes. Now this was a very miserable camp. There was lots of people died at this camp. It had one of the probably biggest burying grounds there at anyplace that I saw. They died . . . they were coming out of the jungle with all kinds of things. Lots of people were getting this brain . . . malaria was affecting their brain. Oh, it was a weird camp. All of the time we were . . . we weren't there, too long. But there was, oh, death after death, and people were screaming and taking on. They'd get this condition, and they didn't last very long.

Marcello: Well, before we get into that, I have just a few more questions, and we can finish up this particular portion of the interview. Were you impressed with the memorial service?

Smallwood: No, no.

Marcello: What were your thoughts as you had to endure this memorial service?

Smallwood: Well, to me, I mean it's . . . we went there, and we saw it happen. We wanted to see the monument, to see what it was. But we were completely convinced and fully aware of the fact that it wasn't anything in the world but a hoax. I mean, the Japanese were doing this for show. They weren't sincere at all.

Marcello: A few other general questions. Had you ever received any Red Cross packages or anything up to this time?

Smallwood: None.

Marcello: Had you ever been able to send any mail to the outside world up to this time? Now I know from time to time the Japanese would allow you to send those little postcards where you had to indicate that your health was either good, fair, or poor.

Smallwood: I don't believe I sent a card until I was in Saigon. I know that I sent three the entire time, and my wife got two of them.

Marcello: One other question. Did the officers have to work on this railroad? Did the Japanese make the officers work on the railroad?

Smallwood: No. There was an officer in charge of, say, fifty men.

Marcello: There was an American officer in charge of fifty men?

Smallwood: Yes, and a British officer would be in charge of fifty British men.

Marcello: Did this cause any resentment at all among the men, the fact that the officers weren't working?

Smallwood: Not necessarily. Not necessarily. Really, I don't think we really expected them to do it. No, I don't think so.

Oral History Collection

Mr. P. J. Smallwood

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas Date: October 25, 1973

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. P. J. Smallwood for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 25, 1973, in Dallas, Texas. This is the second interview with Mr. Smallwood concerning his experiences while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. At the conclusion of our last interview, Mr. Smallwood had just finished talking about the completion of the Burma-Thailand Railroad and was about to be transferred to another camp. This was in October or November of 1943.

Before we talk about your move to your next station, I have a few general questions yet before we actually leave the railroad. Now one is this. Were there ever very many efforts to engage upon sabotage on this railroad? Was there anything done to wreck the Japanese work so to speak?

Mr. Smallwood: We didn't work on a finished product or see trains moving on a track, so there was no way. Now as far

as sabotaging the line, I wouldn't think so because I don't know what we could have . . . I don't know what we could have done, really.

Marcello: Could you possibly accidentally misplace tools, say shovels, picks, or things of that nature?

Smallwood: I didn't. All it was was a shovel and a pick and a yo-yo stick and a burlap sack.

Marcello: Another question comes up. Did you ever maintain any secret radios or anything of this nature?

Smallwood: Early in Burma we didn't. But later on--and I forgot what camp it was. Now whether it was from our camp or whether it was the adjoining camp where some Dutch people were or some English, I'm not sure--but we used to get just a . . . it was more . . . we didn't get to . . . everyone didn't get to read it. But someone in each barracks would get to read sort of a little BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] message. So there must have been some kind of a radio contact.

Marcello: How was this usually done? Did somebody get the sheet of paper and then he read it to everybody else?

Smallwood: No, no, they would just by word of mouth pass it from one to another. Now I'm sure this many times might have even been ballooned up. But what it consisted of mostly was some place had been invaded or a major

battle had been fought. We were always the winner and that sort of thing. I suppose it was as much propaganda as anything else, but you could gather generally where the troops were being massed and where the lines were at least and things like that.

Marcello: I'm sure this sort of thing must have done wonders for your morale.

Smallwood: It did. It did. That's why we kept thinking, "Surely the day after tomorrow we'll whip them (chuckle)."

Marcello: That brings up another interesting question. How often did you see men simply give up and lay down and die?

Smallwood: Well, now how often, I can't say. I do know that while I was in prison camp, that on no less than five or six occasions, in specific instances, people did just this. They were not necessarily sick to start with either. I couldn't call names or ages or what branch of the service they were in, whether they were in the Navy, Marine Corps or Army, but there was a number of these people that just, I guess, just gave up. I think that's the way you would describe it.

Marcello: What would they do? How could you tell, in other words, when somebody'd given up?

Smallwood: Well, they'd just . . . first, they'd get moody. They don't mix with the rest of the guys very much anymore. They'd set around with a faraway look on their face. Then they'd talk a lot about home. They'd gripe a lot, or they'd go on a strike against the food. They wouldn't eat and things like this. They'd talk about the things they did at home. The first thing you know, they were ill, really. From then on, it was just a gradual falling off. Then they would get sick and die.

Marcello: Did you ever see any cases of mental disorder?

Smallwood: No, no, not really. I would consider this being the closest thing to it.

Marcello: That's why I managed to bring up the question.

Smallwood: I think this is . . . this starts out . . . maybe it is mental disorder.

Marcello: I'm sure to a great extent it is.

Smallwood: That's certainly the beginning of it. But as far as just going off the rocker or something like this, not too many did this. Now, of course, you know malaria, in certain stages of malaria, you go stark raving mad. Now I've seen quite a bit of this. Particularly . . . what's the name of this place in Burma that . . .

Marcello: Kanchanaburi?

Smallwood: Kanchanaburi, yes.

Marcello: I think they called it Kanburi for short.

Smallwood: We used to call it "Kanchanabra" or some place like that. But that's the place it was. This was a big camp, and it was extremely hot there. Burma must be about . . . I mean, Bangkok must be about the hottest place on earth. But there was a lot of that there. You didn't even know who it was, but you could hear it day and night.

Marcello: You'd been up working on the railroad for some time before it was completed. How did you replenish your clothing supply? I'm sure there must have been all sorts of ingenuity evidenced on this particular point, since the jungle just must have rotted your clothing and so on.

Smallwood: Well, it did. We had a pretty good supply when we went in--several uniforms, several khaki uniforms. It seems to me that on one or two occasions, they issued us some Dutch uniforms, clothing, at one time and some British at one time. Then, of course, if you could afford it, we used to buy from each other in camp. The British, of course, would sell off

anything they had. I mean, they really would. We used to buy some British walking shorts and things like that. Of course, you didn't need much when you was out there working.

Marcello: A lot of times were you down strictly to the G-string, or did you ever reach that point?

Smallwood: Oh, I never . . . now, I did not. That's what I was telling you the other night. Ray LaBove from Port Arthur and I kept a full uniform until way on up into . . . we were way on up into Burma on the railroad. I'm talking about a full uniform--long trousers, shirt, tie, cap, everything (chuckle). We were ready to go (chuckle).

Marcello: Where were you going (chuckle)?

Smallwood: No, we really were. Optimists, I guess you'd say, idiots. But that's the way we got our start.

Marcello: You got all these things through this business activity that you engaged in?

Smallwood: Yes, yes. Of course, we maintained this uniform from back when we were taken. We kept a full uniform to wear out of that place. I'll tell you what it was for (chuckle).

Marcello: That's really being optimistic. But like you say, this

is one of the things that you needed to be in order to get through, quite obviously.

Smallwood: Frankly, I don't think those that weren't optimists came home. That may be kind of a funny way to put it, but I really don't.

Marcello: I would also assume that by this time, all of the prisoners had become pack rats. I'll bet you were scavengers and collected anything that you thought would be of value to you. Can you think of some of the odd articles perhaps that you may have had in your own kit?

Smallwood: Well, we traveled rather lightly, Ray and I. But, yes, you're right. To see people when we'd move from one camp to another, that's when you really saw it. Little cans with wire bales, all sorts of things hanging on them in different places. It looked like one of these fellows you see standing on the street corner with a World War I uniform on with all the medals and stripes. You've seen that? Well, this is much the way we did. Now the people that did this more than anyone else--and I suppose it was really comical--were the Dutch because they were really pack rats. Now they really were. The British, I guess, were pretty bad. We were bad, bad enough. But I

don't believe the Americans ever hung on to things like that. The Dutch and the British used joints of bamboo to keep water in and things like that. They might have three or four joints of bamboo. Well, I realized when you got to the next camp, they'd have another joint of bamboo down there just the same as they had from where we came, so I didn't bother to carry it. The only time that ever separated me from my gear was complete exhaustion. I mean, you just couldn't carry it anymore, and you didn't want to, so you'd throw it aside. I've done that. But that's right. You didn't throw anything away. You really set a high value on things like a blanket and shoes, as long as they lasted. You set a high value on these things. Head gear, very, very definitely because that was one of the things that could really do you in. But head gear and a blanket and shoes. Of course, we run out of shoes. I worked for months and months and months in Burma and never owned a pair of shoes.

Marcello: Here again I would assume that the jungle took a very heavy toll upon shoes.

Smallwood: Yes. I remember--and I can't remember what camp it was either--but I do know that it was a time when I

was really suffering a lot of malaria. I had an awful lot of that. I really had it. But anyway, we'd worked through the hot part of the year, and going barefooted and working all day, you really form a very thick skin on your feet. We got some rats in the camp--big ones. I got up one morning, and when I swung my feet off the bunk, I couldn't stand up. My feet were so tender that I couldn't even walk (chuckle). The rats had literally shaved that skin right off of your feet at night and not even wake you up (chuckle). They did numerous people that way. Another time, you'd get a build-up of this thick skin on your feet, and then the monsoon came along. Walking in the mud and water all the time, you'd wash your feet off and look at the bottom, and it was like you'd take a razor blade and just slit it like that (gesture) because it'd become soft and then cut on the rocks and things like that. But, yes, we were pretty much pack rats. We didn't throw things away.

Marcello: Incidentally, how great was theft in the camp?

Smallwood: Well, I would say it was a minimum. We had some of that, yes.

Marcello: I would assume that if anybody'd get caught stealing from a fellow prisoner, the punishment was rather severe.

Smallwood: Well, of course, the Japanese or Koreans did not get involved in this. We did not report anything like that to them, of course. Now stealing from them was a very serious thing. It was supposed to be the death penalty. We had this, yes. But we didn't have it as much as you would think. One instance and this . . . I won't even get into this, but I'll give you an example. I mentioned a fellow by the name of Joe Rivero. We had another fellow called Frank Looney. His initials were F. A., Frank A. Looney. Joe Rivero swiped his mess kit. Anyway, he had F. A. L. on the bottom of his mess kit, a regular standard mess kit, and he had it carved into the bottom of the metal with a knife or a nail or something, F. A. L. Well, Joe Rivero got this mess kit, and Frank caught him with it and challenged him. Joe said, "Oh, no, that's mine." He said, "No, it has my name on it, Frank A. Looney." Joe said, "My name is Francis Antonio Louis. So those are my initials, too."

Marcello: Looney didn't know Rivero's name apparently.

Smallwood: No, no, that was just for short. I think his name was something along that line (chuckle). We had some

of that. But I would say that that was not a real serious problem at any time.

Marcello: Now how about religion? Did you see people become more religious under these rather adverse circumstances, or did you see no difference?

Smallwood: I would say no. The very small amount of actual combat that we had and saw and the bombing raids and the strafing raids and that sort of thing, I saw more evidence then than I did later on. From time to time they used to have a church service. Different people within the group had Bibles and read the Bible and had a service, after a fashion, from time to time. On rare occasions, I think some priest came through. From where, I don't know. Maybe he was Dutch, I don't know, or Australian. But they used to have a service in camp periodically. I went to a couple of them with Ray. They were mostly Catholics down in there. But they were for all groups, all denominations. But not really, not really.

Marcello: How about collaboration? Did you ever see very many instances of prisoners openly or clandestinely collaborating with the Japanese in order to curry certain favors?

Smallwood: None, no. One instance that . . . and one fellow. But one instance I'll use as an example. This was an Italian boy from Port Arthur, Texas. Clean-cut, good-looking. Zip Zummo. You've heard of him, I'm sure. Vincent Patrick Zummo.

Marcello: Yes.

Smallwood: Very clean-cut boy and a very nice person, too. But high-tempered, it was like a spring. Anyway, when we were . . . I guess it all started about the 15 Kilo Camp. Zip--now I don't know how--but he got to be . . . he started working in the Japanese kitchen. Being a real fancy guy, real dandy, well, he always dressed nice, and he stayed in camp. He was a very clean fellow, and he was that way all the time. He picked up some Japanese, and guys began to resent it. As a matter of fact, in the 15 Kilo Camp, right after this started . . . we had a sailor. We had a day off. We were all in camp, and many of us were sitting in the barracks. Now in the barracks, the bed deal, the floor, was about this high (gesture).

Marcello: About three or four feet high?

Smallwood: Yes. This fellow, this sailor, was sitting there, and he had his head against the post. There was a bamboo

post about this big (gesture) that went on up and held the roof up. But he was sitting there with his head against this post and was yakking with a bunch of other guys. Zip walked in. He had come from the kitchen over to the barracks to pick up something at his bed. I don't know what it was. But there'd been some remarks made before that. Well, when Zip walked in the front door, he hollered, "Ki o tsukete," which you're supposed to do if a Japanese walks in. He hollered, "Ki o tsukete." Well, it just so happened that Zip was wearing a pair of shorts, and he was rather dark-complected anyway. He had this white towel . . . he had his hair cut real short, and he had this white towel around his head. He looked the part. I'll tell you, he almost looked the part. But when he walked in the door--this guy knew better--but he hollered, "Ki o tsukete," and everybody jumped up as they're supposed to do (chuckle). Well, Zip didn't even break stride. I was sitting right across the aisle from him. He didn't even break stride. He went right on by him. Then he stopped dead still, and he turned around, and he walked back. He said, "Who said that?" Of course, this guy said, "Hi."

That's as far as he ever got (chuckle). Oh, he just ruined him. He hit him so hard right on the nose--and, of course, his head was already resting against that pole--until he crushed out every bone in his nose. This guy almost died. Boy, he had a terrible time. He hemorrhaged a lot, and they had no way of resetting his nose and all that.

But this time and then later on, this continued and progressed. I'm not going to ever say that Zip ever did anything he shouldn't have done. I would not say that. But he did enough to where a lot of people didn't like it. They thought he was realizing too many favors and being too friendly.

But on at a later time, he went out on a work party one day. I guess he had a slack day in camp or something. He went out on a regular party. While he was out there, he'd picked . . . he thought he'd picked up more Japanese than he had. So some natives came by with some sugar made out of cane. It was very rough sugar in its roughest form. But some of the guys wanted to buy it, and the guard, of course, wouldn't let them. He was a Korean. Well, Zip knew him pretty good, and he was talking to the guard about it. He

said, "Now . . . " in his pidgin Japanese . . . he was trying to tell him, "Now, we're prisoners. We're horios. You're the guard. You're the bigshot. We'd like to buy the sugar. Now if the situation was reversed, then I'd let you buy." Well, the guy was just stupid enough to misunderstand (chuckle). He was smart enough to pick it up, but he was stupid enough to misunderstand in the wrong way. He got the idea that Zip was saying, "Pretty soon, you will be my prisoner." Well, he reported him when he got in. You always had the Kempeis [secret police] nearby. You know who I'm talking about?

Marcello: Yes.

Smallwood: Okay.

Marcello: These were the same as the secret police.

Smallwood: Right. Then the next morning, long before daylight, Zip was taken away from camp over to the main headquarters across the draw. They kept him from before daylight until . . . well, we came in late that afternoon, and he was still over there then. When they turned him loose, Zip was no longer the same man. He was terribly beaten. I think some ribs were broken. Oh, he was just really, really . . . he was the guy

that they fed him lots of raw rice and made him drink hot tea and put cigarette butts out on him and knocked him off of these little high porches made out of bamboo, knocked him off there with rifle butts. They worked him over real good. But from then on, he was just absolutely . . . the rest of the time that he was in prison, he was just absolutely scared to death of a Japanese. Every time one came, he'd bow and go more than . . . that, I saw. What amazed me was how much of that was in the Korean deal. We had nothing like that. Maybe our situation was completely different. I'm sure it was. But we had nothing like that at all. Now with Zip, like I say . . . he couldn't have . . . he didn't do anybody any harm, really. He just made some guys . . . he needled some guys, I think, more than anything else. But as far as releasing anything or doing anybody any real harm, I don't see how he could have.

Marcello: This is something, I think, that needs to get into the record. I think it was not a matter of him actually turning informer or anything of that nature.

Smallwood: Oh, no, no.

Marcello: I would say that probably it perhaps was a little bit of jealousy or envy on the part of some of these

people that . . . he just happened to get a good job, and they'd have liked to have had it.

Smallwood: It was. It was, right. Zip was a good friend of mine and . . .

Marcello: I say this because I've got to stick up for a fellow Italian (laughter).

Smallwood: Right. But he was a good friend of mine. I think you've learned already that I tried to make my own way. I didn't muddy the water for anyone else. But if someone else is doing something, as long as it's not harmful to the group, as long as it's not harmful to the country, I had no animosity toward him at all and told him so. As a matter of fact, I was quite sympathetic with him when he got worked over like he did because this does something to a man's pride. It hurts. But there was practically none of this collaboration, practically none.

Marcello: I assume that the Japanese made virtually no attempt whatsoever to win over your minds to the Japanese cause. In other words, there was no sort of psychological warfare being carried on in these camps.

Smallwood: It was more the other way around. They wanted to ridicule you and make fun of you more than they . . .

they made no move, as far as I'm concerned, to win you over.

Marcello: They were interested in humiliating you, in other words.

Smallwood: That's right, absolutely. Getting as much work done . . . getting as much work out of you as they could and keep you in a state of mind where you were completely demoralized, absolutely.

Marcello: I would gather that generally in camp the Japanese guards kept to themselves, or the Japanese personnel kept to themselves and really didn't bother you too much in camp itself.

Smallwood: Very little. They would on occasion. I think this was more being lonely than anything else. I suppose that walking guard is not all that much fun. I know it isn't. But they'd come through the camp every once in awhile. A lone ranger would come through the camp. On occasion, you'd get one in a bad humor. They'd come through the camp looking for trouble, too, but it wasn't anything like they were going to line you up or shoot you or anything like that. But one would get up with a brown taste in their mouth or something like that. Or maybe they'd caught the dickens for something, and they always wanted to pass it on. But

as far as just . . . they didn't do too much of that. Now if there was a bunch of them together, and you passed and didn't salute, or they passed you and you didn't salute, well, you might get batted around a little bit. But mostly it was for taking things that didn't belong to you and doing things like that.

Marcello: Did the Japanese live separately from the Koreans?

Smallwood: Yes.

Marcello: Here again, I think this was a superior-inferior relationship, was it not?

Smallwood: Oh, no doubt. Absolutely no doubt. The standard camp might consist . . . in Burma, when we were working details and things like that, you had more Japanese because they were more in the engineering background. But later on, it was more like we might have a sergeant and maybe one more Japanese, and the rest of them would be Koreans. Very, very few. But they did not mix, no. They did not.

Marcello: Well, that brings us up, then, more or less, to the point where you were transferred. Now in your case, I guess it was sometime around January of 1944, perhaps, that you were transferred to Kanburi, Kanchanaburi, however it's pronounced.

Smallwood: Yes, it was about in the first of the year, '44.

Marcello: Incidentally, now I assume that at the time you were transferred, the unit was broken up. In other words, everybody didn't go to Kanchanaburi.

Smallwood: Oh, no, no.

Marcello: Some went . . .

Smallwood: Just a camp, maybe.

Marcello: Right. Some went back down to Changi again, I think, and you went various other places.

Smallwood: Yes, they could have. But, no, it was not the whole group that went at one time. We moved by camps, and we moved to Thailand in this way, too.

Marcello: Was this a rather unsettling experience of . . . well, it probably wasn't the case with your group because you had been moving from camp to camp anyhow. But I guess this was a pretty big change going from the railroad to Kanchanaburi, wasn't it?

Smallwood: Well, yes. To us the big thing was that the railroad was finished. That was the big thing. We wanted out of the jungle, surely. Now we were way up the line before we saw a train. When we saw the first train, we were way up around the 105 or maybe even the 155. But we knew . . . we had word back that they

were going on toward Moulmein from there, and there was evidence of it, too. But we wanted to get out of there because we wanted that railroad finished. We wanted to be done with it and be gone. So when our group moved out and moved on to Thailand, well, it was a real relief to us. We didn't know where we were going.

Marcello: I gather if they'd have asked for volunteers to go someplace, you'd have jumped at it.

Smallwood: Oh, yes, yes, definitely. Very definitely.

Marcello: Well, anyway, how did you get from . . .did the railroad pass by this camp? Did it pass by Kanchanaburi?

Smallwood: Oh, yes, all your camps were . . . no, not right by that one. We had to walk. This one was . . . the only thing I know is that it was close to a river. But it was not too far off the railroad, and we rode up that far. But there was some marching to do before we got to this camp. But it was hot and dry. We moved into this camp and settled down. I don't even remember how long we stayed there, but it was for some time that we were there.

Marcello: What did this camp look like?

Smallwood: Just sprawling in a flat . . . I mean, in a delta-like area. It was a big camp. It was all bamboo like the

ones had been along the line, but much bigger. They had a hospital. They had the hospital building there. Of course, that was a numerous deal--not just an aisle and two bunks on each side, but a lot bigger building. There was a lot of buildings there, a lot of people there from all nationalities.

Marcello: Now I gather that there were thousands and thousands of prisoners at this place.

Smallwood: Oh, yes, this was a big camp. This was a big camp. It was a staging area, I guess, for moving not only into Bangkok but the other way before the railroad was finished because we had people coming down from that side, and I'm sure they came through there.

Marcello: In other words, I gather that to a great extent, Kanburi was to the Thailand side that Thanbyuzayat was to the Burmese side.

Smallwood: Right. This camp that people went back to was very definitely probably very similar to this. Although I didn't go back there to look, I'm sure it must have been.

Marcello: Okay, what did you do when you got to this camp?

Smallwood: We did no work here. We did absolutely no work. More people were . . . well, I wouldn't say they were sick, but they weren't well either.

Marcello: They'd gotten all the work out of this group they possibly could have at that period.

Smallwood: Right. They were worked down, really. This was, I guess, a recovery camp, a hospital camp. I don't even remember how long we stayed there, but not too long.

Marcello: What were conditions like in this camp? Let's say, so far as food, your quarters, sanitary facilities?

Smallwood: Well, it didn't improve. Food did not improve. Now I had suffered a lot of malaria. I had it there. About every ten days, I'd get malaria. They had lots of quinine. They had 98 per cent of the world's supply of quinine, to be exact. They had lots of that, and they gave lots of that. On ten-day cycles, I had malaria just as regular as it came around. So this would last--it'd be chills and high fever--for two or three days. Then I'd make it on to about almost two weeks, and then start the cycle over again. So you'd take this quinine during the time that you had chills and fever. Then you'd taper off toward the end and start over again on the next one. But on cycles like this was pretty much my stay there. Like I say, we didn't work. They built this monument, and we went down there, and we went a couple of other places.

Marcello: This was at Three Pagodas Pass, was it not?

Smallwood: Right, yes. But we did not do any work there. It was just a transit camp.

Marcello: What were your barracks like?

Smallwood: Just like they were in the jungle, except much bigger, much bigger.

Marcello: Were they built in a better location, however? In other words, were they drier or anything of this nature?

Smallwood: Oh, they were definitely drier. It was like being on the desert after being in the jungle. I mean, it was really dry there. The few times that we got over to the river, we really enjoyed it. We really enjoyed it, getting in the water, getting in the river.

Marcello: The river was the sole bathing facility then, I gather.

Smallwood: Oh, yes. Yes, it was.

Marcello: You apparently had a certain amount of leisure time here at this camp. What did you do in your leisure time?

Smallwood: Just sat. The sun was too hot to be outside. We didn't do any sports or anything like that.

Marcello: What did you talk about?

Smallwood: Everything under the sun. Small group . . . there'd be one or two guys in a bunch. You didn't confine

your efforts to talk just to that group, but you took it easy and didn't do anything outstanding.

Marcello: By this time, did you more or less form little cliques, that is, maybe two or three prisoners looked out for one another and this sort of thing?

Smallwood: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, very definitely. I think this was done long before this, long before this. But again, it's a very odd thing, I guess. But to me, this was today, and tomorrow was another day. I think our close group, my very small close group--and particularly Ray LaBove and I--we just kind of took it that way. I mean, today was today, and tomorrow, well, we would be getting a little bit closer to the time the thing would be over and we'd be out of there.

Marcello: I guess it was kind of like, "Well, thank goodness, we've gotten through this day. Now let's get ready to look toward the next day."

Smallwood: Right. We knew in this camp that we were going someplace. We weren't just going to stay there because we'd heard that we were going to move on--and did--move on to Bangkok and then move on to someplace else. This was shortly before we . . . everyone got nervous

about going to Japan. We figured that would end it. That'd be where we'd end up, would be in Japan. We didn't want to go there.

Marcello: This is interesting, and maybe we need to talk about this. I gather that this probably was one of the topics of conversation during your leisure hours here at Kanburi.

Smallwood: Where we were going?

Marcello: Where you were going, and I'm sure the subject of Japan came up.

Smallwood: Yes, and we were very surprised that it turned out like it did because we felt that we might go into Bangkok and then go back down the peninsula.

Marcello: Why was there the great fear of going back to Japan?

Smallwood: Well, because at that point in the game, the United States had gained supremacy of the sea and the air and things like that. We very definitely got feedback, things reliable enough to know, that this was happening. You'd hear about all these ships leaving a certain port with troops and going here and going there and not making it. We didn't want to get on one of those horse manure ships and strike out. Very definitely not.

Marcello: Were there ever any air raids while you were at Kanburi?

Smallwood: Seems to me like we did have a couple. I don't believe there was any planes that showed up, but we did have an alarm a few times. Very definitely after we got to Bangkok. The short time we were there, there was a couple air raids.

Marcello: Now while you were at this particular camp, did the Japanese guards and personnel more or less leave you alone?

Smallwood: Well, they were more or less like they did in the other camps. They maintained the guardhouse, and they maintained a roster. We mustered every day in your own group, and you were counted and checked up on. But as far as just walking around in a tight circle and holding you there, no. There was a fence around the place, and you knew your boundaries.

Marcello: I gather that at times this tenko got to be a rather irritating thing, did it not?

Smallwood: Oh, yes.

Marcello: I understand they lined you up and counted you all the time.

Smallwood: Every day, twice a day.

Marcello: Tenko is the word for roll call, I think, is it not?

Smallwood: Yes, right. Morning, evening, always. Sometimes out in the field . . .

Marcello: Was there always some fellow that would foul up the count?

Smallwood: . . . if some guy would go to the latrine or something and they missed him, they might call a muster right there.

Marcello: I gather you had to count off in Japanese, too, did you not, at these roll calls usually?

Smallwood: Yes, yes.

Marcello: How about tempers? Here you were living under these rather adverse conditions. Quite obviously Zummo had a short temper when he bashed that guy. But was this a rather usual thing, that tempers were rather short under these circumstances?

Smallwood: Oh, yes, yes. Tempers flared many, many, many times. This would cause a little flurry of action.

Marcello: I'm sure that tempers flared over rather trivial things.

Smallwood: Definitely. But it did happen, and it happened many, many times. It caused some people to get pushed around pretty good, and it caused penalties, extra work.

Marcello: Is this what would happen if the Japanese would catch two Americans fighting? In other words, they would impose these penalties or extra hours?

Smallwood: They'd more or less encourage that (chuckle). No, they would stop you, but they didn't get too excited about that. But if you slapped a guard or something like that, they didn't like that too much.

Marcello: I'm sure that didn't go over too big.

Smallwood: Now this happened. This happened quite a number of times.

Marcello: I was going to ask you if it got to the point where the prisoner could not control himself and did take a swing at a guard.

Smallwood: Oh, yes. This happened numerous times in prison camp.

Marcello: Now what would happen in a case of that nature?

Smallwood: Well, sometimes nothing because if the guard . . . if it was totally the guard's fault, if his story wouldn't hold up when he got back to camp . . . he wasn't fixing to tell that Japanese sergeant when he got back in there that he got the dickens beat out of him and why. It could have been very dangerous at that very moment, depending on what the situation was.

Marcello: In other words, this was the sort of thing that one did strictly out of anger. If he thought about an action of this sort, he wouldn't do it.

Smallwood: I'll give you an example of how these things happen. This was much, much later, at a much,much later period. But we were moving. We were up near Dalat in upper Indochina, way up in the northern end. After we'd gone to Saigon, then we went to the mountains and worked for a time when we were up there. The Navy was just cutting the rail lines something awful. They'd knock all the bridges out. The train would stop on the side. We'd have to load everything off, carry it down the hill and up the next hill, and put it on the train again. It was dark and we were making one of these moves. Again, the blanket situation was to roll our blanket and put it on our shoulder because it was easier to carry it that way. The Japanese . . . this guard had this huge sack of blankets. It was just too much for one man. He said something about, "Get it. Get it and let's go." He wasn't speaking English, but we knew what he was talking about. I simply could not pick it up. I mean, that was just more than what I . . . with what I had, I just couldn't

carry it. So I blasted out at him pretty good, and he spoke better English than I did. Well, he stuck a bayonet through that . . . he hit at me, and he stuck a bayonet clear through that blanket. I carried that blanket a long time, too. I guess that when you spread it out, it had about four holes in it. He really would have done me in. But once he had gone that far, well, he cooled off, and then he helped me carry the blankets (chuckle).

I saw Lieutenant Stensland . . . you may have heard of him. He was really hot-tempered. He was a short, stocky-built fellow, slump-shouldered. But anyway, the guys were working on the railroad one day, and this Korean kept throwing just clods of dirt down on the guys, hitting them. It went on and on and on. Well, he asked them a half a dozen times not to do that, and he'd growl back at him. Well, finally, he just lost his temper completely. So he just grabbed his rifle away from him, set it over against the tree, and he just boxed him around real good (chuckle). Of course, the Japanese engineer came running up with a meter stick. Well, he hit the lieutenant a couple times with that stick and yakked at him, but they

didn't . . . he got away with it. But he boxed him pretty good. Things like that happened pretty often. Guys would lose their temper and . . . at one time or another, I've seen most of the officers lose their temper.

Marcello: Is that right?

Smallwood: They maybe did not strike one, but they'd try to lecture them on things they were doing wrong.

Marcello: Did the officers try, in many cases, to act as a type of intermediary between the Japanese and the enlisted men among the prisoners?

Smallwood: I guess you could say that.

Marcello: In other words, did they try to intercede at times on behalf of the prisoners?

Smallwood: Yes, I think they did. For the most part, our officers were really a nice bunch of guys. They were National Guard officers, most of them. I don't think I need to explain that any further. They were bank clerks and things like that and boy soldiers. But they were real nice guys. I would say they did, yes.

Marcello: Now up until this time, that is, up until the time that you got to Kanburi, had you received any Red Cross parcels at all?

Smallwood: Absolutely not. Never.

Marcello: What sort of food were you getting here at this camp? Was it the same sort of thing you were getting in the jungle?

Smallwood: Right. Mostly stew of some kind, some vegetable stew. On rare occasions it'd have some meat in it. Very, very little. Very, very little. Rice, and a poor grade of rice. That was about it.

Marcello: How was it quantity-wise:

Smallwood: Well, normally we had more than we could eat of it (chuckle).

Marcello: But that was unusual, was it not, compared to what you had in the jungle?

Smallwood: Oh, yes, yes. But it was closer to a base there. As I told you the other evening, when we were down in this jungle, how were they to get whatever it was they might have had in there?

Marcello: I would assume that the monsoons simply washed out what road there was and this sort of thing.

Smallwood: Washed them out. I've seen troops coming through pulling their own guns and then down to the trail in the muck and mire.

Marcello: Pryor related a very interesting incident with regard to this sort of thing. He mentioned working on the railroad at one particular time during this monsoon. Some Japanese soldiers were passing by, and there may have been a couple vehicles or something. Apparently, they were having a rough time making it. The vehicles were getting stuck in the mud and this sort of thing. Apparently, the Japanese guards or the Korean guards or whoever was . . . the Japanese engineers and so on, just completely ignored this group of soldiers. Pryor made an observation that this was the way the Japanese operated. One unit didn't help the other unit.

Smallwood: Oh, no. One was an administrative type. They did not mix. A front line soldier, no. No, they did not. We've worked with many, many of them where troops--I mean, people in full pack, rifle, that were on their way to the front, these are front line troops--sat for hours. You wouldn't even see them talking to each other--the guards, the engineers, something. Rarely would you even see them speak to each other. They did not. It was a different ball game altogether.

Marcello: Incidentally, at Kanburi, how much contact did you have with native traders there?

Smallwood: Not too much. Not too much. Now when we'd go down to the river on occasion, we'd see natives around there, but there was very little contact. I had, I would say, no contact.

Marcello: In other words, your business activities came to an end when you got to Kanburi.

Smallwood: Right. Absolutely, because that was a different place then.

Marcello: You said awhile ago you weren't sure how long you were at Kanburi. Was it a matter of weeks, or was it a matter of months?

Smallwood: Well, all I know is we left the jungle in either January or February, and we moved up there in '44, and in May we were in Saigon. So it couldn't have been too long because I remember on my birthday, we were in Saigon.

Marcello: Okay, I think this more or less brings us up to the time when you left Kanburi. What were your feelings when you heard that you were going to leave once again?

Smallwood: First, when we left this camp, we were selected--I'm sure we were selected--by our physical ability and physical condition. We were selected and moved into Bangkok, to another camp in Bangkok. We were there

only a short time. But we were taken out of this base camp, this big hospital camp, and moved in there. We didn't know where we were going, but they very definitely knew where we were going. But we were selected because we were, I suppose, the ones that were in the best physical condition.

Marcello: So you went from Kanburi to this camp?

Smallwood: Right into the city of Bangkok.

Marcello: In Bangkok. Did it have a name, this camp or . . .

Smallwood: I don't remember the name of it. It was right on the edge of Bangkok.

Marcello: It wasn't a place like Tamarkan or Tamuang or one of those, was it?

Smallwood: Well, it could have been. I don't remember the name.

Marcello: Those were some of the other camps that were mentioned here, and I'm not sure in my own mind exactly where they were.

Smallwood: There was a camp there that, when we were liberated in Saigon, we went back there. We flew back there and landed on the way to Calcutta and picked up some Americans there. They came from probably this same camp in Bangkok that we were in. I don't remember the name of it. Of course, we only saw them at the

runway. We set down, set the plane down on the runway, and they were there ready to load when we got there.

Marcello: Well, by what means of transportation did you get from Kanburi to this camp in Bangkok?

Smallwood: We went to . . . what's that? It's a famous place. Phnom Penh. We went to Phnom Penh by railroad.

Marcello: This was down in Indochina.

Smallwood: Oh, yes. We went to Phnom Penh. From Bangkok, we went to Phnom Penh by rail. Then we went from Phnom Penh to Saigon on a barge or a boat.

Marcello: Now let me get this straight. You went from Kanburi to this camp outside Bangkok. You just remained there a very, very short period of time?

Smallwood: Oh, a week maybe?

Marcello: You did nothing while you were there?

Smallwood: No, just staging, I think. Probably getting the group together.

Marcello: Then from there you went from rail again to Phnom Penh. How long did you stay there?

Smallwood: Well, just to transfer from the rail to the boat.

Marcello: I see. Then from boat you went from Phnom Penh to Saigon.

Smallwood: Right on down to Saigon.

Marcello: Did anything eventful happen on this trip?

Smallwood: No, not that I know of.

Marcello: Not too much hardship of any sort?

Smallwood: Well, it was a tough ride on the railroad. On their type of railroad, that's just not pleasant. But then in the boat, it was just a barge-type boat that had a bamboo top on it. That's what we used going down to Saigon, right down the river.

Marcello: You mentioned it was a tough ride on this railroad.

Smallwood: Well, it always is--a narrow guage railroad, dusty, hot, and crowded.

Marcello: Were you in sealed boxcars or cattle cars or . . .

Smallwood: No, I didn't end up in any of those sealed boxcars. I was lucky, I guess.

Marcello: How was your own health holding up at this time?

Smallwood: Well, my health was <u>real</u> good. Other than having the bouts with malaria, I . . .

Marcello: How about dysentery?

Smallwood: No, I didn't have dysentery.

Marcello: You were especially fortunate in that case.

Smallwood: Oh, yes. No, I didn't ever have dysentery, and I had that one little ulcer.

Marcello: Did you ever think back on how you possibly avoided dysentery? Was it a matter of personal cleanliness, perhaps, in some way on your own part?

Smallwood: No, I never did because . . . I suppose there was probably less than 5 per cent of us who didn't have it, if that few. But, no, I don't know how. I dunked my mess kit in boiling water the same as anyone else. I avoided drinking raw water out of a stream, things like that. But other than that, I didn't use any other precautions that I know of. I guess I just had a strong stomach.

Marcello: Well, where did you go when you got to Saigon?

Smallwood: Well, now we went right up to a camp right next to the dock. This was a camp that had been prepared for us. We had barracks and a nice, ten-foot wire fence around it. It had a guardhouse and a gate along the big boulevard in front. I can't remember the name of the boulevard, but there was a big boulevard along the front of the camp. It was all slatted bamboo so no one could see inside, things like that. It had the guardhouse. It had been prepared for us to move there. There was most all nationalities there.

Marcello: Was this a pretty big camp?

Smallwood: Yes, it was. I guess we had probably 2,000. I'd say there were about 2,000 there. There were about probably 300 of us Americans and the rest of them Dutch, English, Australians, natives, you know, Dutch Army troops. But I'd say there were between 1,800 and 2,000 people there.

Marcello: What did you do when you got to this camp?

Smallwood: Well, we were sent there to do several specific things. We loaded rice on the docks, bound for Japan. The natives would bring it into the warehouses there, and we'd load it on to the ships and barges. We'd work there and that's pretty much what that consisted of--either loading rice or unloading rice. Now we saw lots of Red Cross parcels there, too, but we didn't get any. We saw them there, though. The warehouse was full of them, literally full of them.

Marcello: I'm sure that caused a great deal of resentment.

Smallwood: It did. It sure did. But much of it had been there so long until it was already ruined anyway. But there was a lot of that there. Now we would work on the dock, or we would work at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, or we would work at the oil refinery. Now that . . . those three basic jobs. Then there was lots of small

jobs. I don't know. I was very lucky. I ended up on many, many small jobs with five, ten men. But we worked a good deal in Cholon in the Chinese section. When we did this, why, we'd go down there with Japanese engineers, building barracks and things like that. We'd help build the barracks and things. But basically the three jobs consisted of working on the docks, working at the airport, and working at the oil refinery. Those were the three big jobs in Saigon.

Marcello: What sort of work did you do at the oil refinery?

Smallwood: Clean up. It had been bombed. The Japanese had really bombed the heck out of it at one time. Then the Americans had bombed the heck out of it when the Japanese took it over from the French. These were Vichy French. They let the Japanese come in for a time. Then after that, of course, they sort of moved in and took over, and they didn't like that too much. There was quite a . . . there was evidence of a lot of sabotage in this place, too. You could see that. It was pretty much banged up.

We had a project going down there one time later. We were putting up blast walls around all the tanks. The Americans kept hitting it and hitting it. This

was in the days of the B-29's, when they came over pretty regularly. But we were building blast walls around these . . . what few tanks that were left in this tank farm. We'd worked on this one tank. It had high-test gasoline in it. We worked on it for about six weeks every day. We'd take sod and we'd go out twenty meters all the way around the tank. Then we'd start stepping it up and build it right up to the top. We just about had this thing finished, too. It was a work of art. It was really pretty (chuckle). We'd cleared . . . for hundreds of yards around we'd dug all the sod up and put it around there. Then this character--I think he must have been from the Bronx--in a B-25 came down the river and hopped over to the bank and dropped a bomb right in the middle of the tank and blew all of our sod and everything else away (chuckle). He messed it up real good.

Marcello: Incidentally, did you ever get some sort of satisfaction out of completing any of these jobs. I mean, did that give you some sort of a goal or something of that nature? Did it really work on you when this plane came along and blasted that tank, for example?

Smallwood: Oh, yes. In Saigon, I guess, we did some pretty good sabotage work, I would say, here. Because we used to

foul the compasses in the planes. They let you do all kinds of things.

Marcello: This was when you were working at the airport?

Smallwood: Yes. They'd let you do things you wouldn't believe, like set the compass in the . . . they had this tremendously fast, high-flying plane. It had no armor, but it was a photography ship. We set the compasses in these things and did things like that.

Marcello: Now what was it?

Smallwood: It was a two-engine craft that they used to take pictures, aerial photography.

Marcello: Oh, photography.

Smallwood: Yes, a plane. All they had was camera equipment and compass. It had no armor. It was a very fast ship. Now they had a bunch of those there. We used to goof up the runway pretty good. We discovered that the way you'd build these runways, it was a very old-fashioned way of doing things. They were trying to extend runways. They'd been bombed quite a bit, and they'd rebuild that. They wanted to extend them. They used cinders and stuff like that. But if you didn't pack this real well . . . the Japanese planes had a landing gear that was very fragile, very, very

fragile--their fighters, anyway. If you didn't pack that, just really pack it good, well, the first thing that'd happen when it came in with this landing gear, well, if that plane just went in the least bit, well, the landing gear would go out from under it, and it'd belly in.

Marcello: By this time of the war, they weren't exactly having the best pilots in the world either.

Smallwood: No, they were real new, real green, at it. But we did a lot of this. Oh, we used to dump some sugar in the gas tank once in awhile. Things like that. But we did this down there. On the railroad, there was nothing you could do. I mean, there was very little you could do. But here we used to start a fire once in awhile and things like that. We'd be working in the oil refinery, and a fire would get started if we knew no one would be hurt. If you were working too close, you could hurt somebody. You could hurt your own people, too. But we did a little bit of that when we were down there.

Marcello: At this stage, it was quite obvious that the tide of the war had turned.

Smallwood: Very definitely.

Marcello: As a result, did you see any change in the attitudes of the Japanese?

Smallwood: No, I didn't. Very definitely not. As a matter of fact--I guess it was more the Koreans than anything else around the camp--but right up toward the end, I mean right up almost to the . . . well, to the day that we first heard that the bomb was dropped, what we were doing was building gun emplacements around our own camp because they felt that someday . . . well, we had seen enough. Like one day we'd spent fourteen hours under one continuous dive-bombing raid. Planes were overhead for fourteen solid hours without ever leaving. It was just one wave after another and things like this. A hundred men could have parachuted in and taken the place after that kind of a raid. But things like this.

Then we began to build these gun emplacements. But all the guns pointed into camp, see (chuckle). Every machine gun nest was set up to point toward the camp. This bothered us. It really did (chuckle). This kind of bothered us because we were really building this in the . . . it was a very swampy area around our camp. The leeches were terrific, and the

work was hard. We were mixing concrete on a piece of sheet-iron metal, flat. Mix it, and then making these little pillboxes and building blast walls around it out of sod and things like that. But from the very first one we finished, we noted that it was to shoot inward and not outward. So they definitely weren't being built to protect us. We figured . . . we'd heard some wild rumors about places where . . . and the guards had really indicated in their crude way of saying, "Now you won't be rescued." But it's something that made you wonder sometimes.

Marcello: We'll probably come back and talk more about this in a minute because that's more or less in the closing stages of the war. As you were witnessing these American air raids, what effect did this have on your morale?

Smallwood: Well, to see them and to know they were there made you feel good. At the same time, it scared the hell out of you, too, because I never realized Americans were that good (chuckle), really good. It was really something to sit for fourteen hours and see the Navy and Marine Corps perform like that.

Marcello: I would assume they had no opposition whatsoever, or very little.

Smallwood: Yes, early in the morning. They did away with all of it. The first thing they did was to take care of what few planes came off the ground and took care of the rest that were sitting on the ground at the air base. Then the only opposition, of course, was some . . . I think it was thirty-two ships in the harbor, in the river. Of those, eleven or twelve were men-of-war. I don't mean battleships or anything like that, but destroyers and things of that nature--gunboats. But they took them, one by one. I guess we did have . . . maybe we did have one cruiser there. But they took them, every one of them. They sank every one of them. But after that, well, they just ran around like they was hunting rabbits. They were just picking all kinds of targets. But we saw some very amazing things that night. Later, after the war, I read in the Reader's Digest about this very raid, how this pilot . . .

Marcello: This is the fourteen-hour raid?

Smallwood: Right. This pilot actually was blinded in the raid and they flew him back. He winged in with his buddy, and he made it back to the ship and lived. We saw this, actually saw this happen. We know this had to be the time. Anyway, the plane . . . it was in its

third run, and the bomb didn't come lose. He was flying a carrier plane. He couldn't release his bombs. He came down and circled and went back up. He came down again, and the same thing happened, and he went up again. Well, he was hit on the way down this time. But as he came over us, he couldn't have been more than a hundred feet off the ground. He came down at the ship, and that time he really . . . his bombs . . . as he came out of the dive, he flipped over on his back, and the bomb just lobbed over. It landed about seventy-five yards from us (chuckle). But he was on his back. He was upside-down. Then he turned on upright and took on off. We read later that this was actually this very story that happened. But he made it back, and he lived to tell the story. But it was really something. I didn't realize they were that good. Of course, we hadn't seen much . . .

Marcello: You hadn't seen the Americans winning at all up until this point (chuckle).

Smallwood: No, not like that.

Marcello: I gather the Japanese marked your compound in no way whatsoever.

Smallwood: No.

Marcello: The Americans had no way of knowing that there was a prisoner-of-war compound there.

Smallwood: We've heard after the war that they surely knew where every one of them was. Now whether they did or not, I don't know.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago also that on occasions you would go on a work detail in the Chinese section of Saigon.

Smallwood: Cholon.

Marcello: Now I do know that the Chinese in particular hated the Japanese very much.

Smallwood: Oh, yes.

Marcello: I was wondering if you had very much contact with the Chinese when you went on these details?

Smallwood: The Chinese always . . . and you found them everywhere. In the jungle, in Burma, you found them. You found the Chinese <u>everywhere</u>. They were very good, and they'd take many chances to give you food or whatever they had. Medical supplies were also given to us by the Chinese. The French did this, too, in Saigon. They really did. By this time, I suppose, the Japanese had pretty much outworn their welcome with them. They were very sympathetic. They went as far as they dared go, I'll put it that way. They used to come whistling

down the street, down the boulevard, and throw a newspaper over the fence or things like that. But they'd pass food to you or money. You might be walking right down the sidewalk, marching right down the street and the sidewalk, and there'd be people lined up along there. You'd be marching along, and they'd pass money to you and things like that.

Marcello: How was the food situation here in Saigon?

Smallwood: Well, it was pretty much stock--rice and fish and cucumbers and things like that. Now this is what they gave us. Now we were able to buy much, much more in Saigon than any other place. This was a place where they had it here. They had plenty of it there.

Marcello: Where did your money come from?

Smallwood: Well, that's where we really . . . when we got on down there, that's where we really were able to trade more with the natives there than anyplace else. There were more of them, more opportunity.

Marcello: What did you have to trade with?

Smallwood: Well, we traded cloth and medicine--quinine and Atabrine tablets--stuff like that, whatever you could get at the dock.

Marcello: In other words, you would steal things at the docks and trade this material with the natives?

Smallwood: Oh, yes. Now we would either sell it for cash, or we'd trade it for goods or whatever. Yes, you had much, much more opportunity to trade because this was a city.

Marcello: There was a much greater opportunity to steal things of value since you'd been working at the docks.

Smallwood: Oh, yes. This is why we used to . . . if you got to the dock, you could pick up the stuff for trade. Then you wanted to go to the airport because it was at the airport when you spread all out, and you were working in smaller details--some doing runway, some working on planes, some rolling gasoline barrels, some doing this, doing that. But you were broken up into smaller parties, and you were working right alongside natives many, many times. You saw many, many natives moving around with goods and that sort of thing, so you got more exposure than you did anyplace else. So we'd go to the docks to get this stuff, get the cloth and whatever else that they wanted. If you could get it, well, then the next day, you'd like to go to the airport. Now, of course, this wasn't always so. Everyone

didn't trade. Not everyone wanted to participate in this.

Marcello: You mean they didn't want to take the chance of getting caught?

Smallwood: That's right, yes.

Marcello: What sort of ingenious methods were devised to steal this material and bring it back into camp?

Smallwood: Well, I'll give you an example of the cloth. We discovered that these warehouses was chock-full of supplies. The mosquito nets, you didn't have single mosquito nets. They had about six or eight-man mosquito nets. Along the bottom, there was a piece of real good cloth about thirty inches wide. We'd catch the guard looking the other way . . . we'd be working in these warehouses, and we'd drop out and go into this section of the warehouse. You'd tear one of these things off. That mosquito net might have been as big as across this room and down to the other side and back again. You know six or eight men could sleep under it.

Marcello: How many feet do you think we're talking about altogether?

Smallwood: Oh, probably forty feet, ten meters, something like that. You'd just start right here above your legs (gesture), and you'd wrap this way (gesture), and then you'd go

around your waist a couple times, down this leg, back up again, around your waist, back down on this . . . you'd be like a mummy from here up (gesture). You'd put your shorts over that, or if you had a loose tunic or something, you'd use that. You could put ten meters of cloth around you. That's $25 a meter, so that's a pretty good haul.

Marcello: That's what this cloth would bring on the black market?

Smallwood: Right. The natives were making more money than they'd ever seen in all their lives before. The French probably paid them seventy-five cents a day. The Japanese were paying them $6 and $8 a day. They didn't know what to do with the money. They made so much money they didn't know what to do with it.

Marcello: It's somewhat surprising that the Japanese were paying them that much money.

Smallwood: Well, it didn't cost anything. I mean, they just printed it right there (chuckle).

Marcello: They just cranked up the printing presses.

Smallwood: That's right. But this is how this happened. There was many things that you could trade in. Oil, for the natives this was something that was hard to get.

Marcello: This is cooking oil?

Smallwood: Yes, peanut oil. Peanut oil or coconut oil. Now they had a lot of oil, but it was thick, heavy stuff. But if you could get a canteen full of peanut oil or coconut oil, well, the natives would buy that very readily. And any kind of medicine. Now why they didn't . . . I suppose that the Japanese probably took all the medical supplies. I'm sure they did. But quinine and Atabrine, boy, they'd pay huge sums of money for that. We had quite a lot of that anyway, and you'd find a lot more of it at the docks. It was quite plentiful. But the natives couldn't avail themselves of it for some reason.

Marcello: I gather then that you were eating pretty well here.

Smallwood: Yes, we did.

Marcello: How long were you in this camp at Saigon altogether?

Smallwood: Now we moved in there just about in May.

Marcello: Of 1944?

Smallwood: Right. Then we stayed there, other than the trip up to Dalat and back . . . and we were gone up there probably three months, maybe four, not any longer than that. We came back to Saigon and started the same old thing over again. We were right there, and that's where we were liberated--in that one camp along the

boulevard. Then, after the bomb was dropped, and they were . . . already it was over in Japan--it still wasn't over with us, but it was over in Japan--they moved us to this federal penitentiary out near the air base, this one that had the big stone wall around it with the jagged glass around the top. It was a regular federal prison.

Marcello: Okay, we'll come back and talk about that in a minute. But you mentioned that after you were at Saigon for several months, they then moved you to this camp at Dalat.

Smallwood: Right. We went up the coast and went up as far as Dalat.

Marcello: I bet you kind of hated to leave Saigon, did you not?

Smallwood: Oh, yes. Yes, definitely. Besides, it was colder than the dickens up at Dalat (chuckle).

Marcello: Now this would have been in northern Indochina.

Smallwood: Right. We thought we might get up as far as China, if we just kept going.

Marcello: But it was getting colder as you got up in that neck of the woods?

Smallwood: It was really cold up there at Dalat, particularly. We stayed there. That was really where we went to

dig some tunnels through some mountains and built a little Corregidor up there. That was the purpose of us going.

Marcello: What was the camp like at Dalat?

Smallwood: Well, it was the same type of camp. It was a barracks made out of bamboo, but it was much smaller. There was a much smaller group of us. There wasn't 150 maybe. But it was much smaller. It was in the mountains, and it was colder than the dickens, and our diet changed. We didn't have rice up there. We had corn (chuckle). We had corn instead of rice.

Marcello: Was that a welcome change?

Smallwood: No, it wasn't because the corn was just like you shell off the cob. You know, to make hominy.

Marcello: Just like the corn that you feed animals.

Smallwood: Yes. Right. Now to make hominy is one thing. But we didn't have that much time. Between meals you didn't have enough time to make hominy. So mostly it would rattle in the mess kit when you'd pour it in there. Now that was a pretty rough diet.

Marcello: What would you do, kind of like soak it in water for a while to soften it up and then try to cook it?

Smallwood: Well, they tried that, and they'd keep it in water. Then they'd throw it in the pot and try to cook it as hard as they could. They tried to get it as done as they could, but it was still pretty raw. We all ended up with a good case of worms, I mean, from eating it. Boy, I mean a bad case!

Marcello: I would assume your morale took a dip for the worse at Dalat.

Smallwood: Yes, it did. It did. It was on this trip . . . I was telling you about the bayonet incident and things. This is one time that we planned to escape, too, up there.

Marcello: That sounds like a pretty interesting story.

Smallwood: Well, there was two occasions for me like this. One of them was in the 15 Kilo Camp in Burma, and one of them was there. The one in 15 Kilo Camp was like a grade school boy attacking a college boy. I didn't understand what it was all about. We didn't realize in the 15 Kilo Camp that there was at least a thousand miles of virgin jungle from the fence to friendly troops. We didn't even realize that. We had no preparation. But there was three of us who decided we'd try it. So we went through the fence about ten,

eleven o'clock in the night. We had it all planned. We went down and waited till the guard walked around the corner. You could get out any time you wanted to. It was a helluva lot harder to get back in than it was to get back out (chuckle). The first time we got out there, we got a half a mile maybe. We began to hear all kinds of wild animals in this place. It was pitch black, and it was wet. We were fording creeks and dense jungles. We said, "Well, this isn't the place to escape." So we went back. But it really was harder to get back in than it was to get out in this instance. Now in upper Indochina, we talked to a Chinaman. We really felt here we had accumulated a goodly sum of money. Between the three of us, well, we probably had pretty close to five grand.

Marcello: Who were the other two people?

Smallwood: Ray LaBove and Jack Moss from Amarillo. Now he didn't figure in that too much. But we talked to this Chinaman who had . . . he spoke fluent English. He really thought, too, that he could spring us because from where we were, we were close to the coast at this time. We weren't working on the tunnels then. We were working on bridges, trying to get some of

these bridges back together where the Navy would knock them out all the time. But he told us that if we could get like from nine or ten o'clock in the evening, if we could get the rest of the night to start, that he thought he could get us through by boat. He had a motor. But we had to go all the way down to the coast. You couldn't run the motor because it'd attract too much attention. But he sold us on the idea, and we were ready to go, and he was going to equip it and everything. But when we went down to the rendezvous point, he wasn't there, and we never saw him again after that. I suspect that they probably did away with him in no uncertain terms. But we had it all set, and he had the maps. He was going to take us across the bay. He was going to take us . . . he said he could take us to the Philippine Islands. Now we hoped he would. But when we got all packed and got down to the river to go, well, he didn't show.

Marcello: Here again, I assume this was a rather easy camp to walk out of, also.

Smallwood: Oh, yes, definitely, because working camps normally were. I mean, they didn't make any facilities to keep you there very long. You might be there a week,

or you might be there two weeks or less time even than that, three or four days. Then you'd move on somewhere else. So they didn't linger and throw up a lot of fences and stuff like that. It was just a matter of the guards walking around the camp. They were on guard all the time. It was just a matter of waiting till one walked through, and then you could walk out. But like I say, it was harder to walk back in than it was to walk out because they were really looking for you. You'd be coming from the other direction, so you really attracted attention, whereas you didn't the other way around.

Marcello: You mentioned that at this camp at Dalat, you were constructing what you referred to as "a little Corregidor." Would you talk about that a little bit?

Smallwood: Well, yes. Okay, yes. This was a mountainous country. It was quite mountainous up there and so on. We were actually drilling tunnels back into the mountains. It was to be a network and, as we understood it, from what we could gather from the engineers and everything, this might be a place where they would draw back to. Let's say the Americans came into Saigon and started pushing up. This might be a place where

the Japanese would drop back to, into this mountainous country and have these tunnels and everything. It was to be very much like Corregidor. You know what I mean--using a tunnel.

Marcello: Did you have tools up there to dig this tunnel?

Smallwood: Shovels and picks, and we had some gelatinate that we . . . we'd hit some rock. We dug a number of tunnels back into the hills, but we could never see any real pattern or any real progress. We certainly didn't finish the job. We ran into some strange people up there though, the Cambodians, the native Cambodians. They usually wore rice sacks for clothing, and they filed their teeth. Some of them had a lot of jade built into their teeth. They were wild-looking characters, really the wildest-looking people, I guess, I saw.

Marcello: These were Cambodians?

Smallwood: Yes, that's what they told us they were anyway. But they were kind of . . . they looked more like head-hunters than anything else, more than anything we'd seen. But they were supposed to be Cambodians. But it was real cold up there.

Marcello: About how long were you up there altogether?

Smallwood: Three or four months. About four months, I'd say.

Marcello: Was this pretty hard? Did they work you pretty hard up there?

Smallwood: Yes, they did. We worked quite long hours, not only on the tunneling project, but on the bridges and things like that, too. But after about four months, then I guess they gave it up and moved us back to Saigon.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that also while you were up here at Dalat, you were digging those machine gun emplacements.

Smallwood: No, now this was around our camp in Saigon.

Marcello: Oh, down in Saigon. That was near the end of the war?

Smallwood: Oh, yes. But it was back at home station along the boulevard, on the waterfront.

Marcello: I assume that you were making these trips between Dalat and Saigon by train.

Smallwood: Well, yes, train with no bridges (chuckle). You'd load and unload at every river crossing just about because the Navy was hitting hard along the coast. I mean, it was <u>really</u> hitting hard. They'd cut the bridges out, and they'd build it back. Or they'd knock out a section of the railroad, and they'd put it back. But it was a constant thing. We saw a lot

. . . we saw more activity, I guess, more aerial bombing and activity on the line up in that part of the country, than we did anywhere else.

Marcello: Did you ever openly cheer or anything when you saw this American air activity taking place?

Smallwood: Yes, yes, we did. It didn't please the guards too much, either. But we would do this more when it was at a distance than . . . you didn't cheer them on when they were real close. I was working on the docks one day. We were rolling barrels, empty barrels, and loading them on a sampan that would probably go down the river to the oil refinery. I don't know. Anyway, there were dozens of us rolling fifty-five-gallon barrels along, and we had an air raid.

The Japanese used to kid us quite a bit. The alarm would go off, and they'd tell us if we wanted to that we could pray if we wanted to. Well, you could have this time off. They used to kid us about that pretty good. Anyway, we were rolling these barrels along the dock, and the P-38's came in. Man, let me tell you! They just came down the dock. I suppose that we must have been pretty dark by this time. They couldn't have known who we were. But

they strafed the whole works. Man, they were picking barrels out of people's hands like basketballs! We were separating ourselves from those barrels because that's what they thought we were doing--loading gas on that sampan. Luckily, we were loading empty barrels on the sampan. But when they were close like that, you didn't cheer them on too much. You weren't too brave about it.

Marcello: Well, you mentioned now when you got back down to Saigon again from this short tenure up at Dalat, one of the things you were doing--I guess perhaps the sole thing that you were doing by this time--was building these machine gun emplacements.

Smallwood: Right. This was _____job. We continued to work on the docks, and we continued to work at the airport. We had given up working at the oil refinery at this time. I mean, it was pretty much wiped out at that time. That was about an eighteen kilo hike there and an eighteen kilo hike back to the oil refinery. But we'd stopped working down there, and I suppose that we just traded that detail for building these gun emplacements right around this camp. We spent . . . well, we got there in May, and we finished up . . .

we were eighteen months in Saigon. So we were about four months up in the hill country and about fourteen months in the city. Toward the end of the war, the jobs had become more scattered. There was a lot of troops, Japanese troops, moving through trying to get back to Japan, moving back from Burma and Thailand and through there and trying to put to sea and get out. A lot of troops and less rice and gasoline and stuff were moving, so this took us off the docks a lot.

Then at the airport they maintained a goodly number of bombers. At one time, they had a large group of people, kamikaze pilots, training at this base for several months toward the end of the war. But most of the bombers were gone at that time. There wasn't even really all that many air raids going on because there wasn't much there.

Marcello: Did you ever observe very many of these kamikazes training?

Smallwood: Well, this is one of the things . . . when we worked at the airport toward the end of the war, we were right there with them all the time. They were using a standard plane, of course. I mean, they had a little stubby aircraft that was not armed in any way.

But there were almost as many women as men. That's what a lot of people didn't realize. I would say that probably, of the kamikaze pilots, I'll bet at least 25 per cent of them were women. At least there was that many pilots training there, that percentage of pilots. That was very surprising, also.

Marcello: I'd never heard that before.

Smallwood: Of the pilots that trained in Saigon--and we know that's what it was--there was about that percentage of women. I hadn't heard that either. A lot of people . . . a fellow came out from the plant this afternoon and put an alternator on my car. He's been a mechanic at the plant for years. He had three aircraft carriers shot out from under him during the war. I don't know how many kamikaze pilots that he's seen shot down on the ship, around the ship and everything. I said something like that to him one time. He said, "Well, we never heard anything like that." But they were definitely there. Now whether they ever flew these planes or not, I don't know. But they were there training, just like the guys were. They very definitely were because we saw them every day. These are the guys that would go up, and they'd

come in and something would happen, and then they'd get their ears boxed, and they'd go on back up again. But for the most part, they were young, young Japanese. They were Japanese, too, not Korean.

Marcello: But then you were building these machine gun emplacements and so forth around the camp?

Smallwood: Right around the camp.

Marcello: As you mentioned, the emplacements were facing back toward the camp, toward the prisoners.

Smallwood: All the gun ports were toward our camp and none of them away.

Marcello: You also mentioned that these gun emplacements were being built in a rather swampy area and leeches were a problem. That sounds like a kind of interesting story.

Smallwood: Well, of course, this is something that you had over there every time you got around the water, and you did in Saigon. You're aware of the fact that Saigon is really a floating city. I mean, it's canals running through. You could drop a heavy bomb, and if you happened to be fairly close, well, the ground will go like this (gesture), just like it's all afloat in the first place, like you were sitting on a . . .

Marcello: In other words, it would almost move like a water bed or something of that nature.

Smallwood: Right, absolutely. It's just like you were sitting on a bridge, like a pontoon and . . .

Marcello: A wave would undulate this pontoon.

Smallwood: Very definitely. But because of this, much of your soil in Saigon was swampy. This was just right out from our camp, not on one side--that was the boulevard--but on three sides, the back of our camp. This is where we built these. We didn't build any in front. It was actually, I guess, much like a rice paddy would be. There was a couple of canals that ran behind our place, too. I mean, there was canals all over the place. When you get out there and work in that, well, sometimes you'd be in water up halfway to your knees, like they do when they plant rice. Now when you're around water like that in Asia--at least in this part of the country--those leeches were about that long (gesture).

Marcello: About two inches long.

Smallwood: Well, maybe not two inches, but close to an inch and a half, I guess, dark in color. They'd just cling on

to you, and they were the dickens to get loose! They just sucked the blood.

Marcello: I'm sure that was a rather disconcerting experience.

Smallwood: Oh, yes. I mean, the first time they got all over you, it'd scare you half to death in the first place.

Marcello: How'd you usually get them off?

Smallwood: Well, using cigarette butts or anything like that to get them loose. But now the natives used a method of bleeding patients by putting leeches on them. You've heard of that? We've seen that. There would be dozens on a person at one time. But we didn't enjoy them, I'll tell you that. But there were the leeches, and it was hot. The work was hard. Then, of course, it was pretty discouraging to turn the guns into the camp rather than to turn them out. It was just sort of a . . . that was a real tough assignment.

Marcello: Did they ever get a chance to place any machine guns in these pillboxes?

Smallwood: Never did. Never did. I never saw one in there, but they had their place for it in concrete. But along about the time that we got this far along, well, this was when it was close to September, and this was when this all happened. They picked us up immediately, and

we moved right on out to this prison on the other side of town. We never saw this place again.

Marcello: Okay, I think this is where we need to pick up the story. Now before we took our break, you mentioned that they transferred you near the very end of the war from this prison camp at the docks in Saigon out to this penitentiary.

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: You mentioned that this was a penitentiary with stone walls and broken glass around the top and things of this nature. What did you do when you got to this penitentiary?

Smallwood: Nothing. We weren't there long. But we didn't do anything--just stay inside all the time.

Marcello: What was this prison like inside?

Smallwood: Well, they just moved--I suppose they moved--all of the native prisoners out of this to some place because it was masonry barracks. They had bunks made in there. In some cases, these even had springs and a mattress on it. The latrines and the places to cook and the place to wash your clothes and the places to take a bath and things like that--this was set up. This was very much like the school was in Moulmein. It was for

real. It was equipped for native prisoners, is what it was. It had the regulation guardhouse. I'd say it had about a ten-foot by twenty-four inches thick, at least, masonery wall all the way around it. At the top it had jagged glass set in concrete all the way around the top. It had one gate. That was at the front and let out on the street. This was a regulation guard gate. It had gates, double gates, in front that swung in and out. They were metal. It was all set up. Now when they moved us from the docks to this camp, there was one thing they did do that they hadn't done heretofore. They issued us toilet paper and tooth paste and a tooth brush.

Marcello: How many men are we talking about altogether?

Smallwood: Well, as I say, I think that when we first went to Saigon that there were probably somewhere between, I'd say, in the range of 1,800 people in that camp. I believe that's probably about right. I might be overestimating, but I'd say it was around that figure. I don't know how many people we had lost. There'd been some people that had died. We'd lost some Americans there. There'd been some British and others. But probably not more than a hundred in the

eighteen months that we'd been there, at the very most. So I would say that probably there might have been as many as 1,500 people in this prison. It was a big place. It was not a small place.

Marcello: There were mixed nationalities in this camp?

Smallwood: Oh, yes. Very definitely. It was very definitely mixed. Of course, when we moved in there, we each had our own quarters. We were separated just like we'd been in the other camp. I remember very well that they did issue us some toilet paper--not in rolls, in squares, little square paper--and tooth brush and some tooth paste. They gave us that. Just before we moved there, we did receive a Red Cross parcel split four ways, one for every four men. The only thing that you could use of this was what was canned because the cigarettes were all molded. They came out of the warehouse I was telling you about. They'd probably been laying there for no telling how long. Why the Japanese hadn't used it up, I don't know. They had it. But about the only thing that could be used of those Red Cross parcels was the toilet paper and the tooth paste and the tooth brush. They issued a Red Cross parcel box about that big (gesture) for every four men, divided four ways.

Marcello: What were some of the items contained in this Red Cross parcel?

Smallwood: Well, cigarettes, candy bars, canned meat of some kind, and I believe there was some canned cheese. But items like this. I don't think it was one of the big elaborate ones that they usually . . . because the boxes were about . . .

Marcello: About a foot square?

Smallwood: Yes. They weren't too big. I'd say about a foot across and maybe like six inches deep and maybe fifteen inches long.

Marcello: I have to ask you these dimensions because when you make your gestures, that doesn't get on the tape (chuckle).

Smallwood: That don't get on the tape (laughter). But they were, I guess, considered small Red Cross parcels, small. One-man job, I'm sure.

Marcello: Yes. They were meant for one man, but they were split among four people.

Smallwood: Right, that's right. That was it. That was it.

Marcello: When you got these Red Cross parcels, did you eat all this food at once or was it saved?

Smallwood: I would say pretty much, yes.

Marcello: It was eaten pretty much at once.

Smallwood: We smoked some of the cigarettes as moldy as they were because they were Camels and Luckies.

Marcello: Well, now how long were you in this camp altogether?

Smallwood: The prison?

Marcello: Yes, the prison. The penitentiary.

Smallwood: Not too long. Not too long.

Marcello: This is where you were when you were liberated?

Smallwood: Oh, yes, very definitely.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about the events leading up to your liberation then. I assume that you were not there too long.

Smallwood: All right. Now we definitely had radio contact in the camp and had had for some time, over in the boulevard camp and in the prison as well.

Marcello: Had you ever had any opportunity to see this radio?

Smallwood: Radio, no. It was my understanding that the Dutch actually had the radio. There was a radio technician in the Dutch Army. But he had the radio, and they kept it in the kitchen in the boulevard camp. At least, that's where we all understood it was. It was someone that worked in the kitchen who had it because he never went out on a working party. He

was always there. Anyway, there was no doubt about it. We had radio contact. We had a radio in camp, and we were getting the news because they knew when the bomb was dropped. They were told that. Immediately after that, we were moved to this new camp. So it couldn't have been very long. When was the bomb dropped?

Marcello: It was dropped on August the 5th or 6th of 1945.

Smallwood: Okay, so a month later we were liberated.

Marcello: It took them that long to get there?

Smallwood: Yes.

Marcello: Well, describe what things were like after the bomb was dropped. Go up to the day you were liberated. What exactly happened?

Smallwood: As far as guarding and everything, no change. I think they would have shot us had we ever tried to climb over the wall or anything like that. I very definitely think they would have. They put us there. There were no working parties. We did not go out to work, stayed right in that camp, washed our clothes, took a bath, milled around for the better part of a month.

Marcello: Was this rather nerve-wracking to know that the war was over and you weren't getting out?

Smallwood: Very definitely. Very definitely because, you see, we were hearing about these little isolated problems--that the Japanese weren't giving up in the Philippines, that they weren't giving up in Java. They weren't giving up in a lot of places. If the communication was . . . if the word was getting through, they weren't abiding by the orders, sort of a do-it-yourself, do-your-own-thing project. This bothered us quite a bit because every day the guards stood guard. They were right there, and we were behind the wall. We weren't out, and a lot of other people were. So this would tend to worry you a little bit.

Now we saw other things going on. You could see through--there was parts of this, near the gate and places like that--where you could see out. You could see them in the streets. We saw a lot more activity in the air than we had seen before--leaflets being dropped, things like that. Thousands of leaflets were being dropped in the town. Well, these things went on. Of course, it was getting on toward the end of the month then.

Then the day that it happened, was in the afternoon, shortly after lunch, I think. There was the

planes. We saw the planes coming in and landing. They landed at the . . . now they . . . first they dropped . . . they tried to drop into the camp some supplies. Well, they didn't hit the camp. But anyway, the planes did land. We said, "Well, gee, something's got to be happening out there."

Well, it wasn't too long until it did. They brought jeeps, and they put together this group of people under this major, I believe he was. They came out to camp. He came right up to the guardhouse. He had a little problem getting through to the guys out front that they were going to have to let him in. But they did. I think he had about ten men with him, something like that. I remember he was about your size, and he had on a leather jacket with a big flag on the back. It was one of these groups that had been trained specially to do things like that. He was a prince of a guy! Boy, he really was! He came in. He called everybody together. He made no bones about it. He said, "I have come to take the Americans out and nobody else. That's all that's going with us. But we're going to be here for about three or four days." He said, "You're at liberty to go out and go

on leave if you want to." But he said, "I would say to you or remind you that now if you have a grudge against someone, if you want to kill him, go ahead. That's your business. We can't stop you. But I hope you'll remember that you'll live with your conscience the rest of your life and things like that. So if you want to go on liberty, go on liberty. Go to town, do whatever you want to do. You're not going to be harmed. I don't think you're going to be harmed at all. Do what you want to do. But now we're going to get some things ready to go in a couple days, three days at the most. We're going to leave. We're going to take off."

But you were free to go outside and go downtown. This is the place that we'd been in for eighteen months. We'd previously walked around and said, "Gee, I sure would like to go to that bar," or "I sure would like to visit that place." We did, just free to go. We went outside and met some people and bought some civilian clothes and visited with some families in Saigon, had a very nice time.

Now it was right at this point in time that the Annamites started the very first uprising against the

French. This is something else that a lot of people don't realize. It was right at this point in time that the Annamites rebelled against the French. Annamites, they called them--Annam.

Marcello: Yes. Oh, I see.

Smallwood: Now I'm sure that they now probably refer to them as something else. But we called them Annamites, and they called themselves Annamites, or they referred to themselves simply as "Annam."

Marcello: In other words, when the Japanese were defeated, these people expected that they would receive their freedom, that the French would not come back in again.

Smallwood: Absolutely. Absolutely because they were remembering this leader, the one that fought so hard and so long over there, the real leader.

Marcello: This is who, Ho Chi Minh?

Smallwood: Right. Now they really felt that when the Japanese . . . that's what the Japanese were doing in the first place, was liberating them from the French.

Marcello: This is what the Japanese told them, yes.

Smallwood: So it was at this very time that the Annamites began to machine gun the French down on the street. We saw it happen, really did. That was the very beginning

of the Indochina War right there, on September 3, 1945. We saw it.

Marcello: What sort of an attitude did these people take toward the Americans?

Smallwood: Well, hands off. This sort of--I don't know what you'd call it--uprising, resistance movement started killing the Frenchmen right in the city, shooting them down in the street. Well, of course, this shook us up because we were all in civilian clothes, and we were white. That really bothered us. So we began to try to figure out, "How are we going to get back to camp?" We started back as a group--there was eight or ten of us--and we stopped by a marketplace, wanting to buy some cigarettes. Over a period of time I'd picked up a little bit of the lingo over there. So I went in this place to buy some cigarettes, and I asked them how much they were in French. Boy, there was dead silence! You could just see these natives. Here we were, dressed in white shorts and white shirts and sandals and could have passed for a "Frogie" [Frenchman] I suppose. But, boy, just dead silence, and then we were really frightened! Then we began to say, "American," "Anglais," this sort of deal. So they realized we must be, and they didn't harm us.

Marcello: It was pretty tense there for a moment.

Smallwood: Touch-and-go, yes it was because we weren't sure we could convince them. They were just taking any and all--male, female--bumping them off, very definitely. About the last day we were there, the last day and night that we were there before we flew out, hundreds and hundreds of Frenchmen came to our camp for protection. They came inside the camp, and they were there when we left. But they were afraid, I mean, of standing out on the street.

Marcello: From what I gather, the French did exploit Indochina while they were there. They took everything out and didn't put too much in.

Smallwood: That's right.

Marcello: As you look back on your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as being the factor that most pulled you through?

Smallwood: Well, I don't know, really. I think probably the thing that pulled me through more than anything else was not ever being totally aware, or allowing myself to ever be totally aware, of how serious the situation was. I'm very thankful for that.

Marcello: When you went in the service, how much did you weigh?

Smallwood: A hundred and ninety pounds.

Marcello: How much did you weigh when you were liberated?

Smallwood: A hundred and thirty-five.

Marcello: Well, that's a pretty good loss of weight.

Smallwood: Yes.

Marcello: We're talking about a loss of about sixty pounds.

Smallwood: Right.

Marcello: Almost a third of your body weight.

Smallwood: Yes. I'd say about 135. Now physically, I'd probably even hardened some, muscle-wise. Now I was in good shape when I went overseas, really good shape.

Marcello: You wouldn't want to get hardened that way again though, I presume.

Smallwood: Oh, no, no. But it lasted an awful long time, just like my tan did. My tan stayed with me over three years (chuckle). People were speaking Mexican to me from time to time. I was very, very fortunate inasmuch as I did not . . . malaria was about the only illness that I had the whole time I was in prison. I was very, very fortunate! I had no ill-effects at all other than losing some weight. Now this simply was more, I think, of a . . . you're diet would be real good for a time, and then it wouldn't be. It'd

fall off, depending on what was going on, and working hard all the time. I know the eighteen months in Saigon, we really worked hard. I mean, we really worked hard. Many, many times we worked an eighteen-hour day, and we'd work ten, twelve days without a break. But things like that . . . but I was as hard as nails, as hard as nails. I had malaria a lot, and you tend to loose weight this way. You thin out pretty good because you perspire an awful lot when you . . . but I dropped between fifty and sixty pounds.

Marcello: At the time of your liberation, did you have any sort of animosity toward the Japanese? What were your attitudes toward the Japanese at the time of your liberation?

Smallwood: What was my attitude? I wanted to be separated from them quick and forget it. I wasn't the type of guy that wanted to do like some did. Some went right out in the streets of Saigon . . . I saw two Australians kill a guard with their hands, things like that. I had no feelings like that. Oh, sure, I felt like it. But I didn't want to do that. I just didn't want to do it.

Marcello: In other words, the joy of liberation overcame any attitudes of revenge that you may have had.

Smallwood: Right. I'm not real sure that I would have been any better to them than they were to me. I'm not real sure that I would have been any better. I'm not real sure under certain circumstances that all of our people were any better. I said under certain circumstances. I'm sure here in this country where internment camps and in places where they were viewed publicly all the while . . . I've heard some pretty wild stories myself. But why? I mean, to me it didn't make any sense to get out of a prison camp where you've been for a time like that and kill a helpless guard just for the sake of revenge. I just don't see it that way. Sure, they'd boxed me around real good at times. But some of the times I had it coming. Some of the times I didn't, too, because this was the way they did things. One did something, all suffered--like burning your mail, not giving you your mail, things like that. Well, they didn't do that because of something we had done but because of something the pilots were doing or the gunners or something.

Marcello: I hadn't realized that they had burned your mail.

Smallwood: We never got any mail, not in Saigon. The Dutch used to get their mail, the Australians would get their mail,

the English used to get their mail. The Americans didn't get any mail for months.

Marcello: It was mainly because of the bombing and so on?

Smallwood: I would think so. At least, we thought that.

Marcello: What is your attitude toward the Japanese today?

Smallwood: Well, I don't particularly like them. I'd just as soon keep a distance. I see many of them here. There's a number of them belongs to my club. They're here in land and cotton and things like that, and you see them. As a matter of fact, there's an awful lot of them in here now. Well, it doesn't completely turn me off if I happen to be in the same room with one. If I see someone that's married a Japanese or something like that, that bothers me a little bit. But I have no real hatred for the people, no.

Marcello: Did you have a very hard time adjusting to civilian life once again after your ordeal as a prisoner?

Smallwood: No.

Marcello: Did you fit back into the mainstream of society pretty well?

Smallwood: Well, yes. We'd been POW's for four years, and a lot of things had changed. I mean, I'm talking about everything now had changed so much until it was a little

awkward for a time to get back in step. But once you'd done that, well, there was . . . no, it wasn't all that hard.

Marcello: As you look back, what was the funniest thing that you can remember in your whole tenure as a prisoner-of-war?

Smallwood: You mean some occasion when something amusing occurred?

Marcello: Yes. What was the funniest thing? Obviously, there had to have been funny things that happened in the four years that you were a prisoner.

Smallwood: Gosh, I don't know. Over a period of time I've forgotten so many. But I think probably the thing that stands out in my mind as being one of the funniest things was the cigar incident. To me that was a real funny deal. But we've seen many silly little things happen. But I don't know that I could just point one out and say . . . there's so darn many of them over four years. But that's one thing that really stands out in my mind. Things that you see the Japanese do, like feeding their vehicles cake and stuff like that--kind of odd. But I guess that was probably one of the funniest things that I saw happen. It happened to one of our own. I mean he did such a good selling job until he just . . . they just took him in.

Marcello: You mentioned this story during a break. I think we really have to get it on the record because we're talking about this cigar incident and we're not following through with it. I hate to have you repeat it again, but if you would, we can get that in the record, and I think we can finish the interview.

Smallwood: All right.

Marcello: Well, talk about the cigar incident again.

Smallwood: Well, we went out on this working party and this . . . it was at one of the camps in Burma. I don't recall which one. But we'd been out on this working party, and this fellow bought a package of cigars from a native trader, and he put it in his mess gear. He had a Dutch mess gear. This package of a hundred cigars just fit right into the mess gear, and you would think the chances of him getting caught with these cigars was a thousand to one, really, and in the way he had them in there.

But it just so happened that this guard did open this mess gear and found the cigars. Of course, you weren't supposed to have them. You weren't supposed to buy things from the natives, and we all knew that. They brought the interpreter out and gave him an

opportunity to explain his side of the story. He did, and he sold them inasmuch as he told them that . . . as a matter of fact, I guess he had the floor for about five minutes. He told this interpreter all about his reasons and the logic--working hard and doing a good job for the Japanese. He figured that he had that much right to go ahead and buy the cigars. Besides, when he smoked, it made him very happy, and when he was happy, he worked hard. So he figured the Japanese would be well off in the long run, I mean, to forgive him for it. They agreed with him. This guy really agreed with him. He nodded and found him a little stool and set it down in front of the guard-house and set him down on it with a package of matches.

The next morning when we went to work, he was still smoking cigars, trying to smoke the bunch up. He didn't look too happy. He looked kind of green around the gills. But he was still smoking nevertheless.

One other occasion that was kind of funny comes to mind. We had a day off. We had a break, and we had a day off. We were in camp, and this guard was walking through camp. One of the sailors was just walking from one barracks to another, and he was

whistling. The guard stopped him, and he asked him why he was whistling. He said, "Well, I'm happy." Well, this really puzzled the guard. He could speak broken English, and he inquired of him, "How could you possibly be happy since you are a prisoner-of-war, in a prison camp, no hope of ever getting home again. You know you'll never make it back. You're sure to die in this prison camp. If you don't, well, we'll probably bump you off at the end anyway. How in the world could you be happy?" Well, he really didn't try too hard to explain it, I don't guess. He just told him, well, he was, and he dismissed him. Sure enough, the minute the guy walked away from the guard, he started whistling again. This guard just blew up. He just couldn't dig this at all. So he called him back, and he really bashed him around real good. He said, "Don't ever, ever, ever whistle again as long as you're a prisoner-of-war, or sing, or make any kind of music. Don't sing, don't whistle, don't do anything that would indicate that you're happy. Because when you're a Japanese prisoner-of-war, you're supposed to be sad, sad, sad." Things like that. This happened quite often in different ways. But it was enough to keep you going.

Marcello: Keep your sanity anyhow.

Smallwood: That's right.