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Interview with
Paul Bunch
December 7, 1971

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: *William F. Bunch*
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Mr. Paul Bunch

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: December 7, 1971

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. Paul Bunch for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on December 7, 1971, in Dallas, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Bunch in order to get his reminiscences and impressions and experiences while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Mr. Bunch was a participant on the Bataan Death March. Mr. Bunch, to begin this interview would you very briefly give us a brief biographical sketch of yourself? In other words, would you tell us where you were born, when you were born, your education, occupation, things of that nature?

Mr. Bunch: Well, Ron, I was born in Atlanta, Missouri, on July 1, 1921, and lived there and went to grade school and high school there until my junior year in high school. At that time my family moved to Carlsbad, New Mexico, because my father was seeking different employment. I completed my senior year of high school in Carlsbad and graduated in 1938. I got a job and worked for a while and then decided to go to college, and not being able to go to a four year school, I decided to go to a business college. So I went to Chillicothe

Business College, Chillicothe, Missouri. You may have heard of it. I don't think it's any longer in operation. At any rate I graduated from there, took a commercial accounting course, and I graduated in 1939, I believe. I went back to New Mexico and got a job. At any rate when I finished business college, I got a job in a hardware store as a bookkeeper because I took a commercial bookkeeping course. Subsequently, I had a chance to go to work at one of the potash mines in New Mexico because I could make a little more money. And I worked there until the National Guard unit that I was a member of was inducted into the service in January, 1941.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join a National Guard unit?

Bunch: Well, the New Mexico National Guard was the 111th Horse Cavalry, and Carlsbad had a troop--Troop I--and having a Horse Cavalry Troop meant that we had a stable of horses, and if you belonged to the cavalry unit, you were permitted to go to the stables any time you wanted to and go horseback riding, so to speak. I joined the cavalry in 1937. I was only 16 and I had to get the approval from my parents, which I did, of course, and then joined the cavalry, Troop I, 111th Horse Cavalry. I made summer camp the first year in '38, I guess it was, at El Paso, Texas, Fort Bliss. At that time is when I decided to go to business college, so I left

the state. Then when I came back to New Mexico after I got out of school, I rejoined Troop I, 111th Horse Cavalry, and I made summer camp two more years in Las Vegas, New Mexico, as a cavalry unit.

Marcello: The second time that you joined this cavalry unit, did you have any idea that the country would sooner or later be going into war?

Bunch: No, really, I had no idea that a . . . I really and honestly joined simply because I had a lot of friends that were in the unit, and let us say we enjoyed the horse cavalry aspect, I guess you'd say, so I had no idea that we would ever be into a war, and I never even gave it a thought. However, we were subsequently converted to a coast artillery anti-aircraft outfit from the cavalry.

Marcello: That was quite a switch, wasn't it?

Bunch: It sure was (chuckle). The horse cavalry was . . . oh, it was kind of a . . . I don't know how to say it . . . it was exciting to go to summer camp and ride the horses, of course. There was a certain amount of glory in the fact that you were in the horse cavalry outfit. I know I talk to my kids nowadays when we see a movie on the TV that's got the cavalry and Indians, and I say that's the outfit I used to be in. (Chuckle)

Marcello: (Chuckle)

Bunch: At any rate we were converted to 200th Coast Artillery, Anti-Aircraft, Battery F, in Carlsbad. I can't remember exactly

when they made the conversion, but we were in the Coast Artillery Anti-aircraft when we were inducted for a year's training in the Army.

Marcello: You were inducted into the regular Army?

Bunch: Right.

Marcello: Would this have been in about 1940, perhaps?

Bunch: It was in January, 1941.

Marcello: January of 1941.

Bunch: Actually, January 6. Just prior to the draft actually. I think the draft started in maybe February or March, and our New Mexico National Guard outfit was inducted and sent to Fort Bliss, Texas.

Marcello: Well, how did you end up in the Philippines?

Bunch: They kind of pulled a switch on us after we got in. We were supposed to be in for one year's active duty. And I guess along in July of 1941 we learned that we were going to be extended for about six months. Actually we were going to have a total time of eighteen months.

Marcello: What did this do for morale?

Bunch: Oh, it didn't bother anybody because we also learned--now I'm a little hazy here--but I think we learned we were going overseas. I don't really think we knew where we were going. I don't believe we found that out until we got to the west coast, Angel Island. I think that's where we found out we were going to the Philippines. I could be wrong.

I can't remember. At any rate we ended up in the Philippines, and I don't think any of the fellows objected because here again we looked forward to the fact that we were going someplace.

Marcello: I would assume that going to the Philippines was considered rather plush duty, was it not?

Bunch: Yes, it was and actually it proved to be that way after we got over there.

Marcello: The peacetime Army overseas prior to World War II was a pretty good place to be, I understand.

Bunch: Right. Of course, when we were in Fort Bliss, we put in five full days a week plus a Saturday morning inspection which carried us through noon of Saturday. And when we got to the Philippines, we found out that the Army over there operated kind of like the Filipino civilian people did. They took a siesta in the afternoon, and as a result we worked every morning up until noon, had lunch, and then a forty-five minute class of some kind right after lunch, and then we were free the rest of the day. And Saturday morning inspections were infrequent. We didn't have them every Saturday.

Marcello: I understand prices were very, very low, too. Now Army pay was low, but prices were extremely low also.

Bunch: What it amounted to, Ron, was this. I went overseas as a corporal, and I was drawing \$54 a month. But when I hit

the Philippines, we were paid in pesos, so I got 108 pesos. And actually I felt like--and I think pretty well true-- that you could buy just about as much for a peso over there as you could for a dollar over here. So it was almost like a double pay.

Marcello: Well, when you got to the Philippines, was it quite evident that sooner or later perhaps the United States would be getting into a war with Japan, and were you preparing for that eventuality?

Bunch: Well, I think that we really were, although I don't think the average soldier over there really gave it a whole lot of thought. Of course, we heard and read and heard on the radio about the Japanese situation, but we really didn't give it a whole lot of thought. We just frankly didn't feel that anybody was going to bother the United States. We were preparing to the point that we were training with live ammunition, and in fact thirty years ago today we were in the field with live ammunition and actually got into action on that day.

Marcello: Was the training then more or less routine, the type of training that you expected?

Bunch: You mean after I got to the Philippines?

Marcello: Right.

Bunch: I think so. Of course, we were sent to a place near Fort Stotsenburg. Actually, Fort Stotsenburg was a Philippine Scout organization, and the Philippine Scouts, as you may know, were Philippine soldiers with American officers.

Marcello: Now, I assume these were the elite so far as the Filipino troops were concerned, isn't that correct.

Bunch: Yes, that's true.

Marcello: These were fairly well trained.

Bunch: Actually, the Philippine Islands had what was called the Philippine Army, and they also had the Philippine Scouts. And the scouts were the elite, so to speak. They were trained and in most cases directed by American officers and were basically good soldiers. The Philippine Army was, at that time, actually in my opinion, a ragamuffin outfit and not too well organized.

Marcello: It was very hastily trained . . .

Bunch: Right.

Marcello: . . . for one thing, was it not?

Bunch: Right. Basically that was so.

Marcello: Now this was the outfit that MacArthur led before he came back into the United States Army, isn't that correct? Wasn't he a field marshall in the Philippines for awhile, and I think it was his task to train this Philippine Army. And perhaps he could have with a little bit more time.

- Bunch: It might have been, but I honestly don't know. I really don't know.
- Marcello: What sort of equipment did the American forces have at this time? Or maybe if I could phrase this more clearly, what was the condition of the equipment that you had at this time?
- Bunch: Well, the equipment that we had was good, I would say. Actually, we took our own equipment over there. See, we were an anti-aircraft outfit. We had 37mm anti-aircraft guns, and we also had what we called 3-inch guns. I think later on they were changed to 90mm guns. But we had 3-inch guns. That was our big gun, and then we had 37mm . . . oh, they were mounted on a trailer. They were movable. We hooked them onto a truck and dragged them around. And a 37mm shell was, of course, a shell that exploded on contact or at a certain altitude, and it so happened that the battery that I was in was a 37mm outfit. Now we did have Springfield rifles, and I think when I first went in we had a few Enfields. I'm not sure (chuckle).
- Marcello: You probably did because I've heard other prisoners mention the fact that they had some.
- Bunch: I think they were Springfield rifles. By the time we got to the Philippines we had all Springfield rifles. Of course, there were some support outfits that had .50 caliber machine guns and .30 caliber water-cooled machine guns. But our outfit, Battery F, was the 37mm outfit.

Marcello: Now where were you at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack?
Do you recall?

Bunch: Yes, I do. As I told you awhile ago, we were stationed at a place near Fort Stotsenburg and also near Clark Field. And I think that the distance from Clark Field to Fort Stotsenburg was about two miles, and we were right between them.

Marcello: This was a relatively small fort I gather, was it not?

Bunch: Actually, it was nothing more than a training complex, you might say. There were barracks, and besides us was housed there the 192nd Tank Battalion and I think the 194th, if I recall correctly. I do remember the tank outfit and us, and I don't remember whether there was anybody else there or not, but we were just between Clark Field and Fort Stotsenburg. On December 8th, we had been in the field, so to speak, for three or four days on a training mission. We were on field rations part of the time, and part of the time our kitchen sent hot food out to us. And it so happened that our battery was located at the far end of the Clark Field's main runway. We were deployed around the end of this runway with our 37mm guns, and the other batteries were deployed in other locations in the same general area. And, of course, that's where we were when our war broke out. It happened to be that it was right at noon, and our chow wagon with hot food that particular day had just gotten there, and

we were in the process of getting ready to eat and, of course, we had heard on the radio that very morning about Pearl Harbor being bombed, but it still didn't mean a whole lot to us. We thought, "Boy, they'll get this thing over with quick."

Marcello: I was going to ask you what your reaction was when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Bunch: Well, of course, we were amazed about it. But we still had that confidence that "Boy, oh boy, they'll lower the boom on them for that, that's for sure. We won't hear much more about this."

Marcello: You really thought that there would be no contest with the Japanese.

Bunch: I didn't really think so, and I think most of the fellows there felt the same way. I mean, they had the greatest of confidence that "Boy, this thing will be over right quick if they start something. The United States will really lower the boom on them." So we were proceeding about our normal routine. As I say, our chow wagon had come and we were in the process of getting ready to eat when we heard a distant drone of airplane motors. And the first thing we thought was, "Well, here we go. We're going after them right now. That's our planes coming. They're probably taking off from some place and headed for Japan or wherever, you know." So anyway we heard them first, and then somebody spotted them back in the distance coming from the

direction of Fort Stotsenburg, and then when they came into view, as I recall, there were either nine flights of six each, or six flights of nine each. There were fifty-four.

Marcello: There were fifty-four in it. (Chuckles).

Bunch: Fifty-four two-engine bombers. As they got closer, we could tell. And the formation deployed across the horizon and kind of right straight over Fort Stotsenburg. And we still thought these were our airplanes. Then we began to hear explosions back toward Fort Stotsenburg, two or three miles back

Marcello: In other words, you could hear those bombs walking in.

Bunch: Right. We could hear them coming in, and as they got closer, they whistled, of course, and, believe me, the whistling of the bombs is something I had never heard before. I don't think anybody else out there had ever heard them either. And then there were the ensuing explosions, and we just watched things go up in smoke as they got closer and closer and closer. The bombers came right on in and, of course, hit Fort Stotsenburg and hit our area, our living quarters, right on over Clark Field, and they did a tremendous amount of damage to Clark Field, the hangers. It so happened that there were a number of B-17's . . .

Marcello: Well, this is what they were after, those B-17's, I gather.

Bunch: Those B-17's, right. The B-17's and there were some A-20A attack planes there. There were some P-40's there. I believe that's about all, and, of course, they were trying to get those off the ground, and many of the smaller planes did get off the ground, but there were B-17's parked along side the runway almost down to where we were. And what of those that weren't hit by bombs as the bombers came over . . . and incidently, the last bomb crater got within 100 yards of us. I think (chuckles) that was the last bomb that fell. We were at the end of the runway, and the planes, as you say, were after . . . I don't think that they were particularly interested in our anti-aircraft guns at that time because we couldn't do any damage to them anyway.

Marcello: Did you put up any resistance?

Bunch: Oh, yes, we did. Now here's the thing about it. Those fifty-four heavy bombers that came over had . . . I think it was estimated that there were probably at least forty attack planes that escorted them and that we didn't see at first. But as soon as the bombers got over the attack planes came in, and, of course, their mission was to clean up what the bombers didn't do, and they did a fair job of it.

Marcello: They were mainly strafing?

Bunch: Strafing, right. I think the strafing attack planes did a lot more damage to the B-17's than the bombers did, because they could pinpoint their targets, and, of course, they were

fine tracer bullets, and they really wrecked the place. Incidentally, our outfit, the 200th, shot down seven or eight of those attack planes that day.

Marcello: Let me ask . . .

Bunch: Every one of the pilots were captured by the pygmies and brought in.

Marcello: Were your anti-aircraft guns able to reach those bombers?

Bunch: No, not our 37mm. I can't honestly say, but I don't think our 3-inch guns got up to them either.

Marcello: The reason I asked this is because I understand from what I've read and what I've been told, either the ammunition was too old or the guns were so outmoded that they simply couldn't reach the bombers.

Bunch: I don't believe that any of the bombers were shot down. As I recall, none of the fifty-four bombers were shot down by our 3-inch guns. They did shoot at them and we could see the bursts, but it was difficult to see whether we were getting up to them or not. But we did shoot down seven or eight but I can't remember for sure. You see, there was a tribe of pygmies nearby called Baloogas. We called them Baloogas, but I don't know what their real name was. They were a real primitive people. They hunted with bows and arrows, and we used to throw a Filipino penny out there twenty feet, and a kid ten years old could take a bow and

arrow and hit it. We would give it to him if he would hit it. This was before the war, of course. But at any rate, these Baloo gas were friendly and survived to a great extent on the soldiers. The soldiers would take pictures of them, and I have pictures of them here that I took. At any rate the Baloo gas had a reputation of being a very ferocious tribe of little people when they wanted to be, and they captured these pilots and brought them in. I didn't get to see any of them brought in, but I was told that they tied their feet and hands together and ran a pole through and carried them in on their shoulders. But the pilots did bail out of the planes and were captured.

Marcello: What happened after this initial attack on the 8th? Apparently, Clark Field was just a shambles.

Bunch: It was. Well, of course, everybody I think realized then that we really had a problem on our hands, and . . .

Marcello: The Air Corps has been wiped out practically in that one shot.

Bunch: There were a few planes that did get off and flew down to some of the other islands, and word was out that they had lost a lot of planes but that they still had a good Air Corps, and there were millions of rumors floating around about what was going to happen. Actually, it created sort of a mass confusion, you might say. That's about as good a term as I can think of. And it was quite obvious that we were going to need tremendous amounts of anti-aircraft

protection, so that very night we were advised that our outfit was going to be split in half, and the 200th would stay at Clark Field for the time being, and the 515th, which was set up right quick, was sent into Manila, and I happened to be selected in that particular group. I can't remember whether our battery was split or whether the whole battery went. But anyway we went immediately into Manila and were told to dig our guns in around the pier area at Manila, and I know we were right near Pier 7, I think. I know we tried to dig foxholes, but we'd hit water at one foot, so . . . (chuckle).

Marcello: (Chuckle) You were pretty close, then. Now were there Naval installations here where you were, or were you just . . .

Bunch: No.

Marcello: . . . supposed to set up around the pier area in general?

Bunch: I think really that our mission there was to try to protect the dock area.

Marcello: Most of the Naval . . .

Bunch: . . . supply ships and so on.

Marcello: Most of the Naval installations, I guess, were at Mariveles, were they not?

Bunch: Mariveles, and over across the bay at . . . I can't think of the name of that place, but it was across the bay, so to speak, from Manila. See, we were at the pier area where the commercial lines came in. And I think that their thinking

was that our anti-aircraft guns might protect the pier area so that we could bring in ships for supplies and so on.

Marcello: I gather the Japanese gave Manila a pretty good pasteing from the air, did they not?

Bunch: Yes, they did. I can't remember just how long we stayed in Manila, but we, of course, eventually had to move out because the Japanese landed in the Philippines, and we were evacuated to Bataan, but during the time that we were in the pier area we were, of course, under extreme black-out at all times, and there was a tremendous amount of sniper activity and constant searches of buildings where snipers were reported to be. There were a lot of Japanese people, of course, in the Philippines that were spies. In fact, at Angelus, which is near Fort Stotsenburg and Clark Field, and which was the closest town where a soldier could go at night and have a few beers and dance with some of the taxi dancers if he wanted to, the guy who ran the most popular place had a shortwave radio set and was a Japanese spy and he was captured, actually caught, found that out.

Marcello: Were the dock areas themselves a special target of the Japanese?

Bunch: Well, they bombed them, I'll put it that way. As I recall the area where we were specifically was only bombed heavily one time because I remember that . . . we, of course, dug foxholes for our own protection, and we had a tremendous

problem because, as I say, when we dug the water would seep up through. We were right at sea level, at the water level almost, even though we were 100 yards from the actual bay. There was a street between us with the streetcar tracks going down it, and I remember one night they did bomb us quite heavily, and one of the bombs hit in the street right up next to us and blew up the streetcar tracks. They didn't actually tear the docks up too bad. They're pretty lousy bombers sometimes (chuckle).

Marcello: (Chuckle) What's it like to be under a bombing attack? What does it do to a person?

Bunch: They scare you. In fact, I'll tell you . . .

Marcello: You were twenty-one years old?

Bunch: I was twenty.

Marcello: Twenty.

Bunch: I was twenty. Well, it's a very scary thing. If the foxhole is wet, you get in it anyway. You don't worry about that too much because . . . of course, people who have been around the shelling and bombing, either one, know you can hear them coming, and you wonder where they are going to land, so it's a matter of life and death to you, so you take it pretty seriously. You don't hesitate in the middle of the night when the sirens go off to get out of the sack and into the foxhole, I'll tell you. In fact sometimes we slept in them if it was dry enough.

Marcello: How long were you at the docks at Manila?

Bunch: I can't remember specifically. I don't think I was there too long. I'm going to say two or three weeks maybe, but I don't believe it was much longer than that.

Marcello: And at the end of that period, is that when the Japanese finally invaded the islands?

Bunch: As I recall it, but I'm hazy in that . . .

Marcello: Sure.

Bunch: . . . because we were told that they had landed a force of several thousand men on the islands and were moving pretty rapidly, and it was hoped that Manila could be declared an open city so it wouldn't be torn up . . .

Marcello: Right.

Bunch: . . . and we evacuated it. I think one of the reasons why the troops were pulled out was because they didn't want to tear the town up.

Marcello: As I recall, the Japanese who were aiming at Manila landed at Lingayen Gulf, I think it was.

Bunch: I think so.

Marcello: And I think there was a valley which runs from Lingayen Gulf right down to Manila, and on both sides of the valley there are mountains. That would seem to be the logical route. Apparently, MacArthur was even expecting them there, but there were never really any defenses which had been

established there against that invasion.

Bunch: As I recall I think they moved the troops out of Manila primarily to keep from tearing up the city so bad.

Marcello: So where did you go from Manila then?

Bunch: Well, we went immediately on into Bataan.

Marcello: Is it not true that the plan was to eventually move into Bataan and hold out there in the hopes that you would be rescued by the Navy?

Bunch: I know that we were moved into Bataan so we could concentrate our forces, and it was thought to be one place that would be defensible because the Bataan Peninsula, as you probably know, had one road that goes down the coast and up the other side. The peninsula is not too wide, and it was felt like that by pulling the defenses in there that they could hold out and await more troops. I don't recall whether we were waiting for more troops or whether we were waiting to be evacuated, to tell you the truth about it. But I do know that we went in there because we felt this was a defensible position.

Marcello: What was the terrain of Bataan like?

Bunch: I would call it hilly to mountainous with some plains area, but it was primarily hilly and mountainous. There were some fairly good-sized mountains down there, particularly on down toward the tip, as I recall, toward Mariveles, and most of the other area was hills. You have to call them

hills instead of mountains, really.

Marcello: Was it a jungle?

Bunch: Yes, quite a lot of jungle, yes. It was a very pretty place and fortunately abundant with banana trees and papaya trees and mango trees, and occasionally we'd find a cashew tree which we used to enjoy very much when we'd find one of those because we could eat the apples and roast the nuts. (chuckles) Of course, it was heavily populated with monkeys, iguanas and . . .

Marcello: All of which sooner or later became food for some of the troops anyhow, perhaps most of them.

Bunch: Right. Iguana is a very edible type of lizard, and, of course, the fruit was very helpful when we could get it.

Marcello: Well, how long was it after you moved down into Bataan that you had your first contact with the Japanese?

Bunch: Well, as I recall, and I could be forgetting something, but as I recall our particular outfit was assigned to an area, hill-side area, overlooking a large ammunition dump. They had brought ammunition in there and bombs and shells and all types of ammunition, of course, they camouflaged it. It was in a little valley with a stream and a bridge on the road. It was near the road. And our job was to set up our guns there and be prepared in case that ammunition dump came under bombing attack and also the bridge.

Marcello: This wasn't really the front line then, I gather?

Bunch: No, no, not then. No, this was considerably down in Bataan from the front line. Now they did keep some anti-aircraft eventually. I don't remember whether it was at first or not, but they did eventually keep some anti-aircraft on the front, and this was in rotation. In fact, our outfit was up on the front lines when the front lines finally broke, causing the eventual surrender of Bataan. They rotated the anti-aircraft units up there, and it just so happened to be our turn to be up there when the lines broke.

Marcello: Now the whole time you were in Bataan the Japanese had complete master of the air, isn't this correct?

Bunch: Well, I guess I would have to agree with you on that. However, I saw a beautiful dogfight between P-40's and Zero's, and I really truthfully don't know where the P-40's came from, but I know I'll never forget it because it was a tremendous boost to our morale to watch this aerial battle between about five or six P-40's and about the same number of Zero's that got into a dogfight right above us. And, of course, the P-40's in this particular instance came out on the best end. But other than that one particular time, I think I would pretty well have to agree with you that the Japanese pretty well dominated the air.

Marcello: What was life like in Bataan during the siege? I guess you could call it a siege.

Bunch: Well, for us it wasn't bad at all because other than an occasional plane or maybe three or four or a half dozen planes that come down, we weren't bothered too much where I was. Being in an anti-aircraft outfit and being at a place to guard an ammunition dump, of course, we had to dread the day the thing was hit, and it eventually was. (chuckle) We had hell for awhile there when the thing did get hit, and they destroyed it. We weren't capable of driving them off. Other than that, it was the life of Reilly. We spent all day long looking for something to eat, and also our battery was assigned a group of--I'm going to say thirty, and I could be wrong on the figure--Philippine Army boys. Like you say, they were absolutely untrained, and we attempted to try to train them to operate our guns and so forth. This is what we were occupying our time with during the day, but they weren't really interested, so we just finally decided to send them out and let them forage for food. We'd send them out and we'd say, "Go find a pig if you can, and we'll barbecue it, or find some papayas or whatever you can find." So they'd go out and they'd come back that evening with whatever they could round up and we'd have a feast.

Marcello: I assume you were already on short rations, is that correct?

Bunch: Yes, we did get on extremely short rations before it was over with. We were getting rice, of course, and we were

getting some GI food, but to tell you the truth I honestly don't remember what we were eating at that time. This was early in Bataan. We were always looking for something different, and that's true even in peacetime in the states. A soldier is going to go someplace else to get something to eat. That's the reason why we sent these Filipino boys out to forage for food for us or trade from the civilians or however they can get it, actually. But we did eventually get on very short rations on Bataan. In fact, we were down to eating horsemeat.

Marcello: This was near the end, of course.

Bunch: Yes.

Marcello: What was your physical condition like? At the time that you went into the Bataan Peninsula, were you suffering from any of the usual tropical diseases at that stage yet?

Bunch: No. Of course, in the Philippine Islands there's always a danger of malaria, but we were getting quinine and something else we used to get--I can't remember--to ward off malaria attacks, and, of course, we took that religiously because we didn't want to get malaria.

Marcello: Did you have mosquito nets? Apparently, a lot of the troops that went down into Bataan did not have mosquito nets.

Bunch: We had mosquito nets, and we used them.

Marcello: I would assume this was probably because your retreat down into the Bataan Peninsula was not really a hasty one. In other words, you came from Manila, which wasn't too far away.

On the other hand, some of those other people had to come from pretty long distances, and apparently in the haste a good many of them did not have mosquito nets when they got into the peninsula.

Bunch: I think this may be true. I think all of our people had them. It was virtually impossible to sleep if you didn't have one because there were a lot of mosquitoes, and there was always the danger of malaria, and so we used them from the very time we got there. Before the war even started we slept with mosquito nets.

Marcello: You mean . . .

Bunch: I even took mine with me into the POW camp.

Marcello: I would assume that was in many ways a lifesaver, was it not, to carry it along?

Bunch: I don't think I kept it too long. I kept it while I was in the Philippines, but when we went to Japan I didn't need it any longer. I didn't have any need for it. I guess some fellows didn't have them. You know, some guys just don't take care of things, and one guy has one today and somebody else doesn't. Next day the other guy has it and this guy didn't have it, so that's about how it worked. You had to take care of your own.

Marcello: Well, you mentioned awhile ago that the ammunition dump got hit. What were the details surrounding that?

Bunch: Well, of course, Japanese spotter planes continually flew over Bataan. I think we called them "Tojo" or something like that. I think that's what we called them, "Tojo." Anyway, it was a little single-engine, Piper Cub-type thing that flew real slow. We had instructions not to fire. We camouflaged our guns, and we wouldn't fire at these things because we knew if we did that we would be giving away our position, and the ammunition dump was heavily camouflaged with camouflaging nets and underbrush and our guns were, too, and we, of course, were constantly warned not to hang mess kits on tree limbs and anything that would reflect. We tried to keep our place concealed as best we could. But they did fly over and we knew they were photographing areas that they thought might be possible places like this, so I'm sure that they eventually got pictures of that little old valley and spotted us. As I recall there wasn't but three planes that came in there-- dive bombers. Well, they got the thing started, and, boy, it just went. And I can't remember for sure, but I think it took about four hours, and we were in more danger from the ammunition dump than anything else because the ammunition dump was down in the valley and we were up on a hillside. When those shells would explode the bullets would stay still and the ammunition shell cases would go whistling up over the hill.

Marcello: In other words, it was like shrapnel?

- Bunch: Like shrapnal, yes. So we just got in our foxholes and stayed until it was over. They completely demolished that place. They might have saved some of it if it didn't go up, but they got it.
- Marcello: Well, relate as best you can, then the events surrounding your capture.
- Bunch: Well, as I told you awhile ago, our anti-aircraft outfit was on the front line when the front lines broke, and the Japanese came on down into . . . in fact, our anti-aircraft guns were about a quarter of a mile in front of the front line artillery which constantly fired over our heads at the Japanese and was constantly fired back at by the Japanese artillery.
- Marcello: Were you ever subjected to any of these artillery barrages yourself?
- Bunch: Yes, in fact, one of the fellows in my outfit was killed by a shell that hit a tree and exploded, and he was killed by the shrapnal, one of the fellows in my outfit. I think maybe that one casualty was the only one that we actually had while we were up there, but actually the communications weren't too good because when the front lines broke we didn't even know it, but we did see Philippine soldiers coming back in groups of two and three and four.
- Marcello: Now you were back from the line at this time.

Bunch: We were right back from the actual line, and, you see, the anti-aircraft wasn't right exactly on the front line. They were back a way. Our purpose was to keep dive bombers and strafers off of the infantry. That was our job. So they were far enough ahead of us that we couldn't actually see them, but we knew they were down in the jungle ahead of us, so we kept seeing Philippine Scouts and Philippine Army going back. It wasn't too unusual to see people coming back from that direction . . .

Marcello: Especially Filipinos, I suppose.

Bunch: Right. Especially Filipinos because they wandered around all the time. At any rate, finally somebody came to us and said, "You guys better get out of here because there just isn't any front line anymore."

Marcello: Now apparently the Japanese had opened up with just a massive artillery barrage. Do you remember that at all?

Bunch: Well, I remember some very heavy artillery barrages every day that we were up there, but most of them were either dropping ahead of us or back behind us at our artillery. We had 75mm guns back behind us. Of course, we had dive bombers every day that we were trying to ward off, too. But at any rate somebody came over and told us that the lines had broken that morning and that the Japanese would be coming in there any minute. And, of course, as soon as our commanding officer got the word, we were told that we

could get out of there and two things we could do was take the breech block out of our guns and throw them in the creek or take a hammer and smash the feedbox mechanism of the gun and leave them there, but get out quick. So we did that and the gun crew that I was on, five or six of us, left together and started walking back down into Bataan. A real peculiar thing happened to us. It soon became quite obvious that there were a whole lot of other people walking back down into Bataan, too, because you saw groups . . . and, of course, the Japanese divebombers were thick as flies overhead, almost. And the only time that I ever got a wound of any kind . . . we came to a creek and . . . the 31st Infantry was the American outfit that was on the front lines, one of the outfits. And there was an old boy from the 31st Infantry that had been up there several days. We came to this creek and it had a little ford that went across it, and he was standing out in the middle of the creek with his clothes off taking a bath, he said, "The hell with them. I'm going to take a bath while I got some water." He no more had said that when a dive bomber came along and apparently got a direct hit on him--just blew him all to pieces. We all hit the ground, and a piece of shrapnel hit me in the back, and all it did was burn a hole in my shirt and a big blister on my back. (chuckles) It was real hot, but it wasn't anything really serious, but . . .

Marcello: But you got the message, I'm sure . . . (chuckle)

Bunch: I got the wound. Yes, I got my battle scar.

Marcello: Did it scare you?

Bunch: Well, yes, naturally it did, and, of course, it was such a shock to see that fellow standing there one minute, and the next minute he's just gone. There just was nothing there. So we didn't waste any time. We got on out of there and, of course, stayed under cover as best we could until we got back down into Bataan, and, of course, there was utter confusion all over the lower end of Bataan at that time. There were rumors that we were all going to Corregidor; there were rumors that we were going to set up another front line. In actuality, we did set up another front line, and our outfit, not having any anti-aircraft guns, they put us in the infantry. And I recall very vividly that we established a line . . . if I'm not mistaken, there was an airstrip at Pilar. I believe it was Pilar that there was an airstrip, a little airstrip. The P-40's used to come in occasionally at night and bring something, messages or something, and fly out again for the lower islands. At any rate, it was decided that another front line would be thrown up, and so our outfit was told to take whatever guns and ammunition we had and go up there and deploy ourselves. And I recall very vividly that I didn't even have a rifle; I had a .45 Colt revolver. There was a real story behind this because the

Philippine Scouts carried .45 revolvers, and the GI's who carried side arms carried .45 automatics, and the thing to do over there was trade your automatic to a Philippine Scout for his revolver and then take carabao horns and make you a big black handle to go on it and cut the holster off and make it a quick-draw type holster, so half the guys running around there had quick-draw holsters with these big .45 Colts. I don't know if they were Colts--I think they were--but they were revolvers anyway. So that's the only thing I had, and I only had seventeen bullets for the darn thing, and I probably couldn't hit the side of a barn with it, but at any rate that's the thing that I went up to the front line with. And I thought, "Well, what would I do with this thing." And I stayed up on that front line thinking that I was looking sure death in the eye because it got to the point where I could look right down the hill and just see about every twenty feet a Japanese tank just lined up there getting ready to come. And behind them was the infantry staying back under cover. And here we were about every ten yards, one man with a .30 caliber rifle or a .45 revolver and that's it. And I was really contemplating on what I was going to do--run or fight or hide or what--because it was so ridiculous with these tanks right down there and all this Japanese infantry, and here

we were up there with one man every ten yards and nothing really. And I don't know what there was anyplace else, but that's what there was on the hill that I was on. But anyway, finally word came down to pull back and that General MacArthur was trying to set up a meeting with General Homma to surrender Bataan Peninsula. Corregidor was not going to surrender, and if you wanted to go over there and could get over there, you were welcome to come and encouraged to, really. So obviously a lot of fellows made the effort, and some got over there and some of them didn't. I personally didn't. I and some other fellows considered going up in the hills, and a lot of them did this for a while, but in most cases I don't think it paid off. I think most of them changed their minds and went ahead and surrendered, but I felt like the thing we'd do was stay with the mass of people and take my chances rather than go off with a small group and no supplies and really not knowing whether the Filipinos would turn you in or protect you or help you or what. So I felt like the thing to do was to stay with the large group, and that's what I did. And, of course, they did eventually set up a meeting. I don't know whether MacArthur himself who did it or whether it was General King or somebody else.

Marcello: I think it was General King, and at this point I'd like to ask you another question. Apparently during the whole siege on Bataan, General MacArthur had made one trip to Bataan, and apparently this didn't endear him too much to the men on

the peninsula. Would you care to comment on this?

Bunch: I'd be very happy to. I've never failed to express my opinion. I have absolutely no regard whatsoever for General MacArthur, and I'm sincere about that. To begin with, I told you awhile ago that we were down to a little bit of rice and horsemeat once a day. And General MacArthur had tons of mutton that had been brought in there from Australia and stored in Malinta Tunnel on Corregidor for emergency use as I understand, and there was no reason whatsoever that General MacArthur couldn't have given us something to eat besides horsemeat over there. He didn't choose to do that, and I could be wrong but I don't think that you could find a man that was there at the time that I was that will say anything good about General MacArthur, and you can quote me on that.

Marcello: Well, this is the general consensus of just about everybody that I have talked to. Apparently this didn't help morale too much.

Bunch: No. General Wainwright did come over. Now I personally never did see General Wainwright or General King but they were there. I just didn't happen to see them. I don't know whether MacArthur ever came over to Bataan or not. He might have, but I couldn't say. And he may very well have had orders not to. I'm not criticizing him particularly

for that. His presence over there was not absolutely necessary, but it would have certainly helped probably, but he may have had orders not to. I don't know. All I'm saying is that I think General MacArthur could have fed us over there at least. And, then too, I think General MacArthur is a showman, and I really don't know how much regard he had for the front line soldier, and I don't think he treated us right. I had no respect for him whatsoever, never have, and, of course, he's dead now, but that still doesn't change my thinking.

Marcello: Now what happened next? The Japanese had obviously broken through; the American lines were more or less shattered; you were with a mass of people; here were these tanks down below and the Japanese troops obviously getting ready to attack.

Bunch: Well, as I told you awhile ago, we were on this line and we were told to pull back, which we were very grateful for.

(chuckle) We were glad to pull back, and, of course, as we pulled back, we became more and more concentrated down in the Bataan Peninsula. I never did get clear down to Mariveles, but we didn't have to. The meeting did finally come about between I think maybe General King and General Homma, and it was decided that we would surrender Bataan. The troops there would surrender their arms and congregate in areas where they could wait and be told what to do. So I happened to be in a large group, and eventually orders came

down through that we would take all of our guns and put them in a pile. We were told to keep our mess kits, our canteens, and our clothing, and whatever we could carry in a barracks bag or whatever, and no ammunition belts or anything like that. We could carry our belt for our canteen and just mess gear and canteen and eating utensils and bed clothes--whatever we wanted, really. And everything else--helmets--were to be piled up in a pile and left there, and this is what we did. And then we were told to wait, and this, of course, was near the road. Everything in Bataan was near the road. There is only one road that goes around. We waited there and I very vividly remember the first tank coming down the road with a Japanese commander in it, and it pulled up beside us, and he got out and he had an interpreter with him, and we were told what to do, and we got on the road and marched down to . . . again I'm a little bit hazy, but I think there's a little town called Pilar that's right on Manila Bay, and the airstrip went up the valley from Pilar, and we were brought down to this little town. And a real peculiar thing happened. I never did really know why, but we were all lined up--the group that I was in. And I don't know how many hundreds there were, but there were several hundred fellows, maybe five or six or seven hundred. And we were lined up about four, five, six deep and I know the Japanese very methodically

came out and set a machine gun down about every ten or fifteen feet right in front of us, and, of course, naturally we thought that they were just going to machine gun us all. That's what it looked like.

Marcello: What was your initial reaction when you found out that orders had come down to surrender.

Bunch: Well, I really don't know what my initial reaction was. (chuckle) I guess my initial reaction was just to do what the rest of them do, to be quite honest about it. As I told you awhile ago, there was guys who said, "I'm not surrendering, I'm going to the hills," and different individuals had different personalities and had different outlooks and say things that they don't really carry out. I didn't really have a great desire to run off in the mountains without any supplies or anything because I felt like that I'd be just hunted down and shot or turned in. So my reaction was, of course, one of great disappointment, but again I never did have the feeling that I'd be a prisoner-of-war for three and a half years. I thought, "Well, okay, they got us now, but just wait." I thought that eventually we'd be rescued and that there would be just a million troops to come in and take this place back. And I had more or less resolved myself that I was going to be a prisoner and hoped that they wouldn't shoot us all like I thought maybe they might be when they lined these machine guns up. They did another thing that . . . of course, we were kept there for I guess all

day. And immediately tanks, artillery pieces, came down on this airstrip that I'm talking about and set up the artillery pieces. We could see them down there setting up fairly large artillery, and we knew, of course, that what they had in mind was to set it up to continue the fight with Corregidor because Corregidor, of course, didn't surrender then. But the real strange thing about it was that there was a big hill directly between Corregidor and the artillery pieces, a big, bar hill. So they put us all up on this hill and got us in line and told us to sit down, and they had a guard standing around there every so often with a rifle.

Marcello: Were they roughing you up at this time yet?

Bunch: No. No, they weren't roughing us up there at all. They weren't the least bit friendly, but they didn't really bother us at that time. At any rate they had a purpose behind this because as soon as they got these artillery pieces set up they immediately started a tremendous barrage on Corregidor. And I'm convinced that they felt that Corregidor would not fire back because all these GI's were sitting on this hill right in front of the artillery pieces. But for some reason or other Corregidor did fire back, and there was a Japanese guard--I can't remember how close he was to me--but there was a Japanese guard. One shell hit in the midst of us, and it was a direct on this Japanese

guard, demolished him. Never hurt a single American sitting around there. We were sitting on the ground, and when this shell came over we hit the ground, and this guard was killed by a direct hit from this shell. After that they decided apparently that this wasn't doing them any good, so their artillery stopped firing, and then Corregidor stopped firing. Then they moved us out of there, but I'm convinced that they put us up there as protection against retaliation from Corregidor.

Marcello: How long did you remain at Bataan before you finally ended up at O'Donnell?

Bunch: Not very long. As I told you, I did not make the Death March. After this incident on the hill--and I can't remember how long, but it was a matter of minutes or maybe a few hours--we were moved back down to the small village, and I think it was Pilar, but I can't be sure. And we were just more or less just stretched out along the road, you know, waiting. Well, three Japanese trucks, flat bed trucks, pulled up and just happened to stop close to where I happened to be standing, myself and five or six close friends of mine in my outfit. And when those trucks pulled up, well, they stopped and guards came out there, and they motioned for us to get on the truck. Well, when thirty-five men got on the truck, well they stopped them. So we thought, "Well they're going to haul us out of here to some place. This is the first three trucks."

Marcello: Now did you get the impression at this time that the Japanese didn't really know what they were going to do with all these prisoners?

Bunch: No, I really didn't get that impressions. I don't know whether they knew or not, but they didn't hesitate any in taking . . . they knew where they were going because when we got on these trucks they turned around, and we pulled out and drove out of Bataan. I don't remember how long it took us, but it was several hours, I guess four or five hours or maybe longer. I don't even remember. We stopped once along the way. But as we went out, this is where we took the abuse that we got. As we went out of Bataan on the road that comes down into Bataan . . .

Marcello: You were on the trucks?

Bunch: We were on the trucks, sitting back there without any helmets, just our gear that we were allowed to take with us. As we came out of there, the Japanese infantry . . . I presume they were infantry because they were on foot . . . and there were some in trucks, some in tanks and all types coming down in a constant stream. They were just constant, just solid all the way. We were going out in these three trucks. Well, they threw rocks at us and tried to jab us with bayonets, and you had to be on your toes all the time, particularly if you were sitting close to the edge of the truck because they could reach up and hit you or throw rocks at you, and you had to sit there and try to protect

yourself. So we put up with quite a bit of that at first until we got out farther, and then we got out of this situation. But actually as far as abuse down in Bataan after we surrendered, that was the only time I saw a real serious abuse, and that, of course, could have been serious, but the worst that happened was somebody getting hit on the head with a rock or something, or they got hit with a gun butt or something like that just because some Japanese soldier was mad at us.

Marcello: These were the same soldiers, of course, who had been engaged in the battle on Bataan, and they had taken a pretty good pounding, themselves, had they not?

Bunch: They had taken a tremendous pounding. I tell you our artillery inflicted tremendous damage. They fought that battle in Bataan for quite awhile, three or four months I guess, and I heard stories of the artillery just slaughtering them, and when they took back ground they found bodies that they had to bulldoze in because there were so many of them. The Japanese didn't take them out because they didn't have time to.

Marcello: Well, apparently their timetable had been upset quite a bit. They had expected to take the Philippines much sooner than they actually did.

Bunch: I think possibly so. I think that Bataan to a certain degree accomplished some purpose because it did delay them. I

think if we hadn't gone into Bataan, the Philippines would have fallen much sooner. It undoubtedly caused tremendous damages to the Japanese Army as far as personnel losses because what artillery and what resources we had could be concentrated on the peninsula, and I think it did cost them a lot of troops. I'm sure it did.

Marcello: How long were you on the road between Bataan and O'Donnell?

Bunch: I really honestly can't answer that. I'm just going to say five or six hours because I think that's probably pretty close to right. I can't even remember what time of day we left and what time of day we got there.

Marcello: In other words, you were there when the bulk of prisoners from Bataan came into camp.

Bunch: Yes, I watched them all come in. Many of my friends were on that.

Marcello: What did these men look like when they came into O'Donnell off the Bataan Death March.

Bunch: Well, they looked like they had made a long march. I mean they were tired; they were hungry; they were worn out; they were sick; guys were helping each other walk; and they really looked terrible to be perfectly honest with you. Some of them were in pretty good shape physically. Others had been sick and had a tough time making it. As you probably know, many of them didn't make it and were bayoneted or shot or killed in some way or another, and it depended

pretty well, I think, on the condition you were in when you left on it. If you were in pretty good shape, you were strong enough to make it. If you had been sick or in a weakened condition, then you had a hard time. Many of them that made it just barely made it, you know. And, of course, too, the water in the Philippine Islands was absolutely unfit to drink unless it was boiled or treated, and the fellows coming in from the Death March . . . we immediately started having tremendous breakouts of dysentery all over the place. It took these fellows, I guess, oh, as I recall, three or four days to get in there. They came in in groups.

Marcello: What did you do prior to the coming of these troops?

Bunch: Well . . .

Marcello: You were for three or four or five days before they came?

Bunch: Yes. Right. As I told you awhile ago, 105 of us got on these trucks, thirty-five on each truck. And the purpose, we later determined--they didn't tell us this--was to go into Camp O'Donnell and get the place in condition to receive the rest of them. It had been a Philippine Army training camp.

Marcello: What did it look like?

Bunch: Well, it was grown up in grass, and it had nipa huts, if you know what nipa is. It had nipa barracks-type things built up off the ground with the nipa, a grass-like material

and bamboo, of course. The place had been deserted for quite some time. It had very little water facilities on it. It had a few hydrants around here and there that operated. There was a water source, and we were told this water was drinkable, and that's the only water that we should drink. But the lines to get water would take like all day. You would stand in line all day long to fill your canteen. There was a constant line with guys with three or four canteens sweating out the water line, you see. And as a consequence, there was a lot of people who drank water out of creeks when they knew it was just almost sure death. I mean, if you got dysentery you were very lucky to survive. I had dysentery, and I wouldn't have survived if it hadn't been for two friends of mine who came in off the Death March, and in coming in, somewhere along the line they picked up some sulfathiazole tablets and brought them with them. They were both from my hometown, Carlsbad, and friends of mine, and they gave me the sulfathiazole. It was a very common drug used for infections and so on.

Marcello: What sort of an attrition rate took place here at O'Donnell? Could you estimate about how many were dying per day?

Bunch: Yes. I think I can pretty well tell you that. To begin with Camp O'Donnell was divided into two portions--the Americans were put into one section, the Filipinos in another. And I'm trying to think of the numbers, but I'm going to say

there were 6,000 Americans there. I think I'm pretty close to right. On the other hand there were somewhere in the neighborhood of 30-40,000 Filipinos in the other portion. And, of course, with the large numbers of Filipinos in the area I'm sure they had the same water problems that we did. They were losing 300-400 a day, dying primarily from dysentery.

Marcello: This was the biggest killer at this time.

Bunch: Right . . .

Marcello: Malaria was not a factor, not much of a factor.

Bunch: Not at that time, not at that time to the extent that . . . you know, you could have malaria for a long time and live. I had it for a long time and lived without any medicine at all. But dysentery would get you real quick. Dysentery could kill you in three or four days, and if you got hold of some water that was bad and got dysentery and had no medicine, it was just a matter of a slow death, really. Well, it was not too slow, three or four days, and this is what was killing the Filipinos and, of course, killing the Americans. Now I'm going to say the death rate of the Filipinos would go up as high as 300 or 400 a day because I used to count them as they walked by on the road to bury them. We'd sit out there by the fence and count them. There was nothing else to do. And we were losing anywhere from thirty to sixty a day or even higher some days from the same thing.

Marcello: Were you ever unfortunate enough to get on any of the burial details?

Bunch: Yes, I was, many times.

Marcello: Could you describe those, or would you care to describe those?

Bunch: I'll be glad to describe them. The burial details consisted of two details, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. If you got on the morning detail, you dug the grave. If you got on the afternoon detail, you carried the bodies down and put them in the grave. And I've been on both of them. I helped bury some of my very best friends, my very close friends, the guys in my outfit. The gravedigging detail worked against time. You had guards who were with you who were impatient. We had an area that we went to, and I'll have to say that the gravediggers--the boys who dug the graves dug one single grave, a large square hole depending on how many bodies there were to bury. And their desire, as it should have been, was to dig a hole big enough to bury the people in, but when the guard got tired, he went home, whether it was four feet deep or three feet deep or six feet deep. So we dug the hole and had men in there working and some resting and back and forth. We dug as fast as we could, and then the digging detail came in, and the other detail went down later in the afternoon and buried these men all in the same grave. And to describe it as it was, we carried these people . . . the nipa huts that we

had had windows that you push out, made out of framework with the nipa. Well, these were taken off--in most cases they had come off or fell off or they were taken off--and the bodies were laid on those things, and then two poles were put under the ends. It took four men with a pole on their shoulder. And these dead men were nude; their clothes were taken off of them. Many of them had been dead twenty-four hours and were in terrible condition, swollen and very bad odor. It was a miserable thing. You couldn't eat for a day after you had been on the thing, really. That's about what it amounted to. And they simply walked down to the grave area, which I'm going to say was three-quarters or one-half a mile from our camp, and you walked up to the side of the grave and tipped that thing up and let the body roll in, and they had two men down there picking them up and stretching them out side by side, layer on layer. I've actually seen them buried to where it came up to the top. I've actually seen it when we went down the next day--and I've been down there two days in a row--where the graves from the day before, or two days before, you'd see a hand or an arm or bloody water. There usually wasn't just much dirt covering them. And I happened to be one of the unfortunate ones who one time had to get down in the grave. The thing that everybody dreaded worst was having to get down there. The guard on duty said, "You, you, and you get down in there and straighten them out." When you dumped them in, you had

to pick them up, and your fingers would sink into the flesh, and you then stretched them out side by side and I did. Our first sergeant who was a very close friend of my mother and father, and who in fact encouraged them to let me get into the National Guard, died in prison camp and I helped bury him. And I also helped bury another close friend of mine from Carlsbad. That was a horrible thing, really, but I'm sure if you've talked to other prisoners-of-war you've heard this same story identically. You must have if they were at Cabanatuan or O'Donnell. I didn't make the burial detail at Camp O'Donnell; I made it at Cabanatuan. I never got on it in O'Donnell, but at Cabanatuan I did. The death rate there had dropped some, but it was still twenty, twenty-five, or thirty every day.

Marcello: What did you do at O'Donnell? Did they have you on any work details?

Bunch: No, as I recall there was no work details at all at O'Donnell. We simply wandered around listening for rumors. Listening for rumors, that is what we survived on--rumors.

Bunch: Did you still think that help was right around the corner.

Bunch: Always, as long as we were in the Philippines. As long as we were in the Philippines, some guy would come around and say, "I just heard . . . this is no rumor. This is fact. This word has got in through Captain So-and-so up here that there's a convoy of American ships that will be in here about 3:30 day after tomorrow," or some wild thing like that, and

we just thrived on those things. We lived them. I honestly think it kept some guys alive, I really do. I sometimes suspect that maybe some of our smarter officers maybe dreamed them up to give you something to hold on to, you know, because your buddies were sick and dying all around you, and there was not enough to eat, and it was hard to get water, and it was miserable, and there was death everywhere. In the Philippines it was horrible and the rumors, I lived on these things, and I'm sure the other fellows did too. They just survived on them.

Marcello: Were the Japanese roughing up the prisoners at O'Donnell?

Bunch: No. I don't think I ever saw that happen at O'Donnell. They didn't mess with us too much.

You asked me if we did any work at O'Donnell. We did some work at O'Donnell. The work that we did at O'Donnell was not at O'Donnell. It was work details that went out and it was a real desire after awhile for you to get on these work details because if you could get on one of these work details, usually you got out in a group of twenty-five or thirty fellows into a town someplace where there were Japanese troops. I got on one of these details. After I'd had dysentery and got well enough to get around, there was a detail that came up that was going into San Fernando. The Japanese had a large motor pool at San Fernando, a tremendous large motor pool, and they were taking approximately thirty men on the detail. Well, I wanted to be on that detail real bad because I felt like it might be my survival

to get out of this place. The details that would go out would say, "Hey, we had this, we had this, they gave us this," and, you know, things like that. We weren't getting anything but rice.

Marcello: And you could get off those death details, too . . .

Bunch: Right.

Marcello: . . . if you managed to get on one of those at O'Donnell.

Bunch: The real desire was to get out of that place, from the bad atmosphere and the death and the sickness, and maybe get this extra food that the guys were talking about--cigarettes--that Jap soldiers would give them, maybe. So there was a detail going to San Fernando, and I got on this detail even though I was real weak. We did go into San Fernando, and they put us in a pretty good-sized house and told us that that was where we'd live, and they fed us pretty good, and besides that the Filipino kids would come around with things to sell and we . . . I don't know, but we had some American money, I guess, that the soldiers had kept, and so we'd buy things to eat from them. And every morning the details would move out, and this detail that I got on was to go back down into Bataan in trucks. We did several things, but one thing in particular that we did was go down and pick up the empty shell cases after Corregidor fell. See, the Japanese took Corregidor, there was a tremendous amount of artillery fire exchanged, and the empty brass shell cases were all picked up and brought back and shipped back to Japan

for reuse. And I know we spent several days doing that, and we hauled some rations . . .

Marcello: Did you ever get very close to the Japanese soldiers at this time? You were obviously working fairly close with them.

Bunch: Right. There would be a couple of soldiers or so on each truck along with us. Depending on the personality of the Jap soldier, some of them were real good. We'd haul some food on occasions. I remember we had some potted beef, I think it was, or potted ham or something. There were cases of it, and they gave us all we wanted to eat. The next vehicle you'd go out on, they wouldn't give you anything. It just depended on the attitude of the soldiers themselves. I know at one time we hauled beer, and they gave us beer.

Marcello: Did they ever make any attempt to show the prisoners off to the local population as a form of humiliation?

Bunch: No. They never did that any place that I was, Japan or Philippines.

Marcello: Were there ever any escape attempts at O'Donnell?

Bunch: I don't recall any at O'Donnell. We had some instances of it at Cabanatuan but not at O'Donnell.

Marcello: I guess everybody was in such bad physical shape at O'Donnell that the number one priority was to stay alive.

Bunch: That's right, and then, too, as I said before, we still felt like that in a month or two or three it would all be over, you see. As you say, the whole thing was based on

staying alive, trying not to get dysentery, because everybody became very aware of what would happen to you if you did. And we lived on these rumors that the United States was sending a fleet of ships and enough troops to take the whole place back in a couple of days. This is what we lived on, so the desire was to survive this thing until these people got here and took us out of this place.

Marcello: What sort of provisions did the Japanese provide at O'Donnell?

Bunch: Basically rice. I can't recall ever getting anything but rice at O'Donnell, and I was only there a month or so.

Marcello: About how large a person were you when you entered the service?

Bunch: I probably weighed about 130 pounds, 135 maybe. I was small.

Marcello: This might have been a good thing from what some of the other prisoners have told me. I've heard it said by several of them that the bigger ones were the ones who usually suffered the most, perhaps because they needed more food or calories in order to survive.

Bunch: That could be the case. We had some fellows who did not survive that were big men. We also had some big men that made it, so I don't really know whether that theory holds any water or not. I think it depended to a great extent on whether or not you got some sickness that could . . . you know, the biggest and strongest person there is . . . can be weakened by sickness--malaria or dysentery or whatever--and . . . actually, rice was not . . . I take exception when someone talks about rice. I think it's great food, and I

still like it. Of course, the rice they use over there is different from what we eat here. The rice that we have here wouldn't keep anybody alive long, I don't think.

Marcello: Did the prisoners ever take any steps at this time to try to supplement their diet? I'm speaking now of eating snakes or the iguanas or anything like that at O'Donnell. We're still at O'Donnell.

Bunch: Yes. Well, (chuckle) any snake or iguanas at O'Donnell probably were gone the first day (chuckle). If there were any around there, they were taken . . . I guess I've seen guys cook snakes in mess kits, roast them over fires and eat them, and I've tasted them. I never actually cooked one myself. I have seen them drink blood in Cabanatuan when they would get something they had butchered. Every once in a while they would bring in a carabao or something at Cabanatuan and they would butcher it, and we'd get this meat. Of course, when we divided it over 6 or 7,000 men you were lucky if you got a smell of the stew. But when they would butcher the thing, the guys would get the blood, lots of them, the ones that were there, and some cooked it, some drank it. There wasn't anything wasted.

But to go back to O'Donnell, this is where I fouled up. The guys that went out on work details, when they would come back in, they would bring pony cakes back with them. Now pony cakes were a by-product of sugar cane mills, the

waste sugar. They make sugar from sugar cane and there was a . . . the top portion that they skimmed off, or they drained off. It was the impurities of the sugar so to speak. Anyway, they poured it into molds about this big around, and they were kind of round on one side and flat on the bottom, and it was just almost like brown sugar in a cake. Of course, it had dirt . . .

Marcello: Were you calling these pony cakes?

Bunch: Pony cakes. As I was told, the Filipinos fed the pony cakes to the carrromata ponies. Carrromata is a little one-horse buggy, a two wheeled cart pulled by a pony. In the Philippine Islands, particularly out in the villages and the small towns, Carrromata were like taxicabs. If you wanted to go down the street three blocks, the guy would come along and you give him two bits, and he took you down there with his carrromata. They were thick down around Angeles and San Fernando and places like that, in lieu of taxies. We used to just rent them to have races, and (chuckle) the guys would let us before the war.

Marcello: I see.

Bunch: But they called them pony cakes because I was told--I've never seen a Filipino feed them--they feed them to the ponies. So we called them pony cakes. At any rate, somebody brought one of those in, and I got hold of it and I got dysentery. That's how I got dysentery. The next day I was in terrible shape and getting worse, completely out of my head, unconscious.

Two friends of mine came in, and I'm convinced that in another day or two I would have been dead. But they did give me sulfathiazole and I survived it.

Marcello: Dysentery, I gather, was just one constant trip to the head all the time, is that correct?

Bunch: Right. There comes a time when you can't eat, as was my case. You're too weak and you have no desire to go eat, and there's a mucous that forms in the intestines that keeps coming all the time, then blood, then you just become so weak that you just die.

Marcello: How long did you have this siege of dysentery?

Bunch: Well, I guess I'd have to say three or four days maybe because I really was in pretty bad shape. It just so happened that I got it fairly quick and these fellows, when they found out that I had it, they had sulfathiazole and they gave me some and I whipped it, that's all. But I don't know of anybody who had dysentery over four or five days who didn't die with it, as a rule, unless they had medication of some kind.

Marcello: It didn't take long in order to die from dysentery?

Bunch: No. And again, if a fellow was in a weakened condition, it would get him quicker. We had a guy on the work detail that I went to in San Fernando that died while we were there, and he was only sick about two or three days.

Marcello: What sort of medical facilities were available at O'Donnell?
Again, I'm speaking of O'Donnell.

Bunch: I don't recall any medical facilities at O'Donnell. Now we very well might have had some medical people there who you could go to and who maybe could offer some advice or something like that, but that's about all. I think any medicine that was there was what individuals brought in that they had found or had and just held on to.

Marcello: And I understand that sickbay was the step right before death. Is that correct? Apparently only the hopeless cases went to sickbay.

Bunch: I don't recall even having a sickbay in Camp O'Donnell at all. I don't recall any sickbay there at all. I remember guys dying right in my barracks where I slept. They never did go to sickbay.

Marcello: I gather that O'Donnell was more or less a distribution point, perhaps. Is that a good way of putting it? In other words, it was a stopping off place before you usually went on to Cabanatuan.

Bunch: Well, it very well could have been, but I don't really know. I don't really think that once we all got in there that any more came in there. They may have after we left, but I don't know. And, again, I don't remember whether we were there a month or two before we went to Cabanatuan where the facilities were better and that we had more water available. We didn't have the long wait for water.

Marcello: What was the trip like from O'Donnell to Cabanatuan? This was Cabanatuan I?

Bunch: Cabanatuan II.

Marcello: Cabanatuan II.

Bunch: You know, I don't even remember making the trip. I don't really remember making the trip at all. I kind of think, maybe, that while I was out on this work detail they moved and then I was taken up there.

Marcello: I see.

Bunch: I honestly can't remember how I got to Cabanatuan II. I just don't recall it.

Marcello: How did Cabanatuan differ from O'Donnell so far as physical layout was concerned?

Bunch: Well, it was much larger than O'Donnell, to begin with.

Marcello: You had Corregidor boys here, did you not?

Bunch: Yes, by that time Corregidor had fallen on May 6, and the boys from Corregidor came in. Many of my friends that came in there went to Corregidor out of my outfit. Well, the barracks that we stayed in, I think, generally speaking, were better than they were at O'Donnell, a little better. The area had apparently been in use prior to the time that we got there by some other . . . I really don't know whether it was built for us or whether it was really there. I really don't remember that. But there wasn't a whole lot of difference except we had more water, more area. It was a tremendous big place, and the food was a little better organized. We got basically the same thing that we got in O'Donnell and that was rice. I can't remember getting anything

at O'Donnell other than rice, either. Of course, in the meantime, when you get that many fellows together, some guys are going to figure out a way to get some food, and you get the Filipinos from the outside ready to make a buck, and there was a lot of money in this camp, and people had money that wasn't taken away from them, and, of course, the American dollar was still in demand over in the Philippines. And we had guys that had the guts to climb the fences at night and go into Cabanatuan and deal with the Filipinos and come back before daylight and . . .

Marcello: Security was that loose at the camp?

Bunch: Yes. We had guards, but the fence around our camp was just a barbed wire fence, and you could always jump the thing. There was no problem to get over that fence. The guard shacks were around the thing, and they had guards patrolling, but at night you could jump that fence in the darkness and be gone and then get back in, and fellows did that. In fact, we had three fellows that I watched being executed for that very thing.

Marcello: Did you ever try this yourself?

Bunch: No, sir. I'm not that type. (chuckles) I never had that desire, really. Some people are maybe daring enough to do that, but I personally did not, but I knew fellows that did it in the Philippines, and I know one right here in Dallas that did it in Japan. He lives right here in this area. He

was in camp with me. But I never did do it, and it resulted in the death of these three fellows that got caught doing that very thing. If they could make it out and back in and go out and trade for some canned salmon and one thing or another and bring it in, they could not only eat it themselves, but they could sell it for a lot of money and go out and buy more. Cigarettes were worth a dollar a piece for all you could sell and all you could get.

Marcello: I would assume that food was on your mind more consistently than any other subject.

Bunch: I think so, that and the never-ending rumors. Food and the rumors was what we survived on.

Marcello: What sort of work details did the Japanese provide for the prisoners at Cabanatuan II?

Bunch: Well, there was a never-ending supply of work details-- repairs to buildings and tearing down buildings and fixing up buildings. And I can recall guys walking up and down the road with a two-by-four on their shoulder and moving them from here to there and back. Of course, there were the never-ending burial details and the grave digging details. We didn't have a tremendous amount of details at the camp itself other than the burial detail and the gravedigging detail and an occasional construction-type thing where they needed the lumber moved around and a building worked on. There weren't a whole lot of work details that I recall, and

too, in O'Donnell they did take work details out of O'Donnell into San Fernando and places like that such as the one that I went on, but we didn't have a whole lot of that, as I recall, in Cabanatuan. Everybody stayed right there.

Marcello: Were there ever any escape attempts at Cabanatuan that you recall?

Bunch: I don't recall actually any escape attempts in Cabanatuan. The closest thing to it would have been these three fellows that were caught going out and buying food, and they were caught coming back in, not going out (chuckles). I understand, they were caught coming in. But there were escape attempts because, you see, by that time there was considerable guerrilla warfare units set up by Filipinos. In fact, messages had been sent in to our camp, and they delivered them to us, really. They even went so far as to come up close enough to our camp in small groups in an attempt to kill the guards. And this happened at Cabanatuan II. They came in and just flat beheaded a Japanese guard walking outside the fence. And, of course, outside our fences was tall grass, and I don't recall whether there were tress, but there was tall grass. I know after that they burnt that grass off and installed light poles, and we used to sit at night and watch the guards walk their posts looking over both

shoulders all the time (chuckles) when they were around the back side of the camp because there were a lot of Filipino guerrilla outfits working around that area and a lot of guerrilla activity and their tactics were, of course, hit and run and they kept these guards real uneasy. And they had offered to liberate this whole Cabanatuan Camp II, but nobody wanted any part of it. What would we do with several thousand people scattered around just waiting for them to come and get us. There were instances, I understand, where in some places guys got out with a guerrilla outfit and stayed with them and eventually got back to the States. But I had no desire for this, and I don't think anybody in our camp felt like it was the thing for the entire camp to be liberated by the Filipinos.

Marcello: The Japanese also took steps to discourage escapes, did they not?

Bunch: Yes.

Marcello: Didn't they have some sort of a rule set up that divided people into groups of ten?

Bunch: They sure did, and I had a friend who--I didn't see it happen, but I had been told--was in a group of ten that was executed because one of the men escaped. They divided us into groups of ten men.

Marcello: And if one escaped, all ten would get it.

Bunch: That's right, the other nine would get it. It wasn't a bad rule for them because, believe me, you would think a long time escaping as an individual if you knew that nine of your friends were going to be executed.

Marcello: And I'm sure if those nine friends knew you had some desire to escape, they would try to discourage you also.

Bunch: I'm sure they would. We had a fellow that was in my outfit that I was told was executed at another camp because of this thing. I never was able to verify that, but I was told he was executed on that basis.

Marcello: Now were the Japanese roughing up prisoners here? Did you see any physical atrocities being committed?

Bunch: I don't recall in Cabanatuan any Japanese in particular picking on any prisoner other than maybe on a detail where a guy was . . . oh, he wasn't working to suit the guard or he wasn't digging fast enough or he wasn't doing something right and the guard would walk up and kick him or slap him or jab him with a gun butt or something. It was not bad but just more or less a reprimand, I'd think you'd say, enough to make a guy feel it. The only abuse, what I consider a real abuse, was the incident where the fellows were coming back into camp that were caught and eventually executed. They had a punishment, the Japanese did, called the seventy-two hour sun cure, at least that's what we called it. And the idea was that they would tie you to a post, as they did these guys, in front of the guard shack, for 72 hours without food or drink unless somebody could take something to them. And these three fellows were being given the seventy-two hour sun cure, and in some way or other they got their hands

loose, and, of course, the only thing that they could do was come back into camp. It wouldn't have done them any good to run off someplace else, particularly in daylight. Anyway, they jumped the fence and came back into camp. And one in particular--a fellow that I never knew personally, but I knew his name, and I knew where he lived, and he lived just a couple of barracks over from where I lived--ran back to his barracks and crawled up to the top deck and proceeded to drink all the water he could hold. And the guards, of course, immediately came running into the compound. They stayed out of our compound pretty well unless they had a reason to come in there. Of course, they came in and they got him and beat him severely with their gun butts and dragged him, picked him up by the heels, and just dragged him a quarter of a mile back down to the guard shack. And they got the other two fellows, which I didn't see, but he happened to be nearby where I was. They tied him to a big stump, and next morning they got those fellows out and made them dig their own graves and executed them with a firing squad, and they forced us to get out there and watch the whole thing because I guess they wanted to impress on us what could happen, you know.

Marcello: I gather you got the message.

Bunch: I got the message.

Marcello: How about collaborators, did you ever see any collaboration in this camp? I'm referring to Americans who perhaps informed

on their buddies to the Japanese in order to receive special favors.

Bunch: I never knew of that happening in Cabanatuan or O'Donnell.

Marcello: Were you receiving any news from the outside at this time?

Bunch: Only rumors.

Marcello: Only rumors, nothing at all but rumors.

Bunch: Never knew where they came from, no. We never got any messages from outside at all except that the guerrillas sent word in that they would liberate us. Of course, I never actually saw these messages, but I'm told this happened. They would liberate us whenever we were ready, but nobody had that desire.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever pull any sneak inspections of the barracks or things of this nature at Cabanatuan?

Bunch: I honestly can't remember. They did this frequently in Japan, but I don't actually remember them doing it in Cabanatuan. They may have, but it's been so long ago I just can't remember them ever doing that at Cabanatuan. They did it frequently in Japan, but I don't remember it at Cabanatuan.

Marcello: How long were you at Cabanatuan altogether?

Bunch: Well, I was taken prisoner on the 9th of April and I must have went to Cabanatuan sometime probably in early June. I'm estimating this. I stayed at Cabanatuan from then until about October 1. I left Cabanatuan October 1 to go to Japan. We were moved into Manila and put in Bilibid

Prison for about ten days. I presume awaiting transportation. And then we were put on a ship, and here I'm again guessing but I think it was about the 10th or 11th of October, 1942. We landed in Japan on Thanksgiving Day. It took us forty-some-odd days to make that seven-day trip. It was a terrible thing.

Marcello: Let's just go back a minute here before we start on this trip. I would assume that after awhile the death rate at Cabanatuan kind of diminished and then leveled off. By this time all of the weak ones had died and the strong ones, perhaps even though they weren't in the best of physical condition, were at least surviving.

Bunch: Right. That's true. As I recall, as long as I was at Cabanatuan, we had the deaths. Obviously you would with that many people and living under those conditions. But people began to learn how to take care of themselves a little better. They were more cautious about what water they drank, and they were more cautious about what they ate. You learn how to survive under certain circumstances, and then you guard against drinking just any water, and you guard against just eating anything that you can get your hands on. Now the thing that we did have quite a lot of at Cabanatuan, and no medication for it, was malaria. I had malaria very badly at Cabanatuan, and I had no medicine whatsoever until I got to Bilibid. Now when we got to Bilibid, knowing that we were going to Japan, the

Japanese issued quinine. I don't know whether it was through the Red Cross or what, but we did get what we called ten-day courses of quinine. They gave you a ten-day course and then you would wait a week and then take another ten-day course. So I took a ten-day course of quinine at Bilibid while I was there, and then they gave me another one and told me to wait a week and take it, which I did. And, of course, I'm sure their purpose here was to try to get us to Japan in good enough health so they could do what they wanted us to do, and that was to work in Japan.

But at Cabanatuan I can recall very vividly . . . and I don't remember how many days that I had malaria . . . and malaria, as you know, works on you in this manner: every day you have an attack of malaria. Each day as you have this attack you first start off with a little chill up your back, and the first thing you know your just freezing to death. I've actually watched guys climb up in the bays and pile blankets and anything they could get off their buddies' beds and just lay there and just rattle the bamboo with chills. And then the chills go away, and you get a fever. Then the fever diminishes, and this whole process takes maybe two or three hours, and then you're just kind of weak. The next day, fifteen minutes later than the day before, you're going to get another one. I think probably you've heard it before, but it just seemed to get to where you'd

expect it. Fifteen minutes later than what you had it yesterday, you'd have it again today. I went through that several days, and I don't know how long you could survive with malaria, but you obviously would become weaker as time went on. I had malaria when I was going to Japan, but the quinine courses that I took apparently pretty well took care of it.

Marcello: How about the other tropical diseases? Were there ever very many of these at Cabanatuan? I'm referring to beriberi or pellagra or something like that.

Bunch: I feel like after I left Cabanatuan there was a lot of this, but during the time that I was there, I don't remember any cases of pellagra, scurvy, beriberi in Cabanatuan. The biggest problem that we had was what we called tropical ulcers. Boy, those things were terrible! You could start off with a little tiny place on your leg or elbow or hand . . .

Marcello: It was usually a cut or open wound of some sort?

Bunch: Right, and it just kept expanding, getting larger and larger and larger and deeper and deeper and deeper. I've seen them this big around on guys who were just covered with them, terrible looking things. And they called them tropical ulcers.

Marcello: What cure did they have for tropical ulcers?

Bunch: Well, they used sulfathiazole powder to get it. Now we did get some sulfathiazole powder in Cabanatuan. I can't recall whether the Philippine Red Cross or Japanese gave it to us,

but there was a sickbay there because we could get sulfathiazole powder in Cabanatuan. I still got a scar on my knee where I had one--tropical ulcer on my knee. I only had that one. But I saw guys that had them all over their body.

Marcello: I think in most cases these tropical ulcers did leave scars of some sort or another.

Bunch: They were quite deep, and they got larger as time went on.

Marcello: I gather the medical facilities were better at Cabanatuan than they were at O'Donnell.

Bunch: Yes, they were and I can't remember very much about them at all. But I do remember there was sulfathiazole powder over there at Cabanatuan. That's all I remember about the medical facilities.

Marcello: Is there anything else about Cabanatuan that we haven't talked about yet that you think ought to be a part of the record?

Bunch: I really can't think of a whole lot more. It was basically the same thing as O'Donnell except a little bit better conditions. If you had money or if you had the right friends, you might scrounge a little extra food. It would get into the camp some way or another. The fellows spent most of their time sitting around talking, talking about this rumor and that rumor and how authentic it was and so on and so forth.

Marcello: Were there ever any recreation facilities provided, or were most of the prisoners too weak and so on to participate in any such activities?

Bunch: I don't recall ever any organized type of recreation. I think most of the fellows just weren't up to it. They just weren't really physically fit to want to do this sort of thing. Maybe they were able to, but I never saw any volleyball or anything like that. I don't recall ever seeing anything of that sort. Now Cabanatuan offered it a long time after I left there.

Marcello: I'm referring again to your personal experiences.

Bunch: I don't recall ever seeing any recreational facilities at all at Cabanatuan.

Marcello: Did you strike up any close friendships at Cabanatuan? In other words, did perhaps two or three or four or five fellows form a pretty close relationship and kind of look out for one another and this sort of thing?

Bunch: I think this is true. As you start off, your in with some of your own buddies in your own outfit, and then you get divided up and eventually you end up with one or two, and so you obviously make friends with the guys that are around you. I remember fellows that I made friends with that I never met till I got to prison camp. I don't say that in the Philippines, at least, that I ever got close enough to them that . . . they were buddies, sure, we'd go around together. I remember one night that one of my best friends in prison camp went to the john, and the johns in Cabanatuan were something nothing more than a large hole dug in the ground with dirt piled up all the way around, and when it would rain these

piles of dirt would be extremely slick. So he got up one night and went to the head, and he slipped and fell in up to his neck. Fortunately, somebody else was there and pulled him out, and he spent the rest of the night with the help of some of the rest of us washing himself off.

Marcello: Must have been humiliating as much as anything else.

Bunch: Tremendously humiliating and a terrible thing. It was just a terrible thing (chuckle).

Marcello: Then people did more or less look out for one another. There wasn't the "hurrah for me and to hell with everybody else" attitude, or did you see this sometimes on the part of prisoners?

Bunch: Well, I rarely ever saw a guy who got his food and who would give it to somebody else if he didn't feel hungry. He might trade it to somebody else, but he still wouldn't give it to them. There might have been exceptions to this, obviously, but in most cases, if I couldn't eat half of my chow, I'd trade it off for half of somebody else's the next day or the next week or something like that. And this held true clear on through Japan. You just didn't give away food. It might have been cigarettes or something else. Now there were exceptions to that, obviously. We had fellows in Japan who wouldn't trade their food off. They would give it to their buddies. But in most cases, even they at times--and I think without exception possibly--if they for one reason or another couldn't eat their food, they'd trade it off.

Well, there were, of course, groups of fellows that stuck together pretty well and who tried to look after each other, and there were others that didn't.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that from Cabanatuan II you were sent to Bilibid Prison in Manila. Was there anything eventful that happened on the trip from Cabanatuan to Manila? Let me put it to you this way, did you go with a large group of other soldiers? How did you travel there?

Bunch: I went one time someplace on a train, and I remember it was real crowded. But I swear that I don't remember whether it was from Cabanatuan to Bilibid or from O'Donnell to Cabanatuan or where. But I did go on a boxcar that was jam-packed full of people. I don't really remember. I do remember making a trip in a boxcar one time.

Marcello: What was that trip in the boxcar like?

Bunch: Well, we were just jammed in. The doors were closed and you just stood there and waited until you got where you were going, that's all. I took another trip on a train in Japan that was in coach cars.

Marcello: How long did you stay in Bilibid Prison altogether?

Bunch: About ten days. I think we got on about the 1st and stayed there about ten days.

Marcello: And essentially at Bilibid Prison, I gather, you were just waiting for transportation . . .

Bunch: That's where we got MacArthur's mutton. The Japanese had taken MacArthur's mutton out of Malinta tunnel and they didn't like it so they gave it to us. They were feeding it to the boys at Bilibid Prison.

Marcello: Okay, then from Bilibid Prison you boarded a ship . . .

Bunch: Right.

Marcello: . . . and went over to Japan.

Bunch: Right.

Marcello: Now, awhile ago you mentioned the trip from Manila to Japan took forty days . . .

Bunch: Forty-some-odd-days.

Marcello: Obviously, it must have been a pretty eventful trip and one which you remember quite vividly.

Bunch: I do because I remember very vividly that there were five ships in the convoy that we were in. I also remember very vividly that we had heard that many of those ships didn't make it to Japan and were sunk by Allied submarines, dive bombers, and what have you. They weren't marked. At least the ships that we were on were not marked. We had a Japanese destroyer escort, one destroyer escort, that stayed with us during the entire trip with the exception of a day or two. It would be gone and come back and stay for a day or two, then it'd be gone again and come back, but it stayed fairly close. The ship that I happened to be on had carried coal before we got on it, and we were not allowed to stay on deck except for a very few fellows at a time and only for short periods at a time.

Marcello: You were down in the hold.

Bunch: We were down in the hold. It was a coal ship; it hauled coal. You can imagine what we looked like when we got there. And we were just down in there laying around wherever we could. We'd sleep and just laid there.

Marcello: Were the quarters cramped?

Bunch: Very cramped. There was room enough to lay down. We could lay down.

Marcello: Did you loose very many men on this trip?

Bunch: Yes, we lost several. I don't remember how many, but every one of them were wrapped in canvas and dumped overboard as fast as they died. We were allowed to climb the ladder up on the deck. I can't remember how many men there were, but they'd count them, and when they got enough up there, they'd stay up there for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes, and then they'd go down and more would come up. And this was a constant thing. They just kept a rotation. They had urine buckets and so on down in there, of course, and the only thing that we got to eat on the ship was rice, period. And this is where we really got pellagra or scurvy or whatever you want to call it. I really don't know the difference, but I know all the hair came off my legs and arms. I didn't loose it off my head at that time. And my skin all scaled and cracked and became dry, and I'm told this was scurvy or pellagra or something like that.

Marcello: Was there very much seasickness on this trip over to Japan?

Bunch: I really, honestly can't say. I never did get seasick even when I went overseas before the war, and the guys did get real seasick then. And I really, honestly can't remember whether there was any seasickness on that thing. There must have been, but I really can't recall it.

Marcello: What happened that the trip took forty days?

Bunch: Well, for one thing we spent over a week at Taiwan or Formosa, and the reason why we spent so much time there was two-fold: One, the ship took on supplies there; two, we had a submarine that got after us. And this was a real thriller for us because . . . I didn't happen to be on deck, but some of the guys that were on deck saw this submarine. It happened to be there at a time when the destroyer was not there. Obviously it would not have come up otherwise. But anyway, the submarine surfaced, they said, a hundred or so yards off the side of the ship that we were in and that they looked us over real close, and then it submerged. And the funny thing about it was that when this submarine came up, the guards immediately ran everybody below deck, which seemed to me the wrong thing to do. It looks like they'd have got us all up there, you know . . .

Marcello: Right.

Bunch: . . . because if it had been me, (chuckle) I would want them to recognize that this was a POW ship, but they didn't.

They made everybody get below deck, and they even knocked some guys off the deck down in the hold, just knocked them down there, but then they got hurt. So anyway, they battened down the hatches, put the hatches on, battened them down, and we were just down there in the darkness waiting for a torpedo to come crashing through that thing. It was a really scary thing. But nothing happened and the next day or two after that we pulled into Taiwan, and we anchored right out in the middle of the bay, and we sat there for over a week or ten days.

Marcello: You didn't do anything?

Bunch: We didn't do anything except rotate on deck and back in the hold.

Marcello: Now had the weather changed by this time?

Bunch: Well, I don't really recall what the weather was like in Taiwan. All that I remember is that when we landed in Japan, it was cold. It was Thanksgiving Day and Japan is cold on Thanksgiving Day. And we were all pretty well outfitted by that time in Filipino clothes which are much shorter than what most Americans wear. We had pants that struck us about here and light jackets and shirts. And when we got off the boat in Japan it was Thanksgiving Day.

Marcello: Where did you land in Japan?

Bunch: We landed in . . . what's the town across the bay from Osaka?

Marcello: Not Yokohama, not Kobe.

Bunch: I can't remember actually. I think we landed in one and then went to Osaka. But we went across the bay to Osaka. So I

ended up in Osaka. Anyway, we got off the ship, and it was very cold. I would estimate it was probably thirty degrees.

Marcello: Where did you go from there?

Bunch: Well, I can't remember how we went. I really don't know whether it was in trucks or trains at this time, but we went to . . . I remember going to a large building someplace, and in this large building they kind of got us organized, and they gave every man five blankets. They were cotton blankets, real wooly like things, you know, and we found out later the wool all came off them. The backing was all that was left (chuckle). Anyway, every man was given five blankets and some other clothing. I can't remember exactly what, not a whole lot but at least blankets. And we were given rice, and we stayed in this building for a couple or three days, and every day we got out and learned to drill in Japanese. I'll never forget that as long as I live, all those military commands--right face, left face, forward march, how to count.

Marcello: I would assume you were all identified by number, is that correct?

Bunch: Right. We were given a number, and I think maybe at this building we were given it. I remember my number was eight, hachi-ban. There were 400 men in the group that I was in, we were designated to go to the Yodagawa Steel Mill, actually.

Marcello: What was work like at the steel mill?

Bunch: Well, it wasn't all bad, really. We were quartered in a building that was used to make galvanized tin. They galvanized tin in this building. Of course, the Yodagawa Steel Mill was a pretty good-sized complex, and they made all kinds of armor for tanks and steel helmets for soldiers and nuts and bolts and sheet metal of all gauges. They made steel drums, gasoline drums, a lot of different things. We were quartered in the upstairs in one of the buildings that was built for us. The floor was put in and what we called bays were built.

Marcello: This was right at the steel mill itself?

Bunch: Yes, right at the steel mill. There were two bays. There was a lower deck and an upper deck, and there was a little ladder you climbed to get upstairs or downstairs, so to speak. And we had isles down the middle with large long tables with benches to sit on to eat, and in the middle was a great big homemade steel stove that we burnt coal in, and the downstairs was Japanese quarters where they lived in another section of the same building, and our kitchen was downstairs. We had a kitchen built down there. It wasn't really too bad compared to what we had at Cabanatuan and O'Donnell. It was clean and new, and we had an adequate kitchen to cook rice and soup which is about all we had over there anyway. Something real amusing was that we had a nice little commissary. There was never anything in it,

but they had it built there for us. I remember the only thing we ever had down there was spoiled ketchup that they'd sell. That's the only thing I ever remember that place selling. We were paid, you know, for our work, fifteen sen a day. The officers were given forty yen a month for not working. They had their choice as to whether they would work or not work. All of them chose to go out on work details in most cases.

Marcello: Was your work under the supervision of the Army, or did you have civilian supervisors at this time?

Bunch: We had both. We had civilian supervisors and Army.

Marcello: Was there any difference in the treatment?

Bunch: Not a whole lot. It was basically the same. It depended on which ones were there. Now we had some that were there all the time. We had a different commanding officer about every six months; they changed the commanding officer, and it was usually a young lieutenant. The fellows that were our permanent guards were Army guards and were mostly veterans, I think, of the wars with China because they were older men and some of them were crippled. Most of them were basically fairly nice fellows. Most of them treated us pretty good. Some of them were ornery, you know. The mill supplied a man who was a civilian guard, so to speak. He went around and supervised our details on the job and the mill paid him.

We had details of twenty-five or thirty men working here, there, or anywhere. I worked on several different

details myself. The one that I worked on most of the time was in the area where the strips of steel, approximately thirty feet long and a foot wide and a half inch thick, were brought in and cut into widths of, say, three feet and then put into a blast furnace heated with coke and coal to a white-hot condition and then brought out with long-handled tongs and run through rollers and stretched out to make sheet metal.

Marcello: Was this physically demanding work or not really so?

Bunch: It was physically demanding work, and actually it was a challenge because there was a real knack to handling hot steel with tongs. And the Japanese, I'm sure, in this mill did it and in probably a very primitive way compared to the way we might do it over here. I have no idea how they did it in our country at that time, but in making sheet metal in different gauges you make it thinner by stretching this stuff out and folding it over and heating it again and stretching it out again and folding it over and cutting off the end. Then you had a strip of thirty-two gauge sheet metal. As this metal was pulled out of the blast furnaces, the Japanese taught us to do it like they did it, and that was to grab it with your tongs on the end and you flop it over and even up the ends, and then you take your foot and hit it and mash it down. It's white-hot, and you got wooden shoes on, see. And then you run it back through those rollers

again, but you've got to mash it down more or less manually to begin with. So it was kind of a challenge and a knack to learn how to do this. I really kind of enjoyed it. Since I had to work, I would just as soon have worked there as anyplace. It was warm in the wintertime, and not only that, but we worked shift work with three shifts . . .

Marcello: I was going to ask you exactly how you did work so far as hours and days were concerned.

Bunch: Well, we worked pretty well eight-hour shifts.

Marcello: What sort of holidays did you get?

Bunch: We got Sunday off every week. Sunday was just a rest day and about all we did was rest and wash our clothes and whatever else we needed to do.

Marcello: Did you have much contact with the civilians? In other words, could you use the money that they were paying you to buy goods from the civilians or anything like that?

Bunch: Yes, we could but we didn't really have enough money to buy anything from the civilians. We didn't make enough money a month to buy ten cigarettes, as far as the enlisted men were concerned. We eventually started getting Red Cross boxes and packages from home eventually in Japan. And when we did, of course, we got some valuable trading items, and we weren't supposed to trade with the civilians, and they weren't supposed to trade with us, but we did for cigarettes or for some extra food. It depended really on who you worked

with, what kind of a civilian it was, and how his feelings were. I worked with a group of civilians, some of whom would trade with you or bring you something or swap something for you, and then there were others who wouldn't do it at all. We dealt with them if we could get away with it and if they could get away with it. But, really, they didn't have a whole lot more to trade with than we did. They were just about as bad off as we were, and it got down to the point where they didn't have cigarettes either, you know.

Marcello: When you first got to Japan, obviously the bombing and so on had not taken place yet. America was still recovering, I suppose you could say, from the initial blows.

Bunch: Right.

Marcello: So the cities and what have you in Japan were pretty well intact when you first got there.

Bunch: Right.

Marcello: So I would assume at that time the attitude of the civilians was perhaps a little bit more friendly. At this stage they hadn't lost any family or relatives or loved ones and so on, and the horrors of war hadn't yet been visiting them, I suppose you could say.

Bunch: True. In fact, during the time that I was at Yodogawa Bunsho, which is the steel mill. Yodogawa Bunsho was the Yodogawa Prison Camp. I believe I'm correct on that. And it was at the Yodogawa Steel Mill at Osaka. And during the time that

we were there, there were bombing raids on parts of Osaka.

Marcello: The steel mill was located on the outskirts of town?

Bunch: Right. Actually, the steel mill was located right out on the coast. In fact, half of it was built on ashes. They dumped ashes in the ocean and kept building, you know. There is a large river--and I don't remember the name of it--that goes up through Osaka, and there's a number of big bridges on this river that . . . I guess trains and automobile bridges. I am assuming--I didn't get to see any damage--but there were, before I left Yodogawa, bombing raids by American planes, and they were close enough that we could see them. They were B-25's with the twin tail. And they came in from the sea real low and right by this steel mill. We could look out the window and see them going by in the night. They went up and bombed these bridges, but we never did actually see . . . we didn't get to go up there and see what damage they had done. They say they knocked out some of the bridges, but I don't know.

Marcello: I'm kind of surprised that they didn't hit the steel mill. You would think that would be a prime target.

Bunch: Well, I think they eventually did. But I was moved out of Yodogawa. About half of the group that was there was moved out eventually, and I was told later that it was bombed.

Marcello: How long did you stay at Yodogawa altogether?

Bunch: Well, I arrived on Thanksgiving, and a few days later I was at Yodogawa and that was in 1942. I stayed there the

rest of '42, '43, '44, and in early 1945--and I'm going to say it was probably January or February as I recall--word went out that they were going to take, I think, 100 men--and there again I'm not sure about the number, but I think it was 100 men--to another prison camp for another detail, and they picked the men they wanted, and they picked basically the healthier ones. I was in that group, and we were moved by train from Osaka to Miyazu which is over on the China Sea side of the island of Honshu. We were moved to this camp, and it resembled what I would call a prison farm. It had a high fence around it, and it had barracks inside. It had a big gate in front of it where the road went in, and it had a flagpole with the Japanese flag, of course, at the entrance, and it looked more like a camp that was built for prisoners than the one that we were in in Yodogawa.

Marcello: On the trip from Yodogawa to Miyazu, were you able to see any of the physical damage which was caused by the bombing?

Bunch: No. I really can't say whether we actually went through there because they made us keep the blinds drawn on the train all the time. They had guards on there, and if you raised the blind, they pulled it back down.

Marcello: If you were at Yodogawa until 1944, obviously the bombing had already started, and then were you able to perceive any difference in the attitudes of the civilians toward the prisoners?

Bunch: I don't recall any tremendous amount of different attitude among the civilians. Actually, the civilians that we worked with on the work details, some of them were pretty good friends of ours in a manner of speaking.

Marcello: Did you get to know any of them by name or . . .

Bunch: Oh, yes . . .

Marcello: . . . maybe I should say, do any of them stand out as individuals either for acts of kindness or for acts of cruelty?

Bunch: I can't remember any names. I can remember the names of our guards.

Marcello: You probably had nicknames for the guards.

Bunch: Yes, that's true. We knew our guards by names. I don't know whether we had any nicknames for them or not. I can remember a number of the names of some of the guards we had, but I can't remember any of the civilians' names, but I knew some of them at the time because we worked with them all the time, and they were basically pretty good people, the civilians that we worked with. Some of them were, of course, different than others.

I remember distinctly a work detail that I was on for a short period of time, a couple of months, maybe, I guess. The job on this particular detail was one American working with one Japanese, and in a steel mill you obviously have a tremendous amount of ashes and coke and so on. Ashes, and in the ashes is coke. Well, to get the ashes out of the steel mill they had a little narrow-gauge railroad track with pushcarts, like a railroad, and we pushed the cart into

the ash pile and filled it up and then pushed it out to the end of the line and dumped it. The civilians would come and dig the coke out of it for burning in their own homes. I was on this detail with a real old gentlemen who was treating me real good. He brought me things occasionally, and we had a lot of conversations, as best we could. I couldn't speak Japanese. I knew a lot of Japanese. I could carry on a conversation with him, so to speak. When we stopped to rest or we'd stop to eat, we'd talk and I remember one day . . . I thought I got to know him pretty well, you know. I'd say he was sixty years old. So one day we had stopped to eat or rest, one or the other, and we were sitting down, and he got to talking about the war in the Philippines and asked me why I was a prisoner-of-war. And I said, well, we surrendered. And he said the Japanese soldiers don't surrender; they commit hari-kari. And I laughed and I said we had an awful lot of them down there that didn't commit hari-kari, and he knocked the hell out of me. He just clobbered me with his fist. He was mad. I guess I hit a soft, touchy spot with him. (chuckle) I remember that particular incident so well because this old man really did treat me pretty good, but I said the wrong thing when I told him that all Japanese soldiers didn't commit hari-kari when they got captured.

Marcello: Did you ever get belted around at any other time?

Bunch: Yes, I did. Every evening before bedtime we had roll call, tenko they called it. When tenko time came, of course, a couple of guards came up the steps and had their rosters there, and we all had a certain place there to stand in line. We were in groups of twenty or twenty-five each, and we lined up in front of our sleeping areas by the mess tables and stood at attention when they called us to attention, and then we counted off in Japanese. They had issued us what we call smocks that buttoned down the front like a housecoat that a woman wears. It was kind of a smock made of brown cotton material, and they were real handy to wear if you were going down to the shower or you were just laying around on a Sunday, instead of putting on your other clothes. So many times fellows would go to bed at night real early, and they'd have to get up to stand tenko. So what they'd do was put on their smocks and stand tenko bare-legged in their smocks. So for some reason or other the guards decided that it wasn't proper that we stand tenko in smocks. We ought to have our pants on. We could wear our smocks without a shirt, but we should have our pants on. So they put this rule in effect. Well, of course, everybody started wearing pants. You had to get up and put your pants on. But as with all rules, time goes on and they say nothing about it. Well, you eventually drift back into old habits. So (chuckle) one night they came up to take roll call and myself and probably six or eight others, maybe--I don't know, maybe more;

I can't recall--anyway, we were standing tenko in our smocks without our pants and Sergeant Akamatsu--he was a real villain in our camp--decided to walk down the aisle and see how many bare legs there was, I guess. And so everybody stepped forward that didn't have their pants on, and he marched us down to the end of the line there, end of the medical area, actually. We had a little medical area. And we walked there and he gave us a lecture on not obeying the rules, and then he walked up and went right down the line and socked every one of us in the jaw with his fist just as hard as he could. Wham! Right down the line. You just stood there waiting for him to get to you (chuckle). So that's actually the only other incident where I particularly was beat up. I've seen many others, but that's the only one that I was involved in.

Marcello: You mentioned Sergeant Akamatsu. Obviously he is one of the Japanese guards or soldiers that does stand out.

Bunch: He does. He was there the whole time that I was there, and he was the one of all of them that gave us the roughest time of anybody else as far as the noncommissioned officers were concerned. We had Japanese officers that changed about every six months, and we had one in particular that gave us a rough time all the time. He had a samurai sword that he liked to use. He was very proud of his skill with it. I recall one particular incident when one of the boys did

something wrong. And he got him up against the building and would swing at him with his samurai sword, and he kept swinging until he finally brought blood right there at his throat, and that's how close he came. That's how good he was with that thing. He was showing off and made a tremendous impression on this young man.

Marcello: I'm sure it did. Is there anything else that stands out in your mind from your stay at the Yodogawa Steel Mill? I assume most of these incidents that we're talking about took place there at Yodogawa?

Bunch: Yes, they did.

Marcello: You mentioned a while ago that you received Red Cross packages. Had the Japanese gone through these Red Cross packages before they issued them to you?

Bunch: No, I don't think they went through them. They just didn't give us all of them.

Marcello: I was just going to say . . .

Bunch: You see, we got Red Cross packages on a number of occasions, and the first time we got them, I remember very distinctly there was one Red Cross box which weighed eleven pounds, as I recall, for each five men. Now we eventually got as much as one box for each man. But to begin with, and we knew that they had . . . we had seen them . . . some of the fellows saw the rest of them in the storeroom down there. And, not only that, but when you saw these guards smoking Camel cigarettes every day, you knew where they were getting them. So they kept a lot of them and ate them themselves.

Marcello: How about letters or news from the outside. Were you receiving any? Or were you able to send any letters or post cards?

Bunch: I can't recall exactly how long it was, but I think I had been in Japan almost a year before I was able to write or receive any mail. I think my mother told me it was way over a year before she ever heard from me.

Marcello: And I assume that all you were allowed to send were those little printed postcards, is that correct?

Bunch: Right. My mother still has them. They were little "I am fine, hope everyone else is fine. I am working for pay. I'm getting along okay, don't worry" something like that. That's about the basis of what it amounted to. Then later on we were able to write a little bit more in detail. They'd tell us we could write thirty words or forty words or something like that, and they did, of course, read all these things before they went out. They were all censored.

Marcello: What was discipline like among life among the prisoners? Were you still obeying your officers?

Bunch: I think so to a certain extent. The relationship obviously wasn't the same there as it would have in the service. But there were officers there that we respected, and there were officers there that we didn't really respect.

Marcello: Did they segregate you from the officers?

- Bunch: Only from the standpoint that they were all put in one bay area by themselves. All the officers stayed in one section. It was all in one great big room, but they were in one certain area by themselves. And, as I say, they were paid forty yen a month, and they had their choice--they could work or not work. And I think this is in accordance with the Geneva Convention.
- Marcello: From Yodogawa, then, you went to Miyazu, which was along the coast.
- Bunch: Right. Over on the China Sea side of Honshu, across the island of Honshu.
- Marcello: This place was set up like a prison farm.
- Bunch: Right. There were already a number of prisoners there. There were several nationalities. There were some Canadians there; there were Javanese there; and there were a lot of Englishmen there from Shanghai.
- Marcello: Were these the first foreign contingents that you had run into?
- Bunch: Right. When I got to Japan, we were divided into groups, and there were 400 in our group, and we were put into the Yodogawa Steel Mill, and we were all Americans. Now the first that we ran into any other nationality was at Miyazu, and in this camp I don't believe there were any other Americans there. There might have been, but I can't remember. There may have been some, but there were Englishmen, and there were Javanese, and there were Canadians and quite

a lot of Englishmen.

Marcello: Now this was late 1944 when you were there?

Bunch: This was early 1945, I believe.

Marcello: What was your impression of these foreign contingents?
Did you have a very close relationship with them at all?
I assume, here again, you were segregated by nationality.

Bunch: Yes, we were. Our group was put into one barracks, upstairs and downstairs, a big two-story barracks. It was a little different from what we had before. There was a stairway at each end, and it was the same above as down below. I think we were all in one barracks. It might have been two, but I can't remember. Maybe it was two. I believe it was two. Well, our relationship with the Englishmen and the Canadians and the Javanese was . . .

Marcello: Civil, at best?

Bunch: Yes, well, naturally we wanted to get to talk to them and see how things were there and we did, of course. Now they were working in the nickel mines, surface nickle mines. That's what they were there for. And we were brought in there for an explicit purpose--we worked some in the strip mines, the nickel mines, but only until we could get lined up on this other detail. Our reason for being brought there . . . as I told you before, they picked 100 . . . I think it was 100, but it might have been seventy-five . . . but anyway, a pretty good-sized group of the healthiest men at

Yodogawa were sent to Miyazu, and we found out after we got there that we were there for an explicit purpose, and that was to unload ships that were coming in. Up the coast a ways from Miyazu was a little harbor, and they were bringing in shiploads of soybeans and peanuts, believe it or not, and peanut oil and that's it--soybeans and peanuts and peanut oil, mostly soybeans from Manchuria and I believe Korea. And they were bringing them in there in shiploads, and our job was to unload these ships, and these ships were loaded with eighty-kilo bags. And they loaded these ships with the bags, and they also put loose beans in there. In other words, they took advantage of every inch of the hold. They'd put them in there in layers and bags, and then they'd put some loose ones in, and they'd put layers and loose ones, and of course, we'd pull out the bags, and then we'd shovel out the loose ones and load them on boxcars, and they'd ship them out.

Marcello: I assume you could supplement your diet here perhaps a little bit.

Bunch: We sure did. (chuckle) We ate lots of soybeans and lots of peanuts.

Marcello: Did you have to do this on the sly?

Bunch: Well, to begin with . . .

Marcello: Of course, I guess it's pretty easy to grab a handful of soybeans or peanuts, perhaps . . .

Bunch: Except that we weren't just quite hungry enough to eat raw soybeans at that time. Now the ships that we unloaded were all steam-operated ships. And the steam pipes were so hot that you'd burn your hands. So in Japan everybody carried a handtowel. You know, they'd wrap it around their neck, or they stuck it in a waistband--a little white towel. So we'd take these towels, and when we got a peanut ship in we'd wrap them around the steam pipe and at least get them hot. It wouldn't exactly roast them. And, inevitably, when we got a ship in that had peanuts in it, it'd have oil in the bottom. The bottom layer would be drums of peanut oil, and we'd take these hooks that you pick the bags up with and hit those barrels and get oil out of them, peanut oil, and fill our canteens and drink that stuff like water almost. In a way this was good, and in a way it was bad. (chuckle) When we were unloading the soybeans everyday we left at five o'clock in the morning. We had to ride a barge about eight miles up the coast to get to the work area, and that took a little while by barge. And it was the same thing back in the afternoon. So we had a long day, but it was a good detail because we worked hard, we got rest breaks, we got to go swimming, they let us take a swim off the ship when we got through, if we wanted to. And in addition to taking a box of rice with us, which we cooked in the kitchen at the camp for a noon meal, they gave

us all the beans we wanted every day, and two of our men would be given permission to take the beans down to a railroad station that had rice pots in it, and they'd cook those beans about 3:30 or 4:00. Those guys would bring those beans back, and we'd have a big mess of soybeans. You could cook soybeans until they were just about like navy beans.

Marcello: I hear there's quite a bit of nutrition in soybeans.

Bunch: Oh, sure, there's a lot of protein.

Marcello: Right.

Bunch: We weren't allowed to take any back to camp, but we found all kinds of ways to do that. We had long underwear even though it was in the summertime. The guys would wear their long underwear to work and tie the legs real tight and drop the beans down their legs and take them back to the camp for the other guys and sell them and eat them and cook them, so we ate better there than we did any other place in Japan, I guess.

Marcello: Were you ever subjected to any bombing raids at this place?

Bunch: Yes. It was on July 31, fifteen days before the war was over. Obviously, by that time B-29's, which we weren't familiar with, were flying over real high. We could see them, just a silver spot up in the sky, and it wasn't at all unusual every once in a while to see one going over. And I recall one particular day when one went straight over us, you know, real high and somebody remarked, "Boy, that guy's really

taking our picture." At that time, in this little harbor there was a Japanese cruiser setting right out in the middle of this harbor, a big one. It might have been a medium cruiser, but anyway, it sure looked big to me. (chuckle) There were two Japanese destroyers that apparently had just been run in off the ocean, and they were pulled up along side a big cliff that was over on the other side of the harbor, and they chopped trees down and covered them with trees to camouflage them. This cruiser was setting right in the middle of this bay. In addition, there were two or three freighters setting out there waiting to be unloaded, and there was an old troop transport that had been tied up at the dock for a couple of weeks. So there was quite a bit of shipping in this little harbor, and we always anticipated that some day we might get a bombing raid there, and the Japanese had too because they had dug a tremendously big trench and had put sandbags over it, and it was a real great place to go in case you had a bombing raid, and fortunately they let us get in it. At any rate, on July 31 the air-raid sirens went off, and of course, when the air-raid sirens went off, you started looking for the airplanes. So we were looking to sea, but we could see nothing. And all at once, behind us over the mountains came forty dive bombers off the aircraft carriers. And when they came over those mountains, they were real low and when they got over the mountains, they

started climbing and they went right straight above that harbor and started circling, and they peeled off two at a time, and they sunk everything in that bay in about thirty minutes, everything, including the ship we were unloading and the troop transport and the cruiser. And we watched the whole thing.

Marcello: I guess by this time you knew that the tide had turned, or maybe you knew so before this.

Bunch: Well, it had become obvious when we started seeing your own . . . you start hearing air-raid sirens go off, and you know they are getting close, and you see an airplane once in awhile, and you begin to realize that something is going to happen before very long. And then, of course, it was very apparent when we saw very few Japanese planes. What was this cruiser doing sitting in this bay, just sitting there idle? That cruiser was manned by Japanese marines, much different than the usual Japanese. I mean they were big fellows, strong and husky and well built big guys, and every evening while this cruiser was there prior to the time that it was sunk, they came in to shore every evening about three or four o'clock, and they worked with us. They got right in line and unloaded these ships, just as a workout. It looked as though they wanted to come in and work out for an hour, and then they'd take a swim and go back out to their ship, and many of those guys were killed in this thing and many weren't. Many of them made it to shore, and they were

a very angry bunch of fellows, and our guards got us out of there pretty quick.

Marcello: I was going to ask you if you could perceive any differences in the attitude of the Japanese after these raids started to take place.

Bunch: Well, of course, the attitudes of these marines that came in off that cruiser that was sunk--the ones that made it in--they were very angry at us and the Americans and everybody else. As far as the attitude of the Japanese people is concerned, I think they began to realize that the time was coming when it was going to be tense for them.

Marcello: Did you ever think that perhaps when the end did come that they might possibly execute all of you? Did that fear ever cross your mind?

Bunch: We were told that. We were told by our commanding officer at this prison camp that if the Americans landed on Honshu that we would be executed. I don't know whether he knew what he was talking about or not, but we were told that. Fortunately the war ended before we ever landed on Honshu, but when they dropped the first atom bomb, the complexion changed tremendously among our guards. This really shook them up because they immediately . . .

Marcello: The news got around pretty fast.

Bunch: Oh, yes. Of course, we weren't close enough to see the thing or hear it or anything else. In fact, as I recall,

they said that the United States dropped a bomb on Hiroshima that they figured weighed about eighty pounds and killed 80,000 people. As I remember, this was the words that was used. Now whether it was an estimate or what, I don't know. But they came and got our officers and questioned them about this thing, and, of course, our officers didn't know anything about the atom bomb (chuckle). They didn't know what they were talking about. But this really did shake them up, and you could see a little different atmosphere among our guards after that. Of course, I don't remember the date the first one was dropped, to tell you the truth about it.

Marcello: It was in August. I can't remember the exact date either, but it was in August of 1945. It seems to me it was about August the 8th, I believe.

Bunch: I think it probably was because within a week the emperor made a speech one day at noon over the radio, and I know we knocked off early because every Japanese there wanted to hear that speech, and we had fellows who could understand pretty good Japanese, and they overheard the emperor's speech in the distance, and it was obvious that he was telling the Japanese people that the war was coming to an end. I don't know what he told them exactly--whether they were whipped or whether they were going to try to make peace or what--but when we got the word, it was that they were going to make peace with the United States. They had not surrendered, but

they would make peace, and we would all be going home before long and . . .

Marcello: I was going to ask you if you were preparing for the worst after you had heard that the war was over. By this time, you were not . . .

Bunch: No.

Marcello: . . . fully expecting to be executed now.

Bunch: No, now then. To illustrate that, after the emperor made his speech we never went back to work again. The next day they didn't take us to work. We stayed in the barracks and they didn't say anything. Finally they called us out about 10:00 and said that we wouldn't be working any more, that they thought the war was going to be over, and, of course, they were real nice, and so we went back to our barracks and loafed around. The next day was the same thing, and our guards stayed there, and the guys would sit around and play cards, and the guards would stand around and watch us. And I recall one instance that happened that was quite amusing. We had a guard there who had a crippled hand, real badly mangled, and he was a bully. He used every opportunity he could get to pick on somebody, and he had this reputation among everybody. So when they'd come into our barracks they'd always take their shoes off. By habit they'd kick their thongs off and walk in their sock feet. He came walking through our barracks downstairs, and he walked down at the

other end and he went upstairs and walked through up there, and when he did, there was a guy up there who was in the 4th Marines. As I recall--I didn't see this happen--but I saw that guy jump out the window (chuckles). He waited until that guard got right opposite, and he jumped up and took after him. You know, he was really going to get this guard. Of course, he had no gun with him or anything, but the guard just jumped out the upstairs window and ran out across the field and never did come back. (chuckle) And shortly after that every one of our guards left.

Marcello: Did some of the prisoners have scores to settle with the guards? Were they waiting for the war to get over?

Bunch: I heard of instances of this happening, but it didn't happen in our camp, other than this one little incident that I am telling you about, where this one guy made up his mind that he was going to get that guy. If he had caught him, he'd probably have beaten the hell out of him, but the guy jumped out the upstairs window and in his sock feet he ran out across the field.

Marcello: What were your feelings when you heard that the war was over and that the Japanese had surrendered?

Bunch: Well, obviously, there were feelings of elation, and it was great, just wonderful. And it didn't take but a matter of just two or three days until the Americans flew over our camp with transport-type planes, one plane first, and when

they did, they dropped a message to us and told us that they were going to drop us some food and clothing and stuff in fifty-five gallon drums and that they would be back later. But these would be dropped in parachutes, so they made a pass up the valley and came back and kicked these barrels out with the regular parachutes they used in the Army--some red, some white, and some blue. One represents medical supplies and another represents food and so on. Anyway, these parachutes weren't heavy enough to hold the barrels, and they came down and they hit in the area outside of our camp in a rocky area and just exploded. And, of course, they had packed them full of everything--chocolate bars, canned peaches, cigarettes. Of course, our guys hadn't seen anything like that in 3 1/2 years, and they ran out there and just literally ate it right off the ground. So the plane made another pass and dropped another message and said, "We're sorry. We'll be back tomorrow." So the next day they were back again, and this time they took food and dropped it in cases tied with ropes in smaller quantities, and before they left that place, they had dropped us a boxcar-load of stuff that we couldn't even eat--clothing, GI shoes, cigarettes, food of all kinds.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever attempt to grab any of this?

Bunch: No. They were gone by this time. They were gone.

Marcello: The camp was completely deserted except for American soldiers.

Bunch: And we were told to stay there. They asked us to stay in the camp. They would supply us with food. They even entertained us. They flew over with airplanes, and we had an Englishman there and we had a sewing machine there, and his job was to fix clothes. You'd take your shirt over there and he'd sew it up. And this guy literally made from these red, white, and blue parachutes an American flag, a British flag . . . I think there were four flags he made out of these parachutes. Anyway, we took the Japanese flag down and put a crossbar up there and hung all four flags from the flag pole, and there were small planes coming in off the carriers, and they'd come in and put on an air show for us and fly down and let the wings tip these flags as they'd fly by, and every one of them would have a mail sack with something in it. Right at the end of what we called the company street that came in through the main gate and went right up straight through the area was the kitchen, and it had big double doors right in the middle of it. So they'd use this as a target when they'd throw these sacks out, and they'd have whatever they could scrounge up off these aircraft carriers that they'd put in the sack. I remember some pilot someplace had gotten hold of a pair of woman's panties and put them in there and stuff like this, just joke stuff, nothing of use, not like the stuff they were dropping from the transport planes. But they'd come in and they'd fly upside-

down, you know, and put on a big air show for us and entertain us.

Marcello: What was your weight at its lowest?

Bunch: Well, I guess my weight at its lowest was when I was in O'Donnell and I had dysentery, and I don't really know what it was. I would imagine it was under 100 pounds, probably ninety or ninety-five.

Marcello: Had you regained most of your weight by the time of the surrender?

Bunch: Yes. When I surrendered I weighed about 130 or 135 pounds.

Marcello: And you think this was mainly due to working on the dock and getting that additional protein, perhaps, and, of course, plus the food that was being dropped to you?

Bunch: I weighed that much before the food was dropped. I really don't know, but I probably gained some when the food was dropped because we had that for a period of about ten days there. We had all this food while we stayed in this camp waiting for instructions to come out of there and how to come. So I probably weighed, at the time I was liberated, 135. I know I gained sixty pounds in two months.

Marcello: As you look back on your experiences in these prisoner-of-war camps, what do you think was the key to your survival?

Bunch: Well, of course, to begin with I would say the good fortune to have the couple of good friends that had medicine for me when I had the dysentery. Secondly, when I got malaria, I

had the good fortune of being sent to Japan and getting two good ten-day doses of quinine which took care of my malaria problem. And, thirdly, I would say eating my rations instead of trading them off as many did. We had fellows over there who just couldn't control themselves, and, you know, I've mentioned earlier that it was quite common to trade your . . . if a guy didn't want his food, he'd trade it to somebody, and it was very common to hear somebody say, "I got a half a bowl of rice for a bowl tomorrow." Well, some poor guy over here that didn't have any will power would say, "I'll take that." So he'd get a half a bowl of rice today, and he had to give this guy a bowl tomorrow, see. Well, that can go on and tomorrow he is going to trade for another half, and so first thing you know is that he's on half rations. And so we had guys that literally almost starved doing this. I can remember some that just had no common sense, and I think we had guys that ate out of garbage cans if they found them around the factory, or something somebody would throw down, they'd pick it up. We actually had guys that did that, and I just didn't do that sort of thing. I was as hungry as everybody else, but I just didn't feel like eating garbage.

Marcello:

How about the will to survive. I'm sure that was a pretty important factor also. In other words, there were prisoners, were there not, who simply gave up and just literally laid down and died.

Bunch: Probably so. We had fellows in Japan . . . we had many who died there. I think I'm right on this, but I think out of 400 we lost 180 in Japan that died in this prison camp. A little over 180.

Marcello: What was the cause of most of these dying in Japan?

Bunch: Well, most of them died with pneumonia, actually.

Marcello: Because of the cold weather?

Bunch: Because of their weakened conditions and the cold weather. We had tremendous amounts of bedbugs and lice in those places, terrible, absolutely terrible. You couldn't imagine the amount of bedbugs. I've seen them pull the plywood off of a thing, and they'd be that deep in there, in the plywood. And I'd lay at night and kill them like this (stamping foot) as they crawled up the post by my bed and about that fast. I've seen guys that were so eaten up by lice that you couldn't see the skin for the red spots. Of course, most guys would go wash their clothes, and other guys wouldn't. The guys would go wash their bed clothes, try to take care of themselves, you know, just common sense things. On Sunday one guy would sleep all day, and the other guy would go out and wash his clothes, and he would try to do things that made sense to survive and not trade his food off, try to get by on the rations they gave you. At times we got other things besides rice. They used to give us bones, and we'd boil those bones and make broth out of them, and we'd eat the bones. And we got

fruit occasionally about once a year, and they'd save it up and give it to us all at once, you know. Maybe a guy would get fifteen tangerines at one time and not get any more for a year, but they thought this was great and they'd take pictures of this, you see. It made good propaganda. As far as a will to live, I guess everybody had a will to live. I don't know whether I was ever to the point where I said, "Well, I'm going to live in spite of them," or not, really.

Marcello: One of the other prisoners that I interviewed made a very interesting observation, also. He mentioned that when you're sentenced to a prison term for committing a crime, you can always look forward to the day that you're going to be released. But when you're a prisoner-of-war, you never really know when that day is. In other words, is it going to be tomorrow, is it going to be five years from now, or is it going to be ten years from now? And he said this was one of the things which caused him a great deal of concern, just the fact that he never knew when that day was going to come.

Bunch: Well, at the beginning during the O'Donnell and Cabanatuan days we thrived on the rumors because we believed every one we heard, and it was just natural to do. You wanted to believe them, so you believed them. And I don't think there ever was a one (chuckle) that was just anyways near coming true. Then, after a certain period of time, you became

acclimated to the fact of, "Let's face it, it's going to be awhile." So then you start looking for signs. The Japanese used to tell us stories of all kinds, and you couldn't believe this nonsense. They actually told us that Japanese submarines had gone up the Mississippi River and shelled Salt Lake City. This is how ridiculous some of our guards were. They'd come up and talk to us and tell us about what they had done, and they were shelling the west coast and the east coast of the United States, and, of course, we just listened to them and let them go on because we'd been around long enough to know that they just manufactured these stories. You began to see signs, like the bombers that hit Osaka. Then, as the time gets closer, you begin to wonder, well, what will happen when . . . will they just turn us loose, or will they kill us all, or what will their reaction be. We always felt that maybe it might even get to the point where the troops would actually have to land on the island of Honshu and come up to our gate and open it up for us, you know. We didn't know. Of course, it didn't work out that way, but you never know. We did know that something was going to happen because when you start seeing your own planes more than you do the Japanese planes, you know that we're closing in. And when you see this heavy cruiser come in and just set there idle and these two destroyers just pull over there and park in the bay and not

be out doing what their supposed to, then you know there's a reason for that. You know something is going to happen, but you don't really know what it is. You don't know what your reactions will be, but you do wonder about it. Plus, you just get to where you want to accept what's going to be will be, I guess, and you hope for the best.