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Interview with
Mr. George Burlage
November 18, 1970

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald Marcello

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Oral History Collection

Mr. George Burlage

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. George Burlage for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on November 18, 1970, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Burlage in order to get his reminiscences and experiences as a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Mr. Burlage was captured on Corregidor and subsequently spent the remainder of the war in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps. Mr. Burlage, before we get into your military activities could you briefly give us a biographical sketch of yourself--where you were born, your family, your education, things such as that.

Mr. Burlage: Yes, I'm a native Californian. I enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1939 after two years of college. It was a junior college, College of the Sequoias in Visalia, California. After twenty years of service in the Marines, I came to Texas, and since that time I have acquired a bachelor's degree in journalism at North Texas State University and also a master's degree in government at North Texas. At the present time I work for the Federal Aviation Administration as a public affairs officer, and I have collateral duties in the

Secretariat of the Southwest Federal Regional Council in
Dallas.

Marcello: When were you born?

Burlage: April 7, 1918.

Marcello: Where?

Burlage: In Visalia, California.

Marcello: You say you enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1939. Do you recall the circumstances surrounding your enlistment? Why did you enlist?

Burlage: Well, I could get romantic on this or something. I had finished two years of college, and I had tried to go to Fresno State College which was nearby, and I just didn't have the financial means to do so. And I always wanted to get into the military anyway, so I just took advantage of it, and I went to Los Angeles and was walking down the street when I was thinking about the Navy. As I walked down the street I saw this sign out in front of this office that said, "Join the Marines: Travel, Adventure and Romance." And it didn't mean the kind of romance we think of today. It was the romance of adventure and life.

Marcello: At the time that you enlisted did you have any idea that the country would be plunging into war very shortly?

Burlage: Well, in the two years of junior college I had studied comparative government. That was my interest. I knew that some day the conflict would be here, but it was a little

farther away and out of my mind at that time than it really happened to be.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot training?

Burlage: In San Diego.

Marcello: When did you go overseas?

Burlage: In 1939, I volunteered to go to China. At that time we had two garrisons in China--one at Peking and one at Shanghai. And I didn't quite make it. I later got sidetracked and ended up in the Philippines.

Marcello: Could you identify the Marine unit which you were attached?

Burlage: Originally we were just the guard battalion known as the Marine Barracks, Cavite Navy Yard, which is on the Manila Bay. As we started building up our forces, we became the 1st Separate Marine Battalion, and then later we joined the 4th Marines as they were withdrawn from Shanghai, we joined the 4th Marines of the Third Battalion of the 4th Marine Regiment.

Marcello: This was still at the Cavite Navy Yard?

Burlage: No, we had joined in Bataan. We met in Bataan and joined there.

Marcello: I see. What was your particular function in the Marines while you were there?

Burlage: Well, a Marine is a little bit of everything, you might say. At that time at least he was trained in everything. Basically, of course, an infantryman, a rifleman with all the comprehensive training that goes with it such as marksmanship, bayonet fighting, patrolling, and such that would be necessary in time

of war. Just prior to the war I was on the what they called the Marine Patrol in Cavite which was a quaisi-type military police force.

Marcello: What were the circumstances that prevented you from going to China as you had originally hoped for? Or at least had volunteered for?

Burlage: Even that far in advance of the war or before the war, two years prior to the war, somebody in Washington apparently knew more than we knew. They were starting to cut down the forces in China. It was just attrition more than it was taking people out. People would return when their duty was over, but they did not replace them to any great extent. As you look back on it now and see that later in 1940, things were peaceful, we thought. The military forces or departments were moving the dependents out of the Philippines. That was a good year, year and a half, before the war actually started. So somebody knew more than we knew.

Marcello: So you went to Cavite Navy Yard first of all. Would you care to describe what Cavite was like at that time?

Burlage: Well, Cavite was there from the early days of the European civilization, I guess, as it was brought out there--culture, you might say. Of course, it was all Spanish. Cavite Island itself was a small island which, you might say, was almost a walled city. I would describe the island to be only about 75 to 100 acres at the very most. It is separated from the

mainland by a short causeway. In the early days the Spanish, I say in the early days, back in the late 1500's the Spanish built at least three forts on this island. One was San Felipe, which guarded the navy yard. On the other end of the small island was Porta Vaga. And Porta Vaga covered the complete entrance to the island with _____ going through it. Everybody that came through the island had to go through the _____, through the center of this port. I understand there was another fort close to San Felipe that was destroyed by Dewey when he and his men and ships bombarded there in 1898.

Marcello: Would you care to spell the name of the last fort you described for my secretaries' use?

Burlage: P-O-R-T-A V-A-G-A.

Marcello: I see.

Burlage: By the way, it was built and completed in 1602. I remember the sign in the fort itself because that's where we stayed on these town patrols, as we called it. That's where we had our garrison with fourteen people. We lived in the old Spanish quarters in the fort.

Marcello: Describe the physical features of the island.

Burlage: The islands I think are beautiful.

Marcello: Now you say the islands. I'm speaking of Cavite.

Burlage: Oh, Cavite itself. Okay. Back up then. Cavite, of course, as I say, it was the original Spanish garrison in the Philippines.

And as such it was fortified. I don't know where the Spanish got the stones, but they had large, large rocks that formed a sea wall completely around the island. As I said about half the island on one end is the Navy Yard, and at the extreme end was the San Felipe prison. I say prison, it was a prison. It was one of the U. S. Navy's three naval prisons. It was converted into that. But it was a fort in those days when the Spanish had it. I think there was only about three main streets running through the town from the Porta Vaga entrance on the causeway to the Navy Yard, and these streets were lined with houses which were--the first story was stone, kind of a fortification, and the upper part was the living quarters. You've probably seen pictures of this. I think if you have ever been to Europe you have seen the same thing. The parts of the homes downstairs were fortifications and the living quarters were upstairs. Maybe they had horses and so forth downstairs in the old days. The streets were very narrow, and there were not too many people living there because there just wasn't room for people to live. They lived in the adjoining . . . across the causeway were the barrios of San Roque, and Caridad was another barrio, and San Antonio was another barrio. Three barrios.

Marcello: What was the naval base itself like? I assume this is where you spent the bulk of your time or your duty.

Burlage: Well, we lived right outside the navy base in the town in a two story wood barracks, beautiful, very much open air type deal.

The navy base itself consisted of an old ammunition magazine which was also Spanish made and used for many years. There was a receiving ship--what we called the receiving ship area--the ships could dock. It was also the headquarters of the Sixteenth Naval District. We had a commandant there who . . . I don't know what his real rank was. He was an admiral of some sort. I don't remember what the rank was, probably a rear admiral. There were also some repair areas where minor repairs could be made on the ships. Of course, in those days it was a main repair base for the Asiatic Fleet. And the Asiatic Fleet only consisted of, if I remember right now, a heavy cruiser that when the war started, turned out to be the Houston, a light cruiser, the Marblehead, and about twelve or so destroyers that the World War I type four-stackers, a couple of supply ships and several submarines with a submarine tender. These ships wouldn't need too much repair. They would come in there for minor repair. Major repairs like on the heavy cruisers--they would change the cruiser every two or three years and then come back to the states for major repairs. So there was no drydock there. The drydock was at Olongapo which was off the China Sea about four or five hours travel.

Marcello: Would you care to spell it?

Burlage: O-L-O-N-G-A-P-U, I believe that is correct.

Marcello: Describe what your daily routine was like on Cavite. Just describe a typical Marine's day on Cavite.

Burlage: Well, mine was a little different as I said because I did move on up to the Porta Vaga port and did become one of the patrolmen. We were the policemen for the Americans, American sailors, Marines, or any military people, or even civilians. But the normal routine there for a Marine would be to . . . of course, you had to get up in the morning.

Marcello: Early?

Burlage: Early is right. About 5:30 and then from there you went into your routine by eight o'clock definitely. About seven o'clock to eight o'clock as a rule was clean up, where you actually cleaned up. Of course, we had some room boys, but we still had to take care of our own equipment and so forth. At eight o'clock training usually started. You went through training such as close order drill, bayonet drill, into the stripping and studying of infantry weapons and the like. There were also the firings . . . on certain days you went to target range to fire a pistol or other weapons. But every third day . . . as a rule now this changed . . . but normally about every third day you stood guard in the navy yard. You walked a post. And, of course, there was not only Cavite Navy Yard, but also Sangley Point which was across Canacao Bay.

Marcello: Can you try to spell that?

Burlage: I think so. C-A-N-A-C-A-O.

Marcello: Can you spell the other one?

Burlage: Sangley point? Now Sangley Point, let me correct myself there,

I believe was the original Spanish naval garrison, but it was about two miles across from Cavite.

Marcello: How do you spell that?

Burlage: S-A-N-G-L-E-Y.

Marcello: Pretty sure about that?

Burlage: I'm sure about that one because Sangley Point is now in Luzio Bay. The American Navy still has it. They gave up their Cavite Navy Yard, but they kept Sangley as a naval air station. Sangley has 8,000 foot, very well constructed, concrete air strip. I believe the Philippine government would like to have it. But, I may also say in passing, much of the old Spanish Fleet that was sunk was still visible in Canacao Bay. And it was also the bay where the Philippine clippers and the Manila clippers and the China clippers used to land in the old days. The Pan-am clippers. When they made the first runs out there.

Marcello: About how many Marines were in this garrison altogether?

Burlage: Originally when I went there in 1939 about 170, I would say. And it was built up to about 600 or 700 by the time the war started.

Marcello: I see. In your own opinion do you think that at the outbreak of the war were those 700 Marines fairly well-trained?

Burlage: We had the esprit de corps and the training that anybody else would have. The only handicap we had--and it was a handicap--was the weapons. We had World War I weapons, and I might also add to that at the very last our main weapon was the Springfield

rifle, what we called the .03 that we used in World War I.

Marcello: This is bolt action?

Burlage: Bolt action, clip of five rounds, if I remember right. We also were formed into a provisional antiaircraft battalion and given a 1917 model, three inch, .50 caliber antiaircraft guns which came off a ship. We made a concrete mount on the beaches and mounted these, and these were to protect us against the . . . any enemy bombers. And I may also add--and maybe I'm getting ahead of myself here--but when the Japs finally did hit, they came in so high that our shells would not reach their altitude (chuckle) and so we were just . . . it was a morale factor. We fired at them all the way, but it didn't do any good.

Marcello: Now as the country was progressing closer and closer to war with Japan, were there any further preparations taken on . . . what preparations were taken on the island in case of a war with Japan?

Burlage: Well, the . . . let me think back here . . . we did send . . . send the dependents home. We got more Marines. The Marines in China were being . . . the numbers were being cut down toward the eventual closing of the two garrisons there. We had practice blackouts . . . became very frequent to have blackouts in the night because I was still on the marine patrol, and we had to more or less monitor our patrol retreats, and that blackout at night, I remember that. And of course the Navy activity picked up a lot. There were ships coming in from the

states quite a bit bringing something in. I guess it was ammunition. And they would just come in and stay over night and leave. And there was a flurry of new hirings in the Navy Yard too, the Filipino workmen. There were a lot more workmen being hired. Other than that, I can only speak for what I saw. I can't say officially what was taking place.

Marcello: A couple of questions come to mind at this point. Were there ever any precautions taken against sabotage? I assume that there were quite a few Japanese nationals on the island. Now maybe not on Cavite, but I would assume around Manila and so forth there were some Japanese nationals.

Burlage: There definitely were . . . and the . . . I don't think that sabotage was a worry that . . . it might have been in the high command, but it was not anything that filtered down to us. We knew who the suspects were so, that was all the further it went--we knew. Now, I'm speaking unofficially now . . .

Marcello: Sure.

Burlage: . . . for something in the records may show differently. For example, at the Porta Vaga where I was stationed with the town patrol, on the inward side of the fort was a small plaza, as there were always small plazas in the Philippines. Every town has a plaza with usually a statue of Jose Rizal, the father of the country. And Jose Rizal was standing there too.

Marcello: And how is Jose's name spelled?

Burlage: J-O-S-E.

Marcello: I knew that one. (Chuckle)

Burlage: R-I-Z-A-L.

Marcello: R-I-Z-A-L.

Burlage: I believe he's the George Washington of the Philippines. But anyway, he was a martyr. He was killed by the Spanish just before the Americans intervened. But across the plaza there was a corner bar, and it sold mostly beer, I guess. I remember those days. And there was always a loud nickelodeon in the place. There was a Japanese man that came there, and his name was Fuji. I don't think I'll get any libel on this one or anything. But anyway Fuji had come, as I found out . . . as I understood later, he had come to the Philippines a few months before, and the Philippines had strick immigration quotas and laws about Japanese. But anyway, he had come there, and he worked for five pesos a month for six months in one of these southern islands, came to Cavite, and bought himself this bar. Well, anybody knew that he was a suspect in a case like that.

Marcello: Nobody could work that short amount of time and buy a bar.

Burlage: Well, the bar had cost a little more than the few pesos he had earned. And I used to know him very well. I'd walk in . . . I was on patrol, as I patrolled at night, or even just going by there even though I wasn't on duty, I'd stop in and have a chat with him and have a beer sometimes. I remember going in there . . . I was supposed to come home by the way. I was supposed to come home sometime in December of 1941.

Marcello: You were supposed to go home to the United States?

Burlage: Right. (Chuckle) And I went in there, got to talking to him. He says, "When you leaving for home?" I said, "I don't know. I understand that I'm supposed to go home, but nobody knows about ship movements." He says, "I think you'll go home on the tenth." I remember the date. He said, "I think you'll go home on the tenth, and the ship you're going home on will come here and go to Australia and then back to the States." Well, I remember also the night that . . . prior to the . . . the night that . . . the eve of Pearl Harbor that all night long Kate Smith sang "God Bless America" on that nickelodeon in this bar all night until it closed that night. But very few people would suspect him, but I did happen to know a little more background than most people did.

Marcello: Did you suspect him at that time, or is this all hindsight?

Burlage: We used to talk about him and said that he's going to be the boss. I mean the group of us across the street would look over and see him over there, you know, across the plaza. And we suspected him. And this may not be true, but I understand that after the fighting started, the bombing, that Fuji was arrested . . . now if this is not true, there's a parallel somewhere along the line with other people, that Fuji was arrested, and they started him out from Manila to . . . and he was turned over to the Filipino constabulary who usually took care of anybody who was a suspect, and they started in Manila, and some-

how he got away, and the last time anybody saw him, he was in a Japanese navy commander's uniform. And I understand this was very true of a lot of the businessmen in Manila and that area. They were reservists in the Japanese military, and when the time came they donned the uniform, and they did the functions they were told to do or were supposed to do. This is also true, I know this is true. Later on after I was captured, much later on, I was brought back to Manila, and I was in the prison camp at La Pinás.

Marcello: You want to spell that one please?

Burlage: P-I-N-Á-S. La Pinás is very close to the old Nichols Field which is in a southern part of Manila. And we were there to work on the _____ airfield for the old Nichols Field. By the way, Nichols Field was the American Air Corps' fighter base or something in those days. It is now part of a new settlement out there plus part of the airport, I believe, the International Airport. But anyway, the man who was in charge was a warrant officer, a navy warrant officer named Watanabe. Now Watanabe spoke very good English, was very Americanized, and it turned out that one of the majors in the camp I was in, and Watanabe were old friends in Manila. Both were reservists. Only one happened to be in the American Air Corps and one happened to be in the Japanese Imperial Navy.

Marcello: This was Watanabe?

Burlage: This was Watanabe, and I can't tell you the major's name who

was in prison camp with us. But they were both neighbors in Manila back in the old days and Watanabe . . .

Marcello: Was Watanabe a businessman at that time, also?

Burlage: Watanabe was in one of the Japanese banks in Manila.

Marcello: You don't know how to spell his name?

Burlage: Oh, Watanabe's easy. W-A-T-A-N-A-B-E.

Marcello: Okay. You don't know how much my secretaries are going to appreciate this. (Chuckle)

Burlage: So . . . I mean it is true . . . this fifth column--I don't know if we ever hear that word anymore or not--but this fifth column had infiltrated into the Philippines, there's no question about it.

Marcello: Did you have the feeling at this time that the Americans on the Philippines were some expendable? I mean, I don't think anybody really believed that you could withstand any major Japanese onslaught, not given the materials and the amount of manpower you had on the island.

Burlage: Personally, and most of my friends thought we were -- yes, because we were trained that way. I mean it wasn't the idea of . . . I think some days we got . . . well some people could get different idealistic ideas of the military, but in those days we were trained that way, and Marines never surrendered and all this stuff. I mean it was drilled into you. And I was surprised to find myself a captive (chuckle) on Corregidor later on. I never did have any hopes of ever getting through it. Because I

knew it was hopeless. For morale purposes some of the little old wise sergeants used to send some of these younger privates out on a rock out on the end of the island there on Corregidor to watch for the American ships to come in. It was a morale factor. But I knew they weren't coming in. I was smart enough to know how far it was from Hawaii to the Philippines and how many days it . . . I know how many days it took me to get out of there by ship. And that was the only way you could travel in those days--by ship. And they were slow ships in those days.

Marcello: What was your immediate reaction? What were your own emotions when you heard the news about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Burlage: I didn't think it was possible. I just didn't believe it. And I still didn't believe it until I was awakened by (chuckle) a few of them around us. Then I realized that it was true.

Marcello: Where were you when you heard the news of Pearl Harbor? What were you doing?

Burlage: I was ready to come home and . . . they had moved me out of the bar--(chuckle) they had moved me out of the barracks. In fact, I was relieved from my duties as a patrolman, town patrolman, in this good job I had. And I was living in a tent out in the beach near Sangley Point. And in the meantime, while I was waiting for the ship to come in--we didn't know what date it was going to come in--while we were waiting, they put us in these tents and formed us into a provisional battery, and we

went out every day and slammed the breech on these guns a few times (chuckle) and called it exercise. I know it was before daylight, 4:00 or 4:30 in the morning, we got . . . the old bugler was out there blowing like mad and we crawled out. We thought he was drunk, had come in drunk that morning and was having a little fun and . . . but next thing you know a truck backed in without any lights on it and backed up to the command camp and started unloading helmets. We didn't have helmets. We always wore pith helmets or campaign hats. And they unloaded the helmets and the gas masks, and then the live ammunition, and we kind of figured it was for real then. And then, of course, a short time later we saw these Jap planes flying by.

Marcello: When did they come? About either the same day or a day later didn't they? It wasn't too long after Pearl.

Burlage: They were in evidence the first couple of days. I think it was about the third day before they finally--I might be wrong on my dates--but if I remember we got the word that they were coming in from the north and they were giving an E.T.A. (estimated time of arrival) when they were due there and . . .

Marcello: What is an E.T.A? Estimated time of arrival?

Burlage: Estimated time of arrival. And we were updated a couple of times and pretty soon we heard them, and I remember them very well. They looked like . . . the Japs never had a large bomber like we have. They had two-motored bombers, and we looked and and they came in. There were fifty-four in the flight, and

that was more than I'd ever seen in one flight before.

Marcello: This was the initial flight?

Burlage: This was the initial flight. I had seen a plane--one or two maybe three at the most--in the past but they weren't on business they were just getting through the country. That was on the first day or two.

Marcello: Right.

Burlage: And they came in, and they came up fairly close. They were after the Cavite Navy Yard, and they got what they wanted. They got a good slice of it that day. They came in, and if I remember right, they peeled off . . . let me see, all fifty-four came over the first time and dropped bombs. And then they went on to the South. They came from the North and went on to the South. Then they split into two groups of twenty-seven, and one group of twenty-seven came back and dropped bombs and the other group came in and dropped bombs, and then they split into nine, groups of nine, and then they just had fun for a couple of hours. That's when we set down with those guns that wouldn't . . . I think we were firing them to about 14,000 feet. Our detonators were set for extreme range, and I think it was about 14,000. They were up 3,000 or 4,000 or more above that. They had no worries. We didn't have anything to catch them. We didn't have . . . all we had were some old float planes out of there--what we called the scout observations or something. You've seen pictures of these. The float was as

big as the plane on those things. They could only go about 100 miles an hour. We weren't about to catch one of those bombers. We couldn't get that high.

Marcello: What did the base look like after this initial attack. What damage had the Japanese done?

Burlage: They had destroyed everything besides the ammunition depot. They missed that. Everything else was burning. Many casualties but the casualties were Filipino workmen trying to get out. I had estimates up to several hundred Filipinos. Now I don't know if history will bear that out or not. I don't know. They did a very good job, and they took their time in doing it, and everything was either burned or smashed, everything besides the ammunition depot. And that would have gone up if they had hit that with a bomb. That would have gone up in a hurry, too.

Marcello: Apparently there was no American opposition as far as fighter planes were concerned.

Burlage: Nothing.

Marcello: They had taken care of those, I suppose.

Burlage: Well, the first day, if I remember my history, the first day they hit Clark Field. And Clark Field was a fiasco more or less, and they waited until the P-40's came in and the B-17's came in, and they got them on the field over there.

Marcello: They caught them on the ground. What happened after this initial Japanese attack? Describe what happened then.

Burlage: After this we were . . . there were a lot of us down there

without any means of food or anything because they had hit our food supply down there in the Navy Yard. Nobody thought far enough ahead that we would need food. I always remember this young lieutenant who called this corporal over. And this corporal happened to be . . . he wasn't a dummy. He was a University of California graduate with a degree in chemistry. And he just happened to be an enlisted man, and he liked his booze, you know. He wasn't a drunkard, but he just like . . . if he found some he would drink it. And so there was a big liquor store down in Cavite, the main part of Cavite, and he told him, "Now go down town and get any kind of food you can get." We had commandeered a truck. We didn't have equipment like they do nowadays. No jeeps. We didn't have a jeep out there. And so he took off and about two hours later he came back and he had a truck loaded down with White Horse and Canadian Club and what known brands of booze. And so, the lieutenant got mad . . . the guy was too far gone by that time to care . . . I mean the corporal . . . so he got another guy to go down and get some canned salmon, and I guess canned salmon was about the only thing--pork and beans--I guess, were the only things that we could find in those stores downtown. I don't think the Filipinos stock but about two days in advance (chuckle) so there weren't many supplies.

Marcello: What were your other emotions during the time of the attack?

Burlage: You don't think too much. You just keep busy and hope to do

your best. You know it had begun, that's all I was thinking. This is it. But really I can't recall any emotions one way or the other about fear . . . I don't think there was any of that. I think we were more or less conditioned for that. I just don't remember any emotions other than hoping to get one of those guys or something like that. I'd like to see one fall

Marcello: The Japanese made that attack completely unscratched?

Burlage: Unscratched. Probably all fifty-four planes got back to Formosa or wherever they came from.

Marcello: How many more times did the Japanese planes come back?

Burlage: Well, in that location, before we left that area, they came back one more time, and they came in low, and at Sangley Point in those days there were three installations. One was a radio station which was one of the strongest in the world, I understand. There were three towers about 700 or so feet high. In those days you had to have height, I guess, to get their beam out. Then there was the PBY. The PBY is a two-motored amphibian-type patrol bomber the Navy had. And there was the fuel docks. And they came in and they hit . . . came in low and knocked one tower down and bombed around the fuel depot. The planes were already gone. The planes had gone to Java or . . . they were heading South anyway. So there was no worry there. That's the last time we saw them there. We moved out later on. About Christmas Eve or so we moved out.

Marcello: Since the base was virtually wiped out, like you said, what did you do on Cavite then?

Burlage: We just sat there and waited.

Marcello: Until you had further orders and then finally they decided to abandon Cavite?

Burlage: Well, there was . . . yes, it had to be abandoned. We were waiting for orders. The Japs had made two landings. One that was in Lingayen in the North and one was at Legaspi in the South, if I remember right. And they were waiting to see what they were going to do with us. Of course, we were under MacArthur's command.

Marcello: Pardon me for interrupting here, but you mentioned two names you had better spell.

Burlage: Oh! L-I-N-G-A-Y-E-N, I believe is correct. That's the northern port. In fact, the Americans went back in there in '44. And Legaspi is L-E-G-A-S-P-I, I believe it is. It's an old Spanish . . . one of the early Spanish settlers was named Legaspi. I believe that is correct.

Marcello: Legaspi?

Burlage: I believe that is Legaspi. MacArthur's command was debating where they were going to put us. Of course, you've got to realize we didn't have the equipment that some of these troops had. We weren't equipped as well as some of these Filipinos. In fact, I guess the Filipino scouts--they were a part of the American army anyway--I think that in the 31st Infantry, the

American . . . army infantry were very well-equipped, and here we were with the old-type weapons, and they were trying to figure if we could do the job or not. And finally, at last they decided to take us up to Bataan to establish a defense line, and that's when we finally left. It was the last part of December. I think it was December, Christmas Eve or somewhere in that neighborhood.

Marcello: What was the trip like from Cavite to Bataan?

Burlage: Well, it was very uneventful if you want to call riding on top of a supply truck uneventful. We took off and went on around the bay and in to Manila and on up to somewhere around Angels. Of course, the Filipinos pronounce it the Spanish way. And then we cut on over toward the coast in Bataan. It was a trip that . . . we started in the evening and got there the next morning, mid-morning sometime to where we wanted to bivouac.

Marcello: Describe the place where you bivouacked on Bataan.

Burlage: Well, it was just a very typical island scene there with a lot of trees and nice clear water running through. You had to have that, and we just camped there and tried to organize.

Marcello: What was the Bataan Peninsula itself like from a geographical standpoint?

Burlage: Maybe you better orient it on Manila Bay. Manila Bay is a very large bay coming in from the China Sea, and as you come in through . . . into the entrance to the bay, there is . . . Corregidor is an island that guards the bay. It's about three

miles north . . . the north channel which extends from the northern shore of Corregidor to the southern shore of the tip of Bataan is about three miles. In the other direction is Batangas-- B-A-T-A-N-G-A-S, the province to the south, and it's about eight or ten miles down there. As I said Bataan is to the north and it extends . . . it forms the southern tip of the land mass around the bay and extends north for quite some distance inland in the . . . the interior part of the . . . inside part whatever you want to call it. And it's just a peninsula. That's what it is. On one side is Manila Bay and on the other side is the China Sea.

Marcello: What was the terrain itself like on the peninsula?

Burlage: The terrain is mountainous, not great mountains, but pretty mountainous.

Marcello: Is this one of the reasons why they decided to establish a line on Bataan?

Burlage: As I understand, it was predetermined many years before. That would be a line in case, and this was the case. Let me try to think of the name of Mount Sumat, I believe it is. I could be wrong on that. S-U-M-A-T, was the highest peak there, and it was around the base of this peak and on the peak itself is where they set up the final defense line. In fact, I went there in '67. I went for the . . . President Marcos dedicated the monument to the American-Filipino defense--the final defense. And they figured that if they had to set up anywhere,

that would be the most defensive place, and that's where they set it up.

Marcello: Well, were you supposed to form some sort of a holding action until help arrived? Was that the general plan or . . .

Burlage: Well, originally they tried to establish the line farther north, of course, but . . .

Marcello: The Japanese breached that one.

Burlage: You just couldn't do it with our troops. We didn't have the troops, the equipment. The Japs had us outnumbered. They had the reserves and everything else they could put in there.

Marcello: Now, you weren't on that original defense line in the north?

Burlage: No.

Marcello: This had been breached when you were still in Cavite yet?

Burlage: Well, the first . . . that's farther north yet, yeah.

Marcello: Right.

Burlage: But there was another line in the very . . . the head, you might say, of the peninsula is what I was thinking about here. We had formed into a defense unit to go there but our equipment . . . they finally took a look at our equipment, and I don't think they wanted us up there. We had water-cooled machine guns that had been used in World War I, and you can't use water-cooled machine guns in this day and age--in that day and age even. So we didn't go and they eventually pulled us back, and we set up beach defenses in Corregidor. That was our job or the outfit I was with, to set up beach defenses to . . . so that was some

indication they expected them to get to Corregidor sooner or later, I guess.

Marcello: Right. I see. About how long were you on Bataan altogether?

Burlage: Oh, I don't think I was there more than about two to three weeks at the most.

Marcello: Did you see any action at all?

Burlage: None at all. Not on Bataan, no. I wasn't fired at.

Marcello: And you never really came into contact with any Japanese then while you were on Bataan?

Burlage: Not on Bataan itself, no, I didn't.

Marcello: Well, apparently like you say, you were only there for two or three weeks, and it was quite apparent that during that amount of time or during that length of time the situation had become rather hopeless for the Americans. Isn't that correct?

Burlage: Well, there was still hope. The breach hadn't reached the outer defenses up there yet, quite a few miles away and . . . there was always hope, I guess, and that's what we were thinking. Of course, I said I knew it was hopeless, but we were always hoping that it was not.

Marcello: Can you describe your reactions or your emotions when you got the word that you were supposed to retreat from Bataan and go to Corregidor?

Burlage: Well, it wasn't really a retreat it was just a . . .

Marcello: Strategic withdrawal?

Burlage: Displacement of troops, I guess. What we had done, we had

formed and reformed two or three times to try to get into the line--the outer line. And we just did not have the equipment to do the job.

Marcello: You still had the Springfields?

Burlage: I did. We started out up there one time pulling--this is no lie--we were pulling on carts water-cooled .30 caliber machine guns, and that's just the most hopeless thing in the world. They were okay for trench warfare or stationery warfare, but they're no good for any advance or displacement in battle. Well, then we finally got the word that we were going to Corregidor, and we went down to the . . . which was an auxillary . . . which had become an auxillary naval base at Mariveles. And we went aboard a lighter or a barge, if you want to call it, and they took us on over to Corregidor.

Marcello: Did anything happen on the trip over to Corregidor?

Burlage: Very uneventful.

Marcello: Had the Japanese been bombarding Corregidor in the meantime?

Burlage: They'd fly over and bomb it once in a while. We went on over, and we set up as . . . I became part of Love Company, L Company, and we joined with King, K Company, and set up the beach defenses in a place called Battery Point. I called it Battered Point before it was over with, but it was Battery Point. And you must remember that companies were not like today. A company maybe only had sixty-five or seventy people in it. There was about 150 of us altogether there.

Marcello: What was the island . . . what was Corregidor like from what you could see of it? Describe the island.

Burlage: Corregidor, itself--I think I can describe very accurately--is like a tadpole, the head of it facing the China Sea. And on the head rises . . . it's mountainous. It's a mountainous mass rising out of the ocean, and I guess it would rise 6, 7, 800 feet on the China Sea side, and it tapered off to the tail of . . . maybe fifty feet above the water. And at the narrow part--they called it Topside, Middleside, and Bottomside because of the . . . at about halfway back it was very narrow, and that was the . . . had a dock . . . they had a north dock and a south dock, the island itself facing east and west, of course. It was sea level there where you could bring in supplies.

Marcello: Now this was the area which was closer to . . . this was the tail of the tadpole. Is this correct?

Burlage: It's about . . .

Marcello: Is it flat?

Burlage: No, it wasn't . . .

Marcello: . . . where the supplies came in?

Burlage: No, it just happened to be that way about half way down the island.

Marcello: I see.

Burlage: And right behind the dock area, . . .

Marcello: Now was that Bottomside?

Burlage: That's Bottomside.

Marcello: That was Bottomside, right.

Burlage: As you go on down toward the tail of the island, right behind Bottomside, there's Malinta Hill--M-A-L-I-N-T-A--Malinta.

Marcello: This is where the tunnel was built?

Burlage: The tunnel went through there and that's where the . . . it's honeycombed with many things. That eventually became MacArthur's headquarters, the hospital, and a few other things in there.

Marcello: While we're on the physical features of the island, I want to bring up this question. Describe Fort Drum. Had you ever seen it?

Burlage: Fort Drum . . . Fort Frank, Fort Drum, Fort Hughes, okay.

Marcello: Fort Drum was the concrete battleship.

Burlage: Fort Drum was built in the shape of a battleship. It was, as I said before, was about eight or so many miles between the south shore of Corregidor and Batangas, the southern province. Immediately off Batangas was a natural island called Fort Frank. Right off the tail of Corregidor was a natural island. It was just a peak of a mountain sticking out of the water, Fort Hughes. And in between . . . to cover the gap in between was built this concrete battleship. It was built like a battleship. I believe they had fourteen inch guns on it.

Marcello: Double turrets, I think, did it not? It had twin turrets.

Burlage: I think so.

Marcello: Apparently from what I heard about Fort Drum some rather embarrassed naval captains used to come by there and estimate the speed of Fort Drum at three knots or something like that.

Burlage: I heard that.

Marcello: Now whether that's an old sailors' tale or not, I don't know.

Burlage: That's a Marine story against the Navy.

Marcello: (Chuckle) But apparently the currents do pass by there . . .

Burlage: Uh-huh.

Marcello: . . . at Fort Drum much like a moving ship. Well, is there anything else about the physical features of the island of Corregidor itself that stand out in your mind?

Burlage: Well, actually there was only about three places where landings could be made, and I was in one then.

Marcello: And where was this place again?

Burlage: Battery Point.

Marcello: This was at Battery Point.

Burlage: It was a very narrow beach, but it was a beach that sloped down into the bay.

Marcello: Now, where was this in relation to the island itself?

Burlage: Well, okay. It was on the Bataan side of the island, the north side of the island about a mile or a mile and a half seaward from Bottomside. I was going to say Bottomside was one of the places where a landing could be made. The tail of the island could be a place, and Battery Point could be another place.

Marcello: Describe some of the other features of the island. We were talking about Malinta Tunnel a while ago. Did you ever happen to be in Malinta Tunnel or see any of the tunnels at all?

Burlage: Well, yes, I knew the island fairly well. Back in 1940 . . . now this is something you asked me, and I didn't think about it . . . separation. The Navy established an underground radio center on Corregidor on the tail, near the tail of the island, and they had an underground command center. All their equipment was in it, and they used a new type of signal, and they had Marines to guard this, and I was in the first detachment that went over there, and we all stayed about six weeks. We had to guard this installation. And while I was there I traveled the island like . . . they had a streetcar, by the way. It ran almost from one end of the island to the other.

Marcello: It was very useful, too, I understand.

Burlage: Yes, it went through the tunnel and stopped at the Bottomside and wound up to Middleside barracks and up to Topside. I used to go up there to the PX at Topside, and you know, people would spend a dollar or two for shaving cream or toothpaste or whatever we needed, you know. And I used to make the trip maybe every week just to get away from things. So I knew the island pretty well.

Marcello: Well, apparently if the streetcar ran through the tunnel, the tunnel was rather large.

Burlage: Oh, yes. The tunnel, the main tunnel . . .

Marcello: This was Malinta?

Burlage: This was Malinta.

Marcello: The main tunnel?

Burlage: The main tunnel, the main lateral going through the mountains, I guess you could probably run a good size truck through it. Maybe you would have room for a jeep to spare there.

Marcello: It was concrete lined. Is that correct?

Burlage: It was concrete, uh-huh.

Marcello: I assume then there were lateral tunnels running off Malinta.

Burlage: It was pretty well honeycombed with laterals.

Marcello: Also, I would assume it would be very safe as far as bombardments, let's say, compared to the rest of the island.

Burlage: Well, I think it was. The only persons that I knew that had any casualties down there was in the evening, along about dark, when some of the medical staff would come out and stand at the entrance of the tunnel and smoke a cigarette or talk or get some fresh air, and one night after Bataan had fallen the Japs zeroed in there with some artillery, and they got a few casualties. I think they're the only ones that have ever got hurt in that tunnel, to be honest about it.

Marcello: Now originally, is it not true that Corregidor had been mainly set up as, oh, what shall we say, a fort to guard Manila against Naval attack?

Burlage: Right. That was it.

Marcello: It wasn't equipped at all to handle anything from land, is that it?

Burlage: No . . .

Marcello: That is, such as the Japanese coming into the Bataan Peninsula.

Burlage: Okay. Let me go on back on some of this. Now we had them on the head of the island--I can't remember the names of the various forts--but they had a ten inch mortar, or maybe it was a twelve inch mortar, and a fourteen inch gun, and these were all for . . . they weren't quite like Singapore. Singapore was definitely Navy. And they couldn't turn them around to the land side. But I think here these were . . . they couldn't fire back toward Manila, I don't believe. I think the mortar . . . of course, the mortars could be switched around to fire in any direction because I remember one time the Japs infiltrated and got quite a ways down the peninsula. They came in by boat. It was an amphibious attack, and those mortars opened up and were very effective against them. Course, they were shooting almost at a 90 degree angle from the forward position.

Marcello: Well, I would assume that that would have been, perhaps, one of the only things that could have been effective against, you know, any sort of an artillery bombardment from Bataan because like you were saying, Bataan was very mountainous, very hilly, and I assume the Japanese simply put howitzers behind these hills, did they not, and lob shells over on to Corregidor?

Burlage: Well, I think that later on they weren't too cautious. I think at first they did, yes. I remember the Japs . . .

Marcello: Well, of course, there was no way that the guns on Corregidor could reach those artillery pieces except with a mortar.

Burlage: No, because . . .

Marcello: Because the naval rifles fired on a flat projectory, did they not?

Burlage: That's right. The only thing I can remember firing were mortars. That is correct. So that must have been the reason there for that.

Marcello: Well, describe exactly what you did then. You said you were on a beach defense. What sort of measures did you take on this beach defense?

Burlage: Okay, I was pretty well schooled in infantry weapons, and believe it or not, we had never seen a .50 caliber machine gun. That's how old our equipment was. And so there was a barge came floating in and hit the beach out there one day and . . . well, it was there, I guess, when we came in there taking our positions, and what we were forming into was just a rifle platoon with a whole string of rifles and these . . . there were pits, concrete pits and trenches dug in World War I for some reason or another out there. And we cleaned those trenches out, and we were going to defend the beaches with .03 rifles. When this barge came in . . . and it had a few things on it. One was a jeep, and it had a mounted machine gun on it, but it

was a water-cooled machine gun again. And so I took that machine gun and looked it over, understood the mechanisms of it, and I took it as my own, and I set up. There were four positions set up on the beach. There were, you might say, heavy machine gun or automatic positions. I set up my machine gun down here, but I had to improvise, and I got some oil drums and so forth and ran holes down to cool the gun and all this. Then there were two in the middle who had . . . they were old bunkers, you know. I guess you call them bunkers. They were built many, many years before, and they put .37 caliber . . . these things would only fire a few rounds. They were very slow firing. They put a couple of those in there in case we could get a boat. Then on the extreme end, we had a couple automatic rifles. We were using the automatic rifles. That was our main defense for our beach and . . .

Marcello: About how many men were defending this beach?

Burlage: We had, as I said before, we had two small companies of about 150 people at the very most, and the rest of them just had rifles. I might say I was the forward point there or something. (Chuckle) My outfit was stationary. The other people were mobile, of course.

Marcello: Now, was the island subjected to constant bombardment every day after you got there?

Burlage: Very frequent aerial attacks. There may have been only three planes, but we got a visitor every day or so. And it may have

only been three planes flying over and . . . at first there were more, then finally at last I don't think they ever brought more than about two at a time because they had some antiaircraft batteries that were pretty accurate. I saw a few bombers knocked down.

Marcello: That did quite a bit for your morale, I suppose . . .

Burlage: Oh, yeah.

Marcello: . . . after what had happened on Cavite.

Burlage: But still I would like to get out in that north channel and find that Jap Bomber I saw go down. That was so pretty that day when it went down right off my position. I have an idea it's still there.

Marcello: I see. Another question comes to mind at this point. How were your supplies and rations holding out?

Burlage: We went on two meals a day in the very beginning, and then as we went along we still got only two meals a day, but they got a . . . awful thin (chuckle) as we went along. And at the very last there was nothing but rice, and rice wasn't too well-cooked. You never could get a fire burn long enough. You had to cook them on the open fire somewhere, and when Bataan fell, it was almost impossible to cook, because any time smoke or a flame or anything was shown, an artillery barrage came in on it.

Marcello: How often were there artillery barrages? You said a plane or so or two or three came over every day.

Burlage: Okay. We had no artillery until Bataan fell. When Bataan fell,

it was murder after that. I think they must have captured every American artillery piece and lined them all up hub to hub and started firing, the way it sounded to me. To give an example, in my position there was a . . . had been built where I set up my machine gun . . . had been built in World War I as a seventy-five millimeter gun emplacement, and I set my machine gun up there, and right behind it was a little underground ammunition storage house that had about . . . it was about six feet tall by about ten feet long and about six wide, something like that. Of course, that was good protection, and when these artillery barrages started heading my direction . . . they were usually walking them up the beach or walking them down from the hill or something. Well, we would get in there. And one day somebody was counting the shells, and I can't remember, but it was unbelievable the number of shells. What they were using would be the 105's, the 155's and then somewhere intermittently they were using a 240 howitzer . . . a mortar I guess it was, a mortar. And this mortar would come in, and they were after the . . . they were trying to break . . . there were a lot of these things that I was talking about--little underground magazines and so forth that you could hide in. And I remember that thing coming up the beach. You could hear that thing . . . whomp, whomp, whomp as it came up the beach. I had two gunners with me, myself and two gunners, and I said let's get in our hole. Well, it just so happened that we got in this

hole, and it had an iron door, a door that was made of iron a half inch thick. And when that mortar finally hit in front of us that door was wadded up like a sheet of paper and tossed back in the back. It knocked all of us out. The three of us were knocked out. When we came to, there was no door. It was rumped up in the corner, and the artillery barrage was moving on up the hill from us. This was a common occurrence. It just happened that anything that was in the open didn't survive as a rule.

Marcello: How long did one of these artillery barrages usually last?

Burlage: The heavy ones would last all day, and then intermittently at night . . . they were just harrassing at night. Then they would come out again.

Marcello: And they were every day?

Burlage: Every day for about three weeks or so there.

Marcello: Something like that. In other words there was no comparison between the artillery barrages and the bombers? So far as danger was concerned, the artillery was much more dangerous.

Burlage: You could see a bomber coming. You knew he was going to drop a bomb, and your chances were one in a hundred that you would even get close to a bomb. But artillery--they drilled that thing in. Just like somebody said, "Corregidor is a bulls-eye and we're in the center," and that's what it was. They had the ammunition. Evidently they captured . . . they sure had the artillery, anyway.

Marcello: What was your own physical condition at this time?

Burlage: Well, we were all down I guess . . . we were always hungry, of course. On Bataan there was dysentary and such as that. But it had not set up yet. We were still healthy. We were just a little bit malnourished.

Marcello: Were you able to supplement your diet in any way?

Burlage: Oh, I had a man that must have been a thief in the old days. He was my gunner and he would go down to the army depot down the road, and he would come back with a can of something. I remember one night he came back, and I thought he had . . . I was just starving to death, and he came back with a gallon can of mincemeat. I never got so much heartburn in my life eating that can. We shared a gallon can--the three of us. Finally there wasn't anything. Whatever we could find we put in our stomach.

Marcello: What did you do to occupy your time other than dodge artillery shells?

Burlage: Well, we all had hope. We would talk about when we got back and that's about it. I mean, it's not that bad. People always thought I was just a little bit more informed than they were. I had just a little more schooling than they had as a rule, and we'd compare notes on talking about other wars, you know, and they would ask me, I was more or less the monitor of it or an authority or something. That's what I did. I don't know. Some of the other people may not have done it, but I mean within my

own group of people that's the way we passed our time.

Marcello: You mean, in other words, you stayed down in your hole most of the time, maybe except at night?

Burlage: No, I stayed in the hole only when I had to, when there was danger. I didn't want to become addicted to that. But if there was danger a guy was a fool not to go into a shelter, but if there were no . . . at that time, if they were shelling another area of the island, I usually got out.

Marcello: How long was it before the initial Japanese assault came?

Burlage: Well, the . . .

Marcello: That is, after you had been on the island.

Burlage: Oh, I'd been on the island since sometime in January. Let's see, February, March, April, about three months. I had been there about three months.

Marcello: That was before the initial Japanese assault came?

Burlage: Onto the island itself. It was about one assault and it was successful.

Marcello: Where did the Japanese hit the island? Describe the assault. Let's put it that way.

Burlage: Well, nobody told us it was taking place. But you could hear so many engines out there, and you knew they were boats. And we didn't have those kind of boats. The only boats we ever saw around there was a few PT boats. Those of Buckley's. Of course, he had taken off with MacArthur, so he was no longer around. We heard these boats, and we knew they were landing

craft, and we just waited, and luckily for me the main force hit down the island a little farther. They never did hit our beach. I mean, our beach was not a main target. That's what I could say.

Marcello: Uh-huh. Did any of the Japanese at all land on your beach during the initial assault?

Burlage: I'd fired at a few.

Marcello: Describe the assault in your particular area. Well, they turned back. They did not land. As far as I know now they did not land. All the action was just out of range to me, the main action. The only thing I did, like I say, I turned some back but none ever got on the shore. Now, whether I did any damage or not in the darkness, I don't know, but at least I kept them off the beach.

Marcello: When did the assault come? You mentioned the darkness. Did it come in the early hours of the morning?

Burlage: It started about ten at night, if I remember right. Of course, you could hear the firing and everything on down the beach from us, and my real danger I believe where I was . . . I was on a higher point of the beach. I was up overlooking the beach, and the rest of my colleagues or peers were down on the beach itself. I could see better, and I was more exposed. And there was sporadic sniper fire in my direction every once in a while. But I think the sniper fire did not come from the Jap troops per se, but from infiltrators that had come on the island

previously. Because when Bataan had fallen many people had made the swim across the three miles or had come by banca or by log or any other way they could get over there. They had Filipino military uniforms but they could have been Japs or Jap sympathizers. And that's where my main trouble came during the night. It was from the snipers. They were firing into my position but . . . they were firing in the direction of my position. It was dark, pitch dark. There wasn't a moon or nothing. It was dark.

Marcello: Did a heavy bombardment precede this Japanese assault?

Burlage: It preceded and continued.

Marcello: Mainly artillery. Was there any naval gunfire at all?

Burlage: No, I don't remember any.

Marcello: Strictly artillery?

Burlage: Strictly artillery. I understand the Navy was out there somewhere, but they were not needed.

Marcello: Well, since you mentioned that the first and only Japanese assault was successful, I think the next thing we can go into then is the events surrounding your eventual capture. I assume you remember them rather vividly? (Chuckle)

Burlage: I remember getting so tired that I woke up. I must have passed out from exhaustion. I remember that and it was daylight.

Marcello: You hadn't slept for a long time, I assume?

Burlage: No, I didn't, and I remember it was daylight, and the fighting was still going on. I could see it. It was too far away to do

anything about, yet. And by that time my company commander came by and said, "Don't fire. It's over." I didn't know whether to believe him or not, and then he sent a runner out later and said, "Don't destroy your weapons. It's unconditional." I had already destroyed mine. I had taken my machine apart piece by piece and had thrown it over into the bay. And so a Jap came by and said, "You stay where you are." They had us surrounded, but they weren't physically with us, I mean, intermingled or have us round about. But we were to stay where we were. So we thought this thing was over. Things just went by fast.

Let me back up a moment and say that when we went to Corregidor it was a beautiful island full of trees. Just as thick as any trees you want to see. And when the surrender came, there wasn't a tree left standing, wasn't even a stump. It was just bare. So when a Jap told you he could see you, you believed him because he could be upon the hillside, and there wasn't anything in the way to keep him from seeing us. So anyway, he says, "You can't leave. Stay here." And all this stuff, so . . .

Marcello: He could speak English?

Burlage: Yes, enough to be understood. And so that night just about dusk all these souls got out there on the roadside, to the left of the road, in a clearing and lit up some cigarettes, and all hell broke loose. Boy, those Japs came . . . about forty

artillery pieces opened up on us across the way there. We went back in the holes again. So the next morning, bright and early the Jap platoon, I guess platoon or company, had come down and rounded us up and marched us away.

Marcello: What was your initial emotions or reactions when you were told that it was all over and the Americans had surrendered unconditionally?

Burlage: I couldn't believe it. I thought . . . well, I had made my peace. I was ready to fight to the last.

Marcello: Had you believed, as many Americans apparently believed, that the Japanese would not take any prisoners?

Burlage: We were told that. One of my mentors, I might say, in the Marine Corps was an old-timer who said save that last bullet for yourself because they will torture you anyway. I used to get so numb and tired and you don't know what you are doing. You're not crazy or anything like that. You're just so tired, and you just don't . . . you'd be surprised. But it gets very exhausting. You don't think.

We were taken up to the Topside of the island from where we were, and it is kind of interesting looking back on it. It was kind of a dangerous journey now to look back on it, too. As we went along there, the Japs over on Bataan were still trigger happy. And they opened up on us with artillery.

Marcello: Other Japanese soldiers were with you?

Burlage: Yeah, they were with us and this . . . I guess their own

artillery doesn't hurt them. Their own artillery shells didn't hurt them because this one Jap grabbed a Jap flag and got on a high point and waved it and waved it over there, and finally the artillery stopped. He wasn't hit. I guess it was all right. And they didn't know what to do with us, to be honest about it. They had never captured people like us before, I guess. Singapore had fallen and Hong Kong had fallen, but I don't believe they expected to find anybody to be alive there, to be honest about it because of the tremendous artillery barrages they had laid down on us. And they weren't prepared for this. So they kept us up Topside overnight and then the next day they sent us on down to Bottomside and off to a place called 82nd Garage Compound.

Marcello: This was an open area, was it not?

Burlage: It was an open area on the beach and not too far from the Malinta Tunnel, and I got in there after dark, and I couldn't see what was going on. I was so exhausted I slept, and the next morning I looked around, and it was a mess. The casualties were already mounting there because of the lack of water, no organization, filth, and I remember some of the Marine senior non-com's organizing a group. They just more or less brought all the Marines over to one area and said we will have sanitation. We will provide for one another, and that's the way it started out.

Marcello: Had the Japanese roughed you up any at this time?

Burlage: No, they hadn't. Well, if you lagged around a little bit, they would hit you with a rifle butt or something like that, but they didn't methodically or with any premeditation, I don't believe. It was just a spur-of-the-moment deal. But they got us down there and you could see people were dying from lack of water, and just plain fatigue, I guess. In fact, this is quite ironic, but I saw the first sergeant that swore me into the Marine Corps in Los Angeles and the major who . . . I take that back . . . the major who swore me in and the first sergeant who prepared the papers for me in Los Angeles. I saw them both die there just from heat and lack of water and what it takes to do that.

Marcello: What was the temperature like at this time? You said it was in an open area, and I assume the Philippines were pretty hot.

Burlage: Yes, it was hot, especially on the water. The water makes it a little hotter, too. And you are enclosed on three sides by rising grounds, I won't say mountains, but rising grounds, little small hills, and so there was just no breeze. It was a nice place to put people because nature provided a good compound for the Japs to put us a secure place. With hills on three sides and water on the other side, they just couldn't find a better place. But luckily somebody remembered something, and there was a cistern under the compound and we did eventually get water. But before the . . . that was after two or three days had passed, and a lot of people had already died from exhaustion and whatnot.

Marcello: Were the Japs providing any sort of food or so on for you at this time?

Burlage: Not a thing. They hadn't given us a thing. I believe the way they acted they probably thought we had rations with us when we went in there. I got to thinking when I went out on a burial detail. On the second day I could see that you were going to have to shift for yourself, and I went up near the entrance where the guards were, and I knew they would come in every once in a while and grab some people and take them off for some detail. And what the details were, I didn't know if it was a shooting detail or a burial detail or a clean up detail or what it was, but I was going to take my chances. I went out and luckily they grabbed me, and I was on the burial detail. I spent all day burying and I . . . a few of my friends, I ran into a few of them.

Marcello: What were these burial details like?

Burlage: The Japs would clean up their own dead, and they had left the American dead lying where they had fallen. By the way this part of the island is called Monkey Point, and that is where they took us to do the burying. And all we could do was just scratch a hole in the ground and roll the person into it because the people were in pretty bad shape by that time. They were bloated and started to rot. In the hot sun they will do that in a day's time. This was about the second or third day. And after we got through with the burial detail, they took us

to Middleside, and I stayed up there about ten days with them. And I kind of fed myself pretty good.

Marcello: What were you doing while you were at Middleside?

Burlage: Cleaning up some former officers' houses for the Japs to live in. And, of course as we cleaned out we found food caches and so forth. I remember one interesting thing. This corporal was in charge, and he was a Jap corporal that was pretty understanding of more than just his own culture as most of them were, and he found a box of apples, and he passed out an apple to everybody. I looked at my apple and it had a big rotten spot in it, and I took it over to him, and I told him it was no good. He looked it over and laughed and gave me another one. I guess I was getting brave by that time. But anyway we cleaned the houses out, and we did a lot of going through the camps or I will say where the people were stationed before and picking food and stuff. If there was any canned rations, something like that, we were looking for that for them. It was more or less a kind of clean up detail. Then they took us back down the day before we left the island. They took us back down and put us back into the compound with everybody else.

Marcello: How long were you on Corregidor after your capture?

Burlage: It was somewhere in the neighborhood of a month. They took us down one morning . . . they brought some ships in. They anchored the ships right off of the Southside docks and Bottomside and took us out and put us on these ships and hauled us off to

Dewey Boulevard. They changed that name now to somebody else. I don't know who. But, anyway Dewey Boulevard was the big boulevard that runs down the Manila Bay side of Manila. At the very southern end of Manila they dumped us off, and we waded to shore and the horse calvary, I remember, took us into Bilibid Prison through the residential district to show us off.

Marcello: I was just going to ask you if they showed you off before the local population, and they did do that.

Burlage: They took us through what was mostly the high class Filipino and Mestizo area. The nice residential area, down near the American Embassy, where the American Embassy is, and through that particular area.

Marcello: Why do you think they did that?

Burlage: Well, they just wanted to let the Philippine people know who was boss. That's the only thing I could see.

Marcello: Don't you think it's also true in a way that this was a method of showing the native population that Asians could beat the white man, the westerners, in a war.

Burlage: I think so and also that . . .

Marcello: A little bit of reverse racism, perhaps, in a way.

Burlage: To say the same thing that you are saying in a different way that we were not invincible after all. After all we were the Americans, and the Filipinos kind of looked up to us. I think they were out to gain respect in a lot of ways, and they were going to show them that we were not such hot stuff after all.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the Filipino population as you were marching up Dewey Boulevard to Bilibid Prison?

Burlage: They weren't joyous in any way. A lot of them were showing the "V" sign which meant something different in those days, and they were still with us. There is no question about it.

Marcello: Were there any instances that you can recall of Filipinos perhaps helping Americans who might have fallen or were sick, you know, on this march? Did you see any of this?

Burlage: The Filipinos themselves were not allowed to give help or to get close. A Jap soldier would usually rush in and stand between a falling person and a native.

Marcello: What would they usually do to a person who would fall?

Burlage: I have never seen persons bayoneted or shot when they fell. I understand on the Bataan March it was different. But they usually provided a truck of some sort to pick the guy up.

Marcello: Something else . . .

Burlage: Of course, these were short marches I'm talking about now. They weren't long marches where they were handicapped by a neighboring enemy force or something like that as was on Bataan. I'm not alibiing for the Japs at all because I could say a lot of things that wouldn't be nice to say here, but they did show a little more humane treatment after the complete thing collapsed. It wasn't too humane, but it was still more humane than it could have been.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get from the beach to Bilibid

Prison? Was this a very long walk?

Burlage: Oh, I think the distance might be ten or twelve miles from where we came ashore. It took about three hours, I would say.

Marcello: What was Bilibid Prison like?

Burlage: Bilibid Prison is . . . it's a walled prison. And it's rows of buildings. An old auditorium-type building, administration building, end of it had been partially destroyed. And a few towers, guard towers. Bilibid Prison had been more or less abandoned, and the new prison was built. It had just been completed by the Filipino government. Bilibid had been there forever. The Japs took it over, of course, in the state it was in. And they used it . . . later on they used it as a hospital, American hospital. It was staffed by Navy corpsmen and Native doctors.

Marcello: About how many Americans had been captured on Corregidor altogether? Do you have any idea?

Burlage: I think so. I think it was somewhere . . . I think that the final count was about 15,000 to 16,000 prisoners of which about half were Americans. In other words, somewhere around between 7,000 and 8,000.

Marcello: And the rest were Filipino Scouts?

Burlage: Filipinos of all descriptions. Philippine Navy . . . very few scouts. The Scouts bore the brunt of the battle on Bataan at the time. These are mostly Filipino army, such as that.

Marcello: Where did they put you when you got to Bilibid Prison? Were

you put into individual cells or in a big compound?

Burlage: No, you just found yourself a place to stretch out. That was all. Outside, inside, anywhere you could find.

Marcello: Where did you happen to find a place?

Burlage: I was a country boy. I stayed outside. We were only there overnight, and then they moved us on out the next morning. It was more or less a receiving or casual facility for us. They moved us out the next morning to Cabanatuan, the main prison camp.

Marcello: Now that was in the northern part of Luzon?

Burlage: Yes, up in the rice and sugar cane producing area, Plains of Luzon, I guess you might say.

Marcello: How did they get you from Bilibid Prison to this other place?

Burlage: It was by train.

Marcello: You went by train.

Burlage: The Philippines have a nationalized railroad which had the small narrow gauge railroad, and they jammed us into the boxcars and off we went.

Marcello: What was the trip like?

Burlage: Well, it wasn't a pleasure trip, but it was just something you knew you had to endure, you know. You were just jammed in there, hot, no water, nothing to eat. It lasted until late in the afternoon, early evening . . .

Marcello: You were in these boxcars with that Filipino heat and so on.

Burlage: Yes.

Marcello: No food?

Burlage: No, no food.

Marcello: No water.

Burlage: No.

Marcello: No sanitary facilities at all?

Burlage: None at all.

Marcello: When was the last time you had had a bath?

Burlage: I don't know. (Chuckle)

Marcello: Had it been a long time?

Burlage: Yeah, it had been. I was trying to think that if I'd had a bath, it was a salt water bath, and that's not very clean. I just don't remember.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get from Bilibid to this other place?

Burlage: It was a day's trip. We left early in the morning. How far it is, I don't know. I would have to look at the map to tell how far it really is.

Marcello: What was this new camp like?

Burlage: We got out of there, and we stayed overnight in the school grounds in a rain storm by the way. And we took off the next morning at daylight marching. I forget how far. There were 800 of us, if I remember right, and we were divided up into 100 each, four rows of twenty-five. And the guards would be relieved every couple of miles, and we kept on moving. It took us all day. Seems like to me it was something like twenty miles up there.

Marcello: That is from where the railroad dumped you off?

Burlage: The school grounds that night before to Cabanatuan. And the Cabanatuan Prison was the barracks area that was built for the Filipinos, when they were occupied by them. It was nipa. It was all bamboo and nipa. Nipa is a leaf that looks like a coconut leaf that they use for shingling or for siding. And the main part of the building is bamboo, and the bamboo would be split, and the floors would have cracks, you know. Never had to sweep it, I guess. And there would be double bunks, I mean, regular bunk area had been cleared. The Filipinos and Japs never used beds. They slept on the floor or on mats, and of course here you were with two shelves or bunk areas or whatever you want to call them there. Boys, I guess, is the correct word.

Marcello: Who was administrating this prison camp? Was it the Japanese Army or the Japanese Marines?

Burlage: The army had these.

Marcello: Are there any other physical features of the camp that you remember?

Burlage: Well, they divided the camp into . . . this was Camp Number Three. There was also Camp Number One which was down a way. Similar, very similar because there were a lot of people from Bataan, and they didn't mix us up because the Bataan people were diseased. They had a lot of dysentery.

Marcello: All these camps were still a part of Cabanatuan?

Burlage: There was Cabanatuan Number One and Cabanatuan Number . . . did I say Two or Three, whatever it was we were in.

Marcello: You said Number Three.

Burlage: Was it Three? I may be wrong. It may have been Two. I don't know. There were only two camps. Where the Three got in, I don't know, but anyway it was starting to rain. The rainy season starts that time of year and we had to get out and dig trenches, build roads, to keep the water out of places. Had to dig pit toilets and so forth for people. And I was trying to think . . . we divided into three groups. We had the Marines and Navy in one, and the Army divided into two groups. I think that's right. And that's what it amounted to. And there is one galley for each . . . each group had its own galley.

Marcello: What did the food usually consist of at this camp?

Burlage: Well, the food was very standard anywhere you went. It was rice with some kind of soup made from carrots or sweet potatoes. Cametes is what they call them out there. Camote is a Spanish word.

Marcello: Was there much of this food? How was it quantitywise? Get very much?

Burlage: Very little, very little. I looked around there again like I did on Corregidor, and I saw that to survive you were going to have to get into a smaller area. A Jap came in and says, "The work detail needs so many people, and we are going to another camp." And I missed it. And it's a good thing I did because

it was one of the roughest ones going. It was at Nichols Field, and it was run by the Navy, and the Navy had a man they called a "White Angel" who gave a lot of the prisoners the water treatment. Put a hose in their mouth and fill them full of water and jumping on them. And it would rupture them, and they would eventually die in agony.

Marcello: He would do what. Put a hose in your mouth?

Burlage: Water hose. That was the punishment. If somebody wasn't working hard enough . . .

Marcello: And this would bloat them up?

Burlage: And then they would jump on them and rupture a kidney or stomach or something, and they would eventually die and die in agony, of course. But I wouldn't know. This is what I heard, and I know there were war trials on this one. I ended up by going to Palawan about a week later. That's the southernmost island in the Philippines, right off Borneo. And we went down to the . . .

Marcello: How did you make the trip?

Burlage: By inner island boat. It was a former Filipino boat.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened on that trip?

Burlage: Very uneventful. We got down there, and our job was to go into the jungle and using picks, hoes, and shovels to clear a jungle strip of coconut trees, mango trees, and anything else that was in the way and build an airstrip. And I was down there fifteen months, so I got so much dingo fever and malaria that they

brought some of us back, and . . .

Marcello: What was your physical condition like when you hit this latest camp?

Burlage: I was still in pretty good shape. But as I was leaving the camp on Luzon, Cabanatuan, my two gunners that were with me and who were captured . . . they had both died of dysentery already.

Marcello: Had you caught dysentery yourself?

Burlage: Not yet. I caught it later.

Marcello: Were you losing weight?

Burlage: No, I was down to about 150 pounds, and I wasn't losing any more. I'd gotten pretty well stabilized.

Marcello: What was your normal weight at that time?

Burlage: Oh, I would say about 190 pounds. We went down there, and we were put into the constabulary barracks and eventually there were 300 of us down there.

Marcello: What was this camp like?

Burlage: It was a constabulary barracks built many, many years ago. It was built in a . . . you've probably seen a replica of them on television. They are built around a center. The whole building is built . . . there are four . . . or what do you say there were two sides and two ends? What do you want to call it . . . with maybe an acre or so of ground in the center. And the buildings have a veranda that faced the inside which was full of coconut trees and lawns and very pretty place when it was

built. And they even had a brig there, as far as that goes. And it was on a slope, and on one end was a storeroom. On the first floor there was a storeroom. You only had a storeroom on one end. We called it a slope--like a split-level place. And you had the galley and the storeroom and everything down there. Everything was on the level, and we could put 300 people in there. Of course, we were allotted a space of about six feet long--a burial plot, I guess--six feet long, three feet wide. (Chuckle) That was your allotted space on the floor to sleep. And we worked . . . went out into the fields at sunup and came in at sundown. Day in and day out. Rain or shine.

Marcello: You just cut coconut trees, mango trees, and what have you.

Burlage: And leveling. We leveled with the wheelbarrows and baskets. Believe it or not--baskets. And when I left there they were getting ready to start a runway, concrete runway, which was eventually built. But I had left.

Marcello: You were there fifteen months altogether?

Burlage: Fifteen months. Uh-huh.

Marcello: Let me ask you a couple of general questions about your stay here. Several things come to mind. First of all, was there ever any evidence of any collaboration by Americans with the Japanese while you were there?

Burlage: The Americans with the Japanese?

Marcello: Right. In other words, were there any collaborators among the Americans?

Burlage: One time, one time only.

Marcello: You don't have to mention any names incidentally.

Burlage: Okay. This man was an Army man, and he was not American-born. Can I mention his ethnic background?

Marcello: Yes, go ahead.

Burlage: Well, he was Jewish by the way. He was born in Germany. He just didn't like to work, I guess. And he had gone to the . . . he had written a note. I don't know where he got the pencil and paper. From an interpreter, I guess. He wrote a note to the commandant of the camp saying that he was a German, and he believed in the Axis cause, and he would like to join the Jap Army. And as soon as the Jap commandant got the thing . . . I had . . . the officer, the American officer in charge of the camp was an American Marine. Captain, and I had known him for a long time, and we more or less chatted quite a bit. And I remember I was talking to him this evening when we came in from work. In fact, my allotted bunk space was right around the corner from where he had a little kind of an office-like thing which wasn't much bigger than my space. But anyway, we were out on the veranda talking, and this commandant and the interpreter walked up. And the commandant gave this Marine captain this note, and he says, "I got this from one of your men." Through interpreters, he said, "I got this from one of your men." He says, "I don't want it." I remember what the interpreter said very well. He said, "There you are. I don't

want it. If that man is no good to you people, he would be no good for us either." That is the only case I've ever known.

Marcello: What happened to this man?

Burlage: This commandant through this interpreter asked the captain, "What would you do with him?" And of course the captain hesitated, and he looked at me, and he said, "What would you do?" And I said, "I would hang him." And so the captain said, "We don't want him. To avoid trouble I think you should take him." And they took him away. And I understand they sent him back to Manila, I don't know. They had a prison in Manila for people like that.

Marcello: This was the Japanese that took him away?

Burlage: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what a typical day was like from the time you got up in the morning until the time you went to bed, if there was such a thing as a typical day, while you were clearing this jungle for the airstrip.

Burlage: Okay. Get up in the morning and soon as you . . .

Marcello: What time did you get up?

Burlage: Before daylight. And you just get up and do what you had to do, I mean, you toilet and so forth which was a pit thing out in back. You went out there and then washed your hands, by the time you got back somebody had come with a bucket or two buckets of rice and soup.

Marcello: For how many people?

Burlage: Well, we were divided up into groups of about seventy-five or so.

Marcello: There were two buckets of rice or two buckets . . .

Burlage: Well, what it amounted to, it wasn't very much. They only had to feed us 600 grams a day or something like that. They argued that with us all the time. And as soon as we got through eating, then the trucks would come up, and we would get on the truck . . . this was in this place. In other places we would march. So we would get in the trucks and went about four or five miles out in the boondocks and went to work. Usually you knew what your work was going to be because you did the same thing every day. You either were hacking down trees with a grubbing hoe . . . and I tell you it is a job to cut down a coconut tree with a grubbing hoe . . . or you were shoveling and pushing dirt in a wheelbarrow to level off the field. This would go on, and about half way through the morning usually they would holler that it was time to break because the tea wagon was coming. They came out with a big truck with a couple of drums with hot tea on it. We could never drink any water because the water was . . . they would never let us drink unheated water. They called this tea. Actually it was hot water. So we had a fifteen or twenty minute break and then went back. At noon we took off for thirty minutes, and they came out with several buckets of rice and fed us our rations and went back to work. In the afternoon there was another break, and then about an

hour before sundown we gathered up the tools and went back to the barracks. We got back to the barracks, and there was one . . . Bilibid Prison had a prison farm down there, and they were the only Filipinos we ever saw, the prisoners or the soldiers in charge of prisoners. And they supplied us with water. They had one three-quarter inch pipe coming over and we all took a shower under it. And this thing . . . somehow or another we all got a shower because we were all filthy. We were just coated with dust every night. Especially if you had been shoveling dirt, you were going to have all that dust on you. And then we sat around and talked about what good food we were going to have when we got back to the states, or how fast the automobiles were going to be, or how blonde the girls were going to be.

Marcello: About what time did you come in at night?

Burlage: Oh, eight o'clock, I guess. We usually got about eight hours of sleep at least.

Marcello: What was the thing that was most constantly on your mind during your stay? What did you think about the most?

Burlage: I think hunger was the main thing because your stomach was always growling. That stomach never got used to that being empty. You'd stretch out on that floor, and your old stomach would just talk back to you. (Chuckle)

Marcello: Did the Japanese supervise the work details very closely?

Burlage: Well, what they would do, they would set up a . . . you had a

supervisor more or less in charge of so many people, or maybe you were divided into groups of fifty or so, and you had one man there. But they would have the guards set up on the perimeter with the machine guns every day. They set up machine guns and they would go out first. And they would be set up when you got there. There was no way to get to the woods in other words.

Marcello: Were there very many escape attempts?

Burlage: In Palawan there were, I think . . . I was trying to think of that the other day after you called me. I think it was about five or something like that while I was there.

Marcello: Were very many of them successful?

Burlage: Yes, there was . . . the first one . . . I don't know if it was the first one or not now, but the . . . I remember the two people. They were both Marines that escaped, and about four days later I saw them bring them in. Oh, about a week later they brought them back in, and I saw them bayonet them. They were fighting. The Jap hit one with something, and the guy swung at him, and another Jap bayoneted him. Then they just went ahead and bayoneted both of them. The other one . . . there was another guy that escaped. He was a medic, I remember. He escaped and they found him under a papaya tree or a coconut tree eating. He didn't get very far. He stopped to eat, and they got him. And I understand they shot him. I never saw him again. I understand they shot him. Then there was

another group. A couple of more took off, and I believe they took those back to Manila, to that prison within a prison that I was talking about. There was a Marine I knew very well. He and I had gone to the Philippines together. He and an Army man--no, he was Navy--escaped, and they made it. I don't know what happened to this Marine other than I know he was in the service after the war. I saw his name at El Toro on something in California. But the other man, I understand, became a major in the guerrilla forces and eventually married into a fairly wealthy Philippine family out there. Now that's what I heard. I don't know if it is true or not. But that's the only one I know--those two went together--they were the only two who ever made it.

Marcello: What retaliatory measures did the Japanese take against the remaining prisoners when there ever was an escape? Did they ever threaten you. In other words, if somebody escaped were so many men supposed to be shot or killed?

Burlage: You had your death squads of ten men. And I can go back to Palawan and tell you . . . the first escape, the Japs seemed very hurt. The commandant seemed very hurt that these people would do this to him. He lined us up. Of course, they had a big parade ground, constabulary parade ground, and they lined us up there. But first of all they kept us in our barracks for two days. No food . . . we weren't even allowed to come out of the barracks. And this commandant called us out, and we went

out and lined up, and he came out, and he was so mad he was incoherent. And he was screaming and taking off there, and he says that we were honorable warriors and we could not do the honorable capters like that. And he went on about this. He says, "There's three things I can do to you. I can put you in chains and take you back to the field, and you can work in chains. I could order my men to shoot you right here and now, or I could forget about it." He said, "I'm going to give you one more chance." And that was it. And the next day we were all put into ten-man squads. But he never did carry out the death threat when the other people escaped, but he did starve us for a couple days at a time or something along that line. And I may say this, this is the same camp . . . Palawan was the camp where they had the massacre at the very end. When the American Fleet was coming into Leyte, the Japs got scared, and they had these prisoners that were left on there. They had about 150 left. And they had them go out in the middle of the compound and had them dig trenches so they could say they were air raid shelters. And as soon as they got them built, the Japs told them to get down in the trenches, and the people went down in the trenches, and then a group came in with gasoline and started throwing gasoline around. And a couple of the officers climbed out and started arguing, and they got cut with a sword, they got killed with a sword. Japs always carry a sword, from NCO's on up. And they threw the match. And when

they threw the match--they had machine guns all set up--and the people that were trying to get out they would shoot them down. And my very good friend over here in Sulphur Springs was one of the five people that escaped. If you want to talk to him I can give you his name. He was one of the five that escaped, swam the bay, and got away from them. But there was a massacre. What happened afterwards they had taken the bodies and piled them up in such a way and then they took dynamite and bounced these bodies around with dynamite to make it look like bomb explosions. It didn't fool the Americans, when they got there they recognized that it was a massacre. But, anyway, I got off the subject here, but I wanted to say this man actually did come through before it was over with.

Marcello: Were you ever allowed to keep any sort of writing material in the barracks?

Burlage: No. No, anything that you could write on was spy material.

Marcello: What other sort of articles were you not allowed to have?

Burlage: Well, I got into the public school over there, and I got a bunch of books. History books were what I was looking for . . . and along with some of the rest of them. . . . Of course, the school was abandoned, and the Japs were living in part of it. And I got a geography book. Well, I had to do some explaining about that. They thought I had taken one of those maps and that I was going to map my route. But that was the only other thing. As long as it was just a plain book and

no pictures in it they let me keep it.

Marcello: How about razors and things like that?

Burlage: We were allowed razors. If we happened to bring one with us, or if we happened to have one, we could keep a razor. But we didn't have any blades for them. (Chuckle) At this particular time I had a beard about, oh, eighteen inches long. They always clipped our hair for us, but they never did worry about shaving us. We always had crew cuts.

Marcello: Were there ever any suicide attempts at this particular camp?

Burlage: There's none I know about.

Marcello: What sort of medical facilities did the Japanese provide?

Burlage: they didn't have any.

Marcello: There were none what so ever.

Burlage: No, we usually had a couple of corpsmen in the crowd, and they were given the recognition of being corpsmen or medics, but they had no medicine. They had iodine or something like that. If a guy cut himself on something out in the field, they might be able to put a little iodine on it, and that was about it.

Marcello: How did you supplement your diet? '

Burlage: Well, it worked out pretty well here. You'd be cutting through the jungle and find banana trees, and you could always . . . I learned how to ration them. I could cut some grass and put them in the grass and in that hot sun within about a day they would almost be golden ripe. Same thing with a papaya. A papaya will do the same thing. Coconuts, of course, were everywhere.

Marcello: Did you ever have to resort to having to eat such things as snakes or anything like that?

Burlage: Oh, I had eaten iguanas and things like that for meat . . . of course, we had no meat. That was the only thing. No, I didn't eat any snakes. I ate iguanas, and I had a rat every once in a while, a nice, fat field rat. I guess they were okay. (Chuckle) But personally I didn't have to go that far. Sometimes after a heavy rain in the field you could get snails out of the ground, maybe in a mud puddle. You could get those, and, of course, you'd clean those pretty well.

Marcello: What were the most prevalent diseases that afflicted the prisoners at this camp?

Burlage: We were in pretty good shape at this camp because . . . we did have some dysentery but because of the abundance of fruit we were in pretty good shape.

Marcello: How was your own personal physical condition?

Burlage: I was in good shape other than malaria.

Marcello: You had malaria?

Burlage: Uh-huh. That wasn't true all the way through now. When you got away from the jungles you got into pretty bad shape.

Marcello: I'm still speaking of your fifteen-month stay in that particular camp. What was the discipline like among the American troops here?

Burlage: We were . . .

Marcello: Did you maintain order among yourselves? Were you obeying

your officers?

Burlage: We kept rank, yes. The senior officers. . . . The Japs were fairly savvy, I would say, on this subject. They would take a group of 200 enlisted men, and they usually tried to get about four officers with them. And they would take the senior officer and make him responsible for everything within the walls, within the fence. And then he would take his other officers and give them some responsibility around. And then he would get his first sergeants or sergeant-majors who were around and . . . we were always formed into companies, I guess you might call them. There were fifty maybe a hundred people in each group. And they would get the senior NCO and put him in charge of the rest. We had the regular line of authority right down the line--just like the military. That's how you survived. Everybody couldn't go his own separate way.

Marcello: Was there very much torture and maltreatment of the prisoners by the Japanese in this camp. I'm referring to beatings or any other type of punishment that they might employ.

Burlage: Well, yes, I can go back to a place where some of the people got into the Jap storehouse and got us a few extra bites to eat. And they tied them to the coconut trees out in the patio--whatever you want to call that thing--and beat them with poles. They gave us a day off so we could watch it all. And if you didn't work hard enough in the fields they would pretty well work you over sometimes.

Marcello: Did you have a certain quota that you had to get done working in the fields?

Burlage: We always had a quota. We never made it.

Marcello: You never made the quota?

Burlage: We figured that if we made the quota they would give us a little bigger one the next day. We never . . . we were always just a little bit short.

Marcello: What were some of the favorite forms of punishment that they used?

Burlage: Plain beatings was the main form.

Marcello: Rifle butts and clubs mainly?

Burlage: Mainly clubs. Occasionally with a rifle butt. In this camp the Japs were very strict on making you bow to the sentry or guard. And many times I was awakened in the night. I would be going out to the outdoor facility, and I would be coming back about half asleep, and I wouldn't see the guard. In fact, I think he was hiding anyway, and he would come out, and he always had a fixed bayonet, and he would run that bayonet and just tickle my skin a little bit with it and make me say a few prayers or something.

Marcello: Did you, yourself ever get any of these beatings?

Burlage: Oh, yes. Yes. I wasn't an angel. (Chuckle)

Marcello: What had you done to deserve these beatings?

Burlage: Oh, just being ornery.

Marcello: In what way?

Burlage: In this particular camp or what?

Marcello: Yes. In this particular camp.

Burlage: Oh, not working enough as a rule. Not fulfilling my quota.

Marcello: You would just get the usual clouts here, I guess?

Burlage: That's it.

Marcello: Did you have very much contact with the natives?

Burlage: There were no natives to be seen down there. The only ones I ever saw, like I said, were a couple of guards from the Bilibid penal farm. I believe that was all we ever saw. The city of Puerto Princesa, which is the provincial capital, was completely abandoned. It was completely abandoned. It wasn't a very large city anyway. Down in that area it's mostly moslems. You know, the Philippines are divided into two distinct religions. These people had all . . . families and all had gone, just gone to the hills, you might say, to use a colloquial term there.

Marcello: Are there any individual Japanese personnel who stand out in your mind at this time? I would assume you had names for most of the guards there. Nick-names.

Burlage: Well, you've probably heard a similar story, but this was a true one. We had this one guy that . . . yeah, we had names for everybody. They weren't too complimentary. But this one guy had a nice name. We called him "Donald Duck" because that's what he sounded like. And he had ears that were of a pretty good size because he could hear us talking about him,

and he wasn't even anywhere in sight, you know. And he would come over and slap you two or three times and accuse you of defaming his character or something. This one particular time he came over and . . . three or four of us were shoveling, and he came over and he said, "You call me 'Donald Duck.' Bad name." And he started in on us. "No, that's not a bad name. It's a movie star." And we convinced him that it was a movie star. And he felt pretty good there for a long, long time. A supply boat would come in about every three months, and sometimes they would bring some films. And it just so happened they did bring some film sometime later, and there was a Donald Duck film in there. Well, we were told about it the next day in kind of a rough way.

Marcello: Are there any others that stand out?

Burlage: Not necessarily . . . yes, there was one little goofy guy there, you might say, that . . . well, there were several. But this one guy was just the opposite. He was an older person, and he liked to play this . . . he wasn't too bright either. We called him "Blinky" because he was always blinking his eyes. And he would come up, and he would want to play this game where you guess how many fingers that you're going to slap across this man's wrist. I don't know if you have ever played that game or not. He would always lose. His wrist was always red from slapping him.

And then there was this guy--I can't remember his name

now, I don't think we really had a name for him. "Timex" or something, I guess. But anyway, he was always trying to get one of the prisoners to send him a wrist watch when they got back home. He wanted an American wrist watch. I guess he didn't know that the Japs, you know, would rule the world some day with watches and other goods. (Chuckle)

But in that particular camp that was about all. But in the other camp we had names for everybody. "Porky Pig." Mostly Disney characters. That's what they turned out to be.

Marcello: Did you ever have much leisure time at all? Were you working seven days a week?

Burlage: We worked ten days and one day off as a rule. Sometimes we didn't get it off.

Marcello: What did you do on the off day?

Burlage: On an off day like that you tried to wash your clothes, if you had any, and try to find some way to shave if you could because you would go without shaving all this time. And maybe you could find somebody to cut your hair.

Marcello: What was the morale like during this fifteen-month stay here?

Burlage: Surprisingly good. You didn't hear people complaining or anything because there was, you know, no reason to complain. What good would it do. And people realized that, too, I guess.

Marcello: Did you ever receive any news from the outside?

Burlage: Not in this camp. Not down there. No, we were isolated down there. We were completely out of the mainstream of anything.

I would like to tell a little story here on this particular camp, if you don't mind. It's just to show you how we did win a few points along the way. I wrote this episode in a story one time. I made a kind of feature out of it. This is true. A boat came in down there on one of these three or four months intervals. It came in and it had a lot of cement on it. Bags of cement. We were going to start building the runway. And, boy, they got us down there, and they worked us from early in the morning until way into the night getting this boat unloaded. And the Japs wouldn't get on the ship because the ship was too darn hot. They just wouldn't get down in those holds. They even had an American running the winch and everything. So we got down in this hold, and we found several cases of beer, San Miguel Beer made in Manila. And we changed shifts about every thirty minutes. We arranged it so everybody could get a beer. We would take the beer and drink it, put the cap back on it and put it back in the cases. The darn Jap was out in the shade of a palm tree, and we finally loaded the beer on the truck. They were all empty by now. We loaded on the truck and the old Jap, he was happy and he said, "Ah, Japanese, we have party." You know, he could speak a little English and he was telling us about what he was going to do. You know, "Americans nothing." Well, some of us were feeling pretty good by that time, you know. So that night the Japs . . . within fifty yards of us; there was a school building where they had

their barracks. That's where they lived. Boy, they got over there, and they decorated that place, and they had a little extra food, and they got in there and started a little singing and dancing with each other and everything else waiting for the beer to come. Finally the beer came, and there wasn't a drop left. That's one time we actually got the upper hand on them.

Marcello: How did they retaliate to that incident?

Burlage: They never did think that we took it. They thought someone had made a mistake somewhere else. Someone made a mistake in Manila when they put it on the boat up there.

Marcello: Is there any other incident that stands out at this particular camp before we move on?

Burlage: No, I think that's about it, I guess.

Marcello: When did you move from here?

Burlage: I went back to Manila for a few weeks in the Bilibid Prison because I did have reoccurring malaria, and I couldn't work down there, so they sent me back. I got back to Bilibid when going through Bilibid . . . it was still kind of a transient barracks. And I went through there, and I told the Navy doctor there . . . of course he interviewed everybody that was in there. I told him I had this malaria.

Marcello: This was an American?

Burlage: Yes, an American Navy doctor. And he says, "Well, let's stay here for a while and see what we can do for you." And I stayed there about five or six weeks. Of course, I wasn't in a bed or

anything, but I took quarts of quinine, you know, and tried to get rid of this thing and it did. It never did come back on me.

But while I was there I was detailed to work at General Yamashita's headquarters which was in the Far East University building. And I went over there, and I might just tell you what happened there. He had just taken over, I guess, this big administration building at Far East University. They had sent all the silverware out and all this stuff because the Japs don't use it. They use chop sticks; fingers. What we did was go in there and dig up the lawns. In front of his office window we dug up the lawn. It was Bermuda grass. And in a quarter acre plot we made a big rising sun pattern out of the grass. In other words, we had a big ball, and we had the rays going off with dirt in between. That was my therapy, I guess. I stayed there for about three weeks.

Then I went on back up to Cabanatuan. I think the second day I was there they were forming a new detail to go back to Las Piñas.

Marcello: About what time was this, now?

Burlage: This was in the late summer of '43.

Marcello: So you were at Bilibid in Manila for about three weeks?

Burlage: Uh-huh. Until August or September. About the end of September I guess it was.

Marcello: Uh-huh. And then from there you went back to Cabanatuan?

Burlage: Yes, but just for . . . I think it was three days total that I was there.

Marcello: What did you go back there for?

Burlage: Well, they sent me back there. That was the main prison camp. They had no idea what else to do with me. They sent me back there, but there were still quite a few people there. As I went in there they were forming . . . like I say, they were forming an 800 man detail to go to Las Piñas. It is on the outskirts of Manila, to the south. And they were building an auxillary . . . it was for the Navy. They were going to build an auxillary airfield. So I joined that group and went back down there. And we were there a year. And actually it was the same thing over again. There weren't any trees. What it was was just rice patties, and we were trying to level the ground, and there again we used wheelbarrows and such stuff to level the ground. And we were divided into fifty-man companies, each with an officer in charge, and we worked like we did before-- sunup to sundown.

Marcello: What did you do to keep up the morale? What could you do?

Burlage: Well, we made up stories more or less, I guess. I don't know. There wasn't much you could do.

Marcello: Did you ever give up hope?

Burlage: Oh, no. We had little plots going. Let me digress here a little bit. We got in this camp. We were getting wiser now. Things were getting bad. They were paying us fifteen sen a

day. You don't hear of a sen any more. There used to be a sen and a yen. A hundred sen to a yen. So you know how much money we were making. And so they were paying us every month. I was making, oh, about four yen a month there, I guess. This is where Watanabe comes in again. I mentioned him a little while ago. Watanabe was still a banker. He would take our money and go down and buy coconuts and peanuts and stuff for us and charge us double price, you know. He was making money. But things got so inflated that it wouldn't work after a while.

Burlage: What helped cause the inflation, I think, was not just us, but we were in on it. We had people who worked in the fields. Most of them worked in the fields but we still had a dozen who worked in the garage, motor pool. And they also had Filipinos. They came to work there just like regular civil service or something coming to work in the mornings. And Americans would give the Filipinos a note that said "I promise to pay the bearer on demand 150 dollars within sixty days after the end of the war," or something like that. He would sign his name, and one of the Americans would take it over and give it to one of the Filipinos on the side. The Filipino would take it down to Manila that night and give it to some Chinaman who would crank up his counterfeit machine and run off some of these occupation pesos and bring it back. So there was all kinds of money in the camp. We had a good racket going there for a while.

Marcello: You mean that they were actually taking your word for it that

they were going to be paid back after the war?

Burlage: They weren't losing anything because they were counterfeiting the stuff. I had another little deal going. There was a man there who would come down through China from Russia on a visa to go to school. And instead of going back to Russia he would go to the Philippines, and he got captured. And he was a civilian, but the Japs regard all Americans as military. And if you would tell them you were a civilian, they would say okay then you are a private and they threw you in with the rest of us. So another man by the name of Kataska (?) . . . he was a Lithuanian from Chicago.

Marcello: Okay. We'll just call him the Lithuanian from Chicago.

Burlage: From the Southside from the way he talked.

Marcello: Okay.

Burlage: He and I were going to do a book. I was going to do the writing and he was going to do . . . he was a very good artist. He was going to do sketches. But he got killed. So anyway we had a little pact going. This Russian could speak the Chinese dialect that the Formosans spoke. And the guards around our camp were Formosans. I think they were a probationary-type. They were going into the Japanese army after so many years or something. And so we had a deal going with him. We would take the . . . also, in addition to these 800 Americans working here in the field, there were about 500 Filipinos and about 2,000 Formosans in a labor battalion. We had been working away . . .

we weren't supposed to speak to any of these people, but would talk . . . look the other way to talk backwards you know. And we talked to the Filipinos, and we said . . . this was my deal. I said, "Can you get me some undershirts?" And so the Filipinos were making some wool . . . light industry, and they were making undershirts. The guy said, "Yes. I will bring some tomorrow." So he just gave me the undershirts. So I was taking them in . . . sneak them into the barracks, and this Russian would take them over and go over and talk to the Formosan guard and say, "I've got some undershirts I'll trade you for some peanut brittle candy or coconut brittle candy." This was full of dysentery germs, but you never had anything sweet or any salt either, and so we would want anything. And so out of my investment of nothing he would get all this candy and come back, and he would sell it for twenty pesos a bar. After the lights went out he was out selling this candy. We were almost millionaires for a while, but the bottom dropped out of everything. It got so inflated that you couldn't do anything with your money. So things turned out from bad to worse there. We didn't have much food. On Palawan we had fruit, but we didn't have any fruit here. That's when we started to get beri-beri and pellegra and so forth then.

Marcello: You were down to mainly rice at about this time?

Burlage: Uh-huh.

Marcello: As the tide of the war turned, did you notice any change in the

attitude of the Japanese?

Burlage: Well, these people who guarded us, who worked with us actually, the main honchos, as we called them, they were equivalent to our Navy chiefs, reserves. They were mostly reservists. And these people wandered around out there, and they were the meanest bunch of people you ever wanted to see. It was nothing to get hit over the shoulder or the head with a pick handle. They carried pick handles, and, boy, I mean to tell you, I was beat up more than once by those people. For nothing at all. And they were saddistic. We had one we called "Porky Pig," and he looked and grunted like Porky Pig. And, boy, you stayed out of his way. There was no question about it. You could tell when something went wrong because these people were a little bit meaner. That is true.

Marcello: Why do you think they acted like that?

Burlage: I think they thought they had it on the move and on the go and going in their direction, and they'd find out once in a while it wasn't like . . . I guess, the Battle of the Marianas . . . the Mariana turkey shoot and all that stuff was taking place about this time. Boy, I mean, it was getting rough there. I'm pretty sure it was along about that time. It had to be.

Marcello: In other words, you think as the tide of the war turned against Japan, they started to become more brutal toward the prisoners.

Burlage: These people did. Yeah. I think the real military man who was actually in contact with the enemy now and then, I don't believe

he became too much that way. But it was these reservists, I think, who did it. And it got pretty rough there. We were working on the airstrip when the Americans returned and by returning, I mean they launched air raids against us . . . and that was the . . . I don't believe they thought it could ever be possible either.

Marcello: Do you think that it's also possible that they may have lost some of their family in the air raids back in Japan. In other words, they might have been taking it out on these American prisoners.

Burlage: I think the air raids were just about starting at this time. This was shortly after the fall of the Marianas and Guam and they were setting up their big base on Saipan, I guess it was. The B-29 raids. It was about this time.

Marcello: What were some of the other favorite forms of punishment that these reserves used other than beating.

Burlage: On us it was beating. Now, I had seen them take the Filipinos and tie them to a post. I mean, by tying them to a post, they'd get him on his knees and tie his wrists and ankles together with a post . . . behind the post. And they would bloody his nose so bad . . . his mouth and everything was just full of blood . . . his ears . . . and these flies would just take over, and he would just die from it. A lingering death. It may take him all night.

Marcello: What sort of an attrition rate was there among the Americans at

this time? I assume these were the worse conditions that you had experienced the whole time that you were a prisoner.

Burlage: Personally, yes. The greatest attrition rate was at Cabanatuan Number One, but I wasn't there. I think maybe the attrition rate was a little bit higher in Japan later on, but I can't remember a person . . . I don't remember a person that died in this camp. We were there a year.

Marcello: Despite the poor food and many beatings?

Burlage: Uh-huh. We were in pretty bad health, but I don't remember a person that died.

Marcello: What had your weight dropped down to at this time?

Burlage: Oh, it was holding somewhere around 140, something like that. That's when we started eating snails, and some of the people started eating rats out of the field, but I couldn't quite go the rats.

Marcello: You never had any rats. You had the snails, though.

Burlage: Yeah I had the delicacy.

Marcello: I see. Is there anything else that you would particularly like to talk about, about the stay in this prison camp?

Burlage: Well, it's sort of the beginning of the end. It was in September of 1944. It was September 21. I remember the date. And we were out doing our regular pick and shovel work . . . and also in this camp we were getting a daily newspaper. We were getting one from . . . sneaked in to us. It was a Filipino printed paper in English, "Juan de la Cruz," John Q. Public in

our language. He was a columnist, and he was writing, "Don't let these stories about the Americans fool you. That B-29 they have won't ever reach here," and all this stuff. Between the lines though you could get a pretty good idea about what was going on. And they always referred to the Japanese flyers as "Brave Eagles" and all this jazz that goes along with it, and they told about how the "Brave Eagles" had chased the Americans away from the Philippine shores and thus saved the Filipinos from being overrun and occupied by the horrible Americans. Of course, it was all a bunch of satire. You could read right through it. Then they said that if you hear any firing, any artillery firing, don't be alarmed. It's just our brave Japanese soldiers practicing in case they have to repel the Americans again. And it just so happened that on September 21 they were out firing, and we were watching. We were working on the auxiliary airfield and here was . . .

Marcello: This was September of 1944?

Burlage: '44. And here was Nichols right over here where they had quite a few of their light bombers and fighter planes, and they were up fooling around in the air with these planes. I remember I was talking to this guy, and I was looking up at them and I said, "They must have brought some more in last night. There's quite a few up there." And this guy looked at me, and said, "Man, there really are a lot of them up there." And I kept watching. I moved the shovel once to keep the guard off us. And we looked

again and this other guy said, "I don't believe they're Japs." He said, "They don't fly in the same formation. They're flying in four's. Japs always fly in three's." So by that time there was no more question about it. Out of the sky came two B-4's coming along, and two peeled off, and one right behind the other, and hit this bomber that had just taken off. Boy, there wasn't a chance. He hit the ground in flames. And then it all broke loose. Out of that sky came about three or four hundred American planes. And for about two hours it was the most beautiful sight you ever want to see.

Marcello: I was just going to ask you what your reactions were when you saw these American planes.

Burlage: And every once in a while a Zero would come ripping right across going about twenty, twenty-five feet off the ground. Boy, he was trying to get away, and there would be one of these carrier-based planes right behind him. And he would let go with his guns, and when he let go, if he missed him . . . of course, the Zero would pull away because the guns would slow him down. He kept on and eventually did get him. And we were shaking our fist. I got hit by the way. I got hit in the leg by a piece of shrapnel. I didn't even know I'd gotten hit. I was bleeding and I was yelling at them. And I was calling, and finally I said, "Did you see that damn guy come by here shooting at us? He had ham and eggs for breakfast, and all I had was that damn rice. (Chuckle) We really enjoyed it, and

then that afternoon there was some dive bombing taking place. And the most beautiful sight in the world is a dive bomber in action. Of course, that's a thing of the past, but these planes would come out of the cloud bank over there and go right into them. We were right in the edge of Manila Bay, and they were after those Japanese ships. That bay was full of ships. And they dive bombed all afternoon, came back the next morning, and dive bombed again in that afternoon. There were about 400 of those airplanes that came by. Just chugging along at treetop level. I guess every plane they could get off those carriers came by and just flew over Manila. There wasn't a shot fired at them. The Jap planes hardly moved or anything. There weren't many left. Nichols Field was burning. Ships were all on fire out there in the bay, what ships weren't already under water. It was a clean-up.

Marcello: What were the Japanese doing at this time? I mean the prison guards and so on.

Burlage: They were just like us. They were trying to find a place to hide and get out of the way. So, we walked back in--they finally marched us back in--and our barracks were full of holes. Twenty caliber holes.

Marcello: It would be twenty millimeter . . .

Burlage: I said twenty millimeters, I mean. Yeah.

Marcello: Cannon shells. Right?

Burlage: Yeah, uh-huh. And a few .50 caliber shells. You could almost

pick up a shell anywhere. You reached around, and you wouldn't have to go very far to find an empty shell, you know, that had been kicked out of the plane. It was a beautiful day.

Then the Japs decided they had better get us out of there because they wanted to save us for some reason. And they put us aboard ship and started for Japan, and that was the worse part of the whole thing.

Marcello: Did they know you were going to Japan?

Burlage: Yeah, they said we were going to Japan. They took us out to the waterfront and put us aboard that ship, and they stacked us in there. They put us in the hold. It was an old coal carrying . . . still had coal in the hold. We thought that was a good idea before it was all over with. But anyway, they lined us up shoulder to shoulder and back to back. We started talking and we said, "We can't get to Japan like this." And the word that was passed that they were only going to take us out past Corregidor and let us get on a big ship. But this was it. They were going to take us all away on that little ship. And before we ever got underway people were dying, of course, from the heat.

Marcello: It was very hot down in that hold.

Burlage: Yeah, and people were going crazy and all this stuff.

Marcello: What would you do with people that died?

Burlage: Stand on them, or anything you like. You didn't remain a human very long in that place. That's the whole thing. And every

morning . . . we were on that ship for . . . we started out and the Japs would come in the morning at daylight . . . they laid down boards on top of us. We couldn't ever get out. Every morning they would lower a rope down, and somebody would tie the rope around the dead people, and they hoisted them up and threw them over the side. And with the same rope they would lower our food, couple buckets of rice. Once or twice a week they would lower a bucket for toilet . . .

Marcello: That was the only sanitary facility there was?

Burlage: That's why I say it was a good thing we had the coal there because we started digging in it.

Marcello: Right.

Burlage: It's not too long of a trip to Japan, but we started out, and we weren't out there more than . . . we had some British aboard, too. The British had been sunk off Lingayen. They were from Singapore . . .and a few Dutch. They were from Singapore. And they had been sunk and there were some of them aboard the ship, too.

Marcello: They'd been sunk where?

Burlage: Off Lingayen.

Marcello: Right.

Burlage: And Americans had sunk them, and the same wave that hit us had sunk these. So about the third or fourth day out . . . we had room by then because so many people had died. We were able to sit down.

Marcello: About how many people died per day? Do you have any idea?

Burlage: Oh, I would say anywhere from twenty to fifty probably.

Marcello: In a day?

Burlage: At the beginning and then, of course, it settled down. This chief was next to me. He was a submarine man and he was sitting next to me. I've known him for a long time. He said, "George, you're going to get hit by a torpedo." I said, "What do you mean, we're going to get hit by a torpedo?" And he said, "I heard sonar knocking off the hull last night." I said, "Ah, your ears aren't mechanical." And he said, "They don't have to be mechanical." You know, he no sooner got through explaining to me how it worked than the whole ocean was booming out there. The submarines were sinking everything all around us.

Marcello: Was this ship a sort of a convoy that you were in?

Burlage: A large convoy.

Marcello: It was both warships and a merchant ship or cargo ships.

Burlage: Cargo ships and troopships and warships escorting us. We were almost choked to death from the fumes of the ship next to us burning, but they didn't hit us. And the only reason I figured they didn't hit us because it was so darn small. Because it was a small ship. The captain started going in circles and everything else, and we ended up in Hong Kong.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get to Hong Kong?

Burlage: About ten days, I guess. We got to Hong Kong, and the only

reason I knew it was Hong Kong was because they let us up on the deck--just let us up, walk around, and go back down in the hold. One time we were out of that hold. We were in there thirty-nine days, and there was only one time we were out of that hold. I recognized Hong Kong. We recognized that it was Hong Kong. Most of us had seen it before. Back in the hold again. We lay there for about another week. They made us move out, I guess, because a bunch of four-motored bombers and dive bombers came by and bombed the dock area. We were laying in that hold looking up through the cracks in that ship and seeing those bombs come right over our ship. That night we pulled out. And then we ran up and down that China Sea for another ten days, I guess, and finally pulled in at Tacao in Formosa.

Marcello: How do you spell that?

Burlage: Oh, my gosh. T-A-C-A-O, I believe. That's the southern port in Formosa.

Marcello: What was your physical condition like by this time.

Burlage: I was down to . . . I couldn't walk. I couldn't stand up because we hadn't eaten in some time. We hadn't eaten for . . . we would go four and five days at a time without a bite to eat, or water either. And we were just living on reserve, I guess.

Marcello: I guess you have no idea what your weight was at this time?

Burlage: We came into Tacao and we hit Tacao and got off, and there was a bomb raid there. And we went back out to sea and ran the

submarine gauntlet again. Came back in and got off. It took us forever to get off the ship because we couldn't walk.

Marcello: Where were you at this time, now?

Burlage: Back to Tacao again at Formosa.

Marcello: Back to Tacao? In other words you went out. The submarine menace was too great, and you turned around and came back.

Burlage: Came back because of the bombers and the submarines, I guess.

Marcello: Right.

Burlage: We came back in, and they finally took us off the ship, and it was a beautiful, warm day. And they took us off the ship, and we couldn't get any farther than the dock. We just fell in the sand right off the side of the dock and layed in that warm sand all day. Got some water. And at darkness that night they moved us to about . . . it took us forever to walk down to the train station. It was only about a quarter of a mile away. And they took us up to the northern part of the island. And we stayed up there for about two and a half months. We thought we were set. Here comes somebody one morning and says, "Tomorrow morning we leave. We go to Japan."

Marcello: What did you do up there for two and a half months?

Burlage: Carried rocks. They kept us busy carrying rocks from one side of a school ground to another and back again.

Marcello: Did your physical condition improve any?

Burlage: No, my weight didn't, but I got my strength back.

Marcello: There was no purpose for you carrying rocks. In other words it

was just something to keep you busy. Keep you occupied.

Burlage: We got our first baths and so forth in thirty some days, too.

Marcello: Is there anything else that stands out from your two and a half months.

Burlage: No, the only thing is we went back to the same port that we'd come in.

Marcello: Is this Tacao?

Burlage: Tacao. And the big red warehouse buildings were all over the place when we came in; they were no longer there. The biggest thing left was a brick wall about two feet high. In other words, all during that stay in Formosa that island seemed to be rocking all the time from bombing. The American Fleet would bomb it all the time. We got back and got on a ship . . .and also the bay we came in looked like a burned over forest. All you could see was just the tops of . . . masts of ships sticking out of the water. That's how complete the Americans had done the job there.

Marcello: Had you been able to witness any of these things or were you too far away from the action.

Burlage: You could hear the bombs, and you would think you could feel the shock or something coming in. Anyway, we went to Japan and . . .

Marcello: What was the trip like to Japan?

Burlage: It was two weeks, and it was cold. We crowded on a ship with a bunch of soldiers. It was another violation of rules. You're

not supposed to carry prisoners and soldiers on the same ship, I understand.

Marcello: Oh, these were Japanese soldiers on this ship?

Burlage: Yeah, uh-huh. So we came into Moji, which is M-O-J-I, I believe it is, and Honshu. What's the southern island? It's on the very top of the . . . I don't know . . . it's south of Honshu.

Marcello: Kyushu?

Burlage: Kyushu, yeah. So we came in there, and they let us up on the deck, and they exercised us.

Marcello: Did you mind the cold weather since apparently you'd been in the tropics all this time?

Burlage: It was cold. We didn't . . . when we left Formosa, the Japs gave me, gave each of us, one army uniform. And the army uniform they gave me struck me right below the knees. And we had wrapped leggings. And there wasn't enough leggings to wrap my whole leg, and I finally finagled somebody out of a pair--traded him a cigarette or something for his pair. So I had to take two pairs of leggings to wrap my . . . that's the only clothes I had was that so . . . so we went on into Moji, and Moji, oh, that was the biggest mess I'd ever seen in my life. We were all over the place there. And the Japs came in and gave us a big speech and said, "You're in luck now. We're humane. You're in the homeland. We'll treat you kindly. The Red Cross will take you to a hospital in Tokyo. You will

enjoy your stay there the rest of the war." I didn't believe them. Nobody else did, I don't think. So we got on this train, and we started north. Went across the channel there by ferry and then got on this train and started north and got as far as Tokyo, and the bombers were tearing up everything. We stayed in Tokyo about a day and a half.

Marcello: What did Tokyo look like from what you could see of it?

Burlage: Oh, it was desolate then. I've been back there several times since, but the city was desolate. The people were in a hurry. The people were going here and there all in a hurry. The Japs did not heat their offices or houses or anything. They had a charcoal handwarmer or something. And we went up into the . . . we had to move from one station . . . they finally moved us from one station to another, and we had to go up over the tracks and get on one of these fast streetcars and go somewhere. And they had for the fire fighting, they had big wooden tubs of water, and they were all frozen over with ice, I remember. The people were just kind of like robots. They were moving around without any real feeling or purpose, looked like. And I remember going down . . . we came out of the subway station to go back to the train station. There was a group of people in the street. And right in the middle was a German sailor. He must've been attached to the embassy or something. That's the only thing I could figure. He was the only one there. And he winked at us as we went by. And that was the only guy that

ever gave us any recognition at all. And we got back in the train and started up north again and just couldn't make any time. It took us four days to go what normally would've been just an overnight trip.

Marcello: What was the treatment or the conditions like on this train?

Burlage: Nothing to eat and no sanitation at all. In fact, they had us on the train with . . . and they stopped at a railroad station and these civilians just climbed on and just . . . they were in there . . . regular . . . their trains were the same size as ours. In fact, I think the car was probably made in the United States. They had 250-300 people in some of those cars. They were up in the racks and baggage racks. For sanitation, there's no such thing as restrooms. You just opened the window. (Chuckle) So we finally got up to . . . Mitsubishi had taken us in. We were going to work in a lead mine for them. And they'd built these barracks for us. And we got up in this town called Hosakura, H-O-S-A-K-U-R-A, I believe is how it's spelled. It's strictly owned by Mitsubishi, up in the mountains. And it was in the northern part of Honshu in the mountains. It was cold, too.

Marcello: Now they moved you from Kyushu now to Honshu?

Burlage: Uh-huh.

Marcello: Is that correct?

Burlage: Yeah.

Marcello: You came in on Kyushu?

Burlage: Yes. It was just across the channel there . . .

Marcello: Right. Right.

Burlage: . . . with our ferry, to get to the train. Let's see, what month was this? This was in the last of January or the first of February.

Marcello: 1945?

Burlage: It was '45 now. And they put us in these barracks, and there was a hundred to a barracks, and here again we had the double bays, upstairs and downstairs so they . . . not upstairs but they were about four feet apart. And snow on the ground, it was cold. And that wind whistling through there . . .

Marcello: Had they given you any additional clothing?

Burlage: No additional clothing, but they gave us five blankets apiece.

Marcello: Five blankets?

Burlage: And this friend of mine . . . there was two of us buddied up there, three of us I should say. There was a man by the name of Joe Romanelli. Romanelli is now a pharmacist up in . . . he studied for the priesthood, and he had married somebody and joined the Marines and it was a sad day that he did that, I guess. (Chuckle) He came back and he is a pharmacist up in Des Moines now. And there was another man by the name of George Fox. He's in Little Rock. He is an appraiser of some sort in Little Rock. I saw him here just a while back. So we said, "Well, it's too cold to try to sleep under one blanket, so let's all three get . . . so we put one blanket on

the floor, and we put fourteen over us, and we just about froze to death that night. The blankets were made out of wood pulp or something. They weren't wool or anything. Well, that was the beginning of about six months there, and we'd lost about . . . there were 300 of us who started up there, and I think there was 240 of us came out in September.

Marcello: What were mainly the causes of . . .

Burlage: Malnutrition had caught up with us . . .

Marcello: . . . of that?

Burlage: . . . beriberi mostly and people just swelled up and . . . you know, beriberi just more or less drowns a person. Fluid gets up in the lungs. It starts in your feet usually, but it works on up.

And I became a driller in the lead mine. I'd never drilled before in my life. I became an expert driller. That was the easiest job.

Marcello: This was down in the ground?

Burlage: In the ground, uh-huh. We had three classes there. We had a driller, timberman, who went along and timbered up, shored up, and a mucker, a guy who did the actual shoveling. And of course, as a driller, I was high class. Socially I was above the Jap who had the shovel. So I had a pretty good deal. I couldn't work except when somebody else cleaned up what was blasted. I did the blasting and . . . I did the drilling and the blasting, everything. It worked out pretty well.

Marcello: What sort of a regimen did you have here? What was the daily workday like?

Burlage: Same thing. Go to work in the morning and come back at night.

Marcello: Did you have a certain quota again you had to meet?

Burlage: Supposed to do so much, yeah. But we usually worked singularly or in pairs, Americans. We would work with a Jap, who's also a driller. And we were working . . .

Marcello: Now, were you being supervised by civilians or by the military at this time?

Burlage: These were civilians. We had carbide lights, and a Jap would take us in there and he would. . . . If I were alone, well, he would say, "Well, I gotta go and do something." And he'd take off. And of course, he'd have to walk a couple of miles back out the shaft out to the supply room or something like that, and the minute he was out of sight, I'd blow my light out and go to sleep. We weren't allowed to have matches so I couldn't light it again. I'd just go to sleep, and after a couple of hours I'd hear him. . . . My name was "Ku ju go," that's "ninety-five," in Jap. So I would hear somebody hollering "Ku ju go," "Ku ju go!" He warned me he was coming. I get up and I'd say the light went out. And he said, "Oh, I was scared. I thought maybe you'd fallen down a shaft or something." You know, he was responsible for me.

Marcello: What sort of treatment did these civilians give to the Americans?

Burlage: Pretty good. There was one guy in the mine who was an inspector. If I find that guy today, I'd break his neck. And he hit me on the head so many times with his little hammer that I thought my head was a rock or something.

Marcello: For no apparent reason he did that?

Burlage: Oh, he'd catch me sleeping, not working fast enough or something. He just didn't like Americans. But I worked for one there quite a bit, two different ones, ah, three. I can only tell you . . . one guy's name was Sato, because sato means sugar. I remember that. Now I worked with him. He was a very nice old guy. I worked for another guy who had been wounded in He was a sergeant-major who got shot in the knee in Singapore. And we got along very well. In fact, I always say I saved his life because he fell about twenty feet in the mine and landed on top of me and about killed me, but it didn't hurt him a bit. (Chuckle) He got up, brushed the mud off, and was patting me on the back telling me what a good guy I was (chuckle) for keeping him from getting hurt. And the other guy was Incho, or some first name as that, and he was very suave character. And we would be working along side by side and he would sneeze, and he'd turn around to me and say, "Influenza," something like that. He was always trying to learn a new English word. They knew the end was near. And they were much nicer to us.

Marcello: Their treatment actually was better after they knew the end was near.

Burlage: From the civilians, it was.

Marcello: Right.

Burlage: I remember this one man I mentioned Incho, whatever his name was there. He would stay home and not come to work and not eat so his wife who was pregnant could have his food. That is how short they were on rations. And then Mitsubishi got wise to this, and they gave the worker half his food when he came to work. They cooked it for him. They gave him half his rations. They controlled him. They owned him, just like they owned us. And we were down . . . we ran out of rice by the way. We were eating, what they call here in this country, maize. We were down eating that. So we were really at the end of our rope. They were, too.

Marcello: What would you estimate your weight to have been at about this time?

Burlage: I can tell you what it was. It was 108 pounds.

Marcello: It was 108 pounds?

Burlage: When the war was over.

Marcello: did you have either beriberi or pellagra?

Burlage: I had beriberi, pellagra, both.

Marcello: These are all dietary deficiencies, are they not?

Burlage: Right. I might say that there was an old man in the mine. He was seventy some years old. And I knew enough of the Japanese language to get by. And he knew a couple words in English, and we had a pretty good conversation every once in a while. He

was awful worried about his son. And so, I said, "What happened to your son?" He said, "He is in Manchuria." And he said, "The Russians have attacked Manchuria there in the war."

Marcello: This was in August of 1945?

Burlage: That's how I got the information of the Russians entering the war. So he used to tell me about the Americans winning the war, because they had big ships with little airplanes on them. They could really do the damage. But on the tenth of August . . . you could hear planes go over at night. They were the B-29s going over. And you could hear them going over at night and never see them. And this one particular morning--it was the tenth of August--and you could hear these planes up . . . it was just at daylight, and we were getting ready to go to the mine. And oh, by the way, in this mine they had . . . before you went in . . . they had a Shinto shrine up high above the entrance, and we had to stop and pray every morning. I almost got my neck broken there one morning because they had a little rhyme that went . . . and I didn't quite say what they wanted me to say. And I was using my own thing that wasn't very polite to Tojo. And this guy heard me, and I thought he was going to break my neck for me.

Marcello: What did he do, beat you again?

Burlage: He knocked me down and hit me in the back of the head with a club. There was a railroad track here, and I just slid down the railroad track, and he kicked me all the way down, me

sliding on my stomach. But, I thought it worth the while.

This particular morning, you could hear this noise up there, and you could guess how many carrier planes were up there. And these guards were saying, "Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!" And off we went down the hill toward the mine. There was only one street through the town, and the mine was over here, and our barracks were on this side. And just as we were about ready to leave this one street and head, oh, 100-150 yards over to the entrance to the mine, it was just like somebody had pulled the curtain. The clouds parted, and the planes started coming. Dive bombing, one behind the other. The first bomb hit right above the entrance and hit the smoke stack of the smelter right above us. And the rest were right behind that one. And we didn't stop that morning to say a prayer to Shinto or anything else. We went in that mine. And you could hear those bombs hitting for most of the morning. And that is when I was really afraid because I saw those bombs and those pilots machine gunning the people in the streets out there. So I was a little bit afraid then. I said, Well, somebody's wife got killed, daughter, or somebody, but we went back out there that night and it was just as quiet and as calm as could be. You could see somebody crying or sitting there stunned-looking, but nobody said a word to us and we went on back. And a couple days later we came back in the mine and started salvaging everything in the mine because there was no way to repair it.

You just had to take this out and put in some other mine and hope that it would fit, you know. We worked there a couple or three days, and then one afternoon this particular afternoon, somebody came running up to the group that I was with--we were not drilling any. As I say, we were taking out air pipes and stuff, and he talked to this guy a while, and this particular runner or messenger had talked to our honcho for a few minutes. And I said, "I think something is going on. I can't understand much, but something is going on here." So, the honcho bowed to the guy and called us all together and says, "Let's go." And we went into the . . . they had a big underground office where they had stored dynamite and everything. And, the people actually in charge, had offices there. And we lined up out there and pretty soon another group came in, and another group, another group, and we were all in there. And all the honchos went in and had a little powwow and did a little bowing and a little praying and so forth, and we walked on out. And a guy from Mississippi said, "I told you guys the war was over." And he was right. He had been saying it for three and a half years, but he was right. (Chuckle) It came true.

Marcello: Well, what happened then after you got the news that the war was over?

Burlage: Well, we didn't get it officially yet. It was just our buddy back there sounding off. We went back to the barracks. We got back to the barracks, and the next day they didn't call us out

to go work, and the next day they didn't call us out to go to work. So we said, "Let's go over and see old 'four-eyes' over there," that's what we called the interpreter. And so, we went over there to see him and we said, "We're tired of sitting around the barracks. We want to go back to work." He says, "Ah, no work, no work." "Why not?" "Oh, I don't know, just no work." And one of the guards was listening and he said, "Americans, Japanese, friends now." So he was trying to tell us something. That was all he knew, all the words he knew. And so about a day or so later, the commandant of the camp disappeared. The interpreter disappeared, and, boy, we didn't have anybody. We didn't know what to do.

Marcello: In other words, they just all took off?

Burlage: Well, they disappeared. But they disappeared for a reason. They were called by . . . the Americans had called them to Yokahama for a conference to decide what to do with us.

Marcello: I see.

Burlage: And so a couple days later, the commandant came back.

Marcello: The Japanese guards were still in control of camp even though the surrender had come.

Burlage: So the commandant came back, and he spoke pretty good English, and so he told this major who was in charge--he was senior man. No, I guess we had a British army captain--called him in and said, "I want you to get all the men out here." So he lined everybody up, and he says, "I have been to Yokohama. I have

instructions from your friends. The war is over. We are going to feed you, make you fat, make you healthy. You can go home to your wife and your friends, sisters, and mothers. You will look healthy." All that old jazz, you know. That was it. He turned around and took his sword and handed it to his captain and took off.

Marcello: What was the immediate reaction when you heard that?

Burlage: How do we get out of here! (Chuckle)

Marcello: Did all discipline break down in the camp?

Burlage: Not a bit. We had officers, we had NCO's, and in fact I was only a corporal, but I was one of the NCO's who more or less was detailed to take care of a certain area and I did. But we obeyed rules and regulations.

Marcello: Were the tables turned now? Did the captives now become the captors and guard the Japanese or anything?

Burlage: They disappeared. All the guards disappeared. It might be something of interest here. We had people from Singapore who were with us who were captured.

Marcello: These were British?

Burlage: British. And I always remember this guy. I couldn't recall his name right now, but we had regular English, we had the real old cockney English, we had Scottish people, and we had some Irish. We had a cross-section of the British people. And I don't know where this Scot got an American flag, but he broke out an American flag when it was official. And he marched into

that barracks where the British people were, and he said, "Alright, let's salute it. The Americans won the war for us." That's just the way he felt. He really didn't care about going home. He'd like to come to the United States.

Marcello: Let me ask you this. You apparently had some contact with the British, at least while you were in Japan, maybe on some of these trips between Formosa and Japan and so on. What was your opinion of the British?

Burlage: I have a lot of respect for the British, but I thought they were . . . maybe I shouldn't say this--somebody will hit me--but I think that we had more discipline in our . . . more sanitation discipline and so forth. They just didn't care to keep themselves clean.

Marcello: This incidentally is a unanimous opinion shared by every former prisoner that I have interviewed. And I just thought I'd like to have your view. Most of the prisoners apparently didn't have too much of a liking for the British. The Australians seemed to be okay.

Burlage: I think the Javanese were even dirtier than the British.

Marcello: The Japanese were?

Burlage: Javanese.

Marcello: Javanese?

Burlage: The Dutch.

Marcello: Oh, the Dutch from Java.

Burlage: That's the Dutch who were native born in Java. I don't believe

he had any Javanese blood in him, but he was just called Javanese because he was born . . .

Marcello: Because he was born there.

Burlage: . . . Dutch extraction, you know. They just didn't know what it was to be clean.

Marcello: What was your first reaction when you made contact with the Americans, that is, the American liberators?

Burlage: Well, we stayed there about a month.

Marcello: You were still in this prison camp for a month?

Burlage: We had some food drops. We had a couple. We had some fatalities out of the food drops. The drops killed a couple of people.

Marcello: Does that mean that the food that was dropped from the planes actually would kill people?

Burlage: Uh-huh. Tore up the barracks. The parachutes broke loose. They weren't the right kind of parachutes for the load. But the first non-Jap we saw was somebody from the Swedish Embassy who came up there to talk to us, and he had with him, of all things, one . . . what would you call him? We called him a combat correspondent in the Marines. He was an Army combat reporter. And he'd gone and gotten up there somehow or another and came up with him. But officially we had never been contacted, and this person from the Embassy told us to stay put. He said, "There's no Americans on the island yet so you can't go anywhere." So we waited and waited, and we got some clothing dropped, and we got all dressed out in khakis. And on

a particular day we got the word . . . one day we got the word to come on down to Sendai, Sendai is a large central Honshu city, and we . . .

Marcello: How do you spell it?

Burlage: S-E-N-D-A-I, I believe. And it was only just a few miles from the coast, and this fleet from Alaska had come down from Alaska and was off the coast there. So we commandeered this little old narrow gauge railroad which Mitsubishi had built up into the mountains, and went on down to the main line which was two or three hours away, got on the big train, and I remember sitting down. I looked up and this Jap came walking through and he had on a green armband that said, "Tourist Guide." And this seems funny but this is it. And so I looked up at him and I said, "What kind of business are you in?" or something to him. And he says, "Before the war, I was a tourist guide. I'm going back to my old business." He says, "There'll be a lot of Americans out here now." (Chuckle) But he just took everything in stride just like "Well, this is just an episode of history, and we're going to take another course now." That's the way he acted. But we went on down to Sendai, and as the train pulled into the station, the Navy had dropped some of their trucks over on the beach, and they were ready to take us out to the ship. They only had one speed and that was wide open through town, and, boy, I mean to tell you the people were scattering, too, when they went down the street. But it was

just then I hit my first disappointment. They got me out there and ran me through the hospital ship and tagged me as malnourished and okay to travel or something and sent me over, and I got on a British destroyer, and my buddies all got separated, and then they got on an American destroyer. And so I was drinking hot tea and eating that hardtack stuff that the British have, and they were eating ice cream. And we'd pull alongside of them, the ship would pull alongside, and my buddy would hold up his ice cream and I was over there just envious as hell. And we finally got into Tokyo Bay, and I went aboard a transport and stayed there a few days, and they finally arranged air transportation for us to Guam to the hospital, and we stayed in Guam for several days. I finally got my ice cream.

Marcello: What food did you crave the most?

Burlage: That was it.

Marcello: Ice cream?

Burlage: Milk or ice cream.

Marcello: Milk or ice cream.

Burlage: Or a cold beer, and I wasn't much of a beer drinker in those days. I drink a little bit more now than I used to, but anything cold I guess it was, anything that would be cold. But at Guam I remember an incident. I had a friend of mine--I just saw him a while back too--and his name is Carman DiMeo. With a name like that, you know what we all called him. In those days

we didn't worry about ethnic insults. We just, they called him plain ole' "WOP". He's still "WOP" today. I saw him. He's in Chicago. And we got back there in the ward, and we wanted some ice cream, and this nurse said, "You can't have any ice cream. You only get ice cream one day a week." And that's exactly six days away or something, and so old "Wop" says . . .

Marcello: How do you spell his name?

Burlage: D-I-M-E-O (DiMeo). "Wop" says, "After being locked up as long as I have, I can work something." So he took off and this nurse says, "Be careful. They've got guards, and they'll shoot anybody that is stealing ice cream." So he was back in twenty minutes with a gallon, a couple gallons of ice cream. And, boy, we were having a feast, and that nurse came in and said, "Where'd you get the ice cream?" And, boy, he was scared to death, and he says, "You couldn't ever guess what happened." Says, "I was walking out here, and I walked across the street and guess who I ran into running that ice cream joint over there? My brother." Yeah, "My brother." He didn't have a brother anywhere. (Chuckle) He'd gone in there, and he'd learned a good trade while he was in the prison camp, you know. But that pretty well wrapped it up until we came on back and stopped in Hawaii for another medical examination. I stayed in Oakland for about four months in the hospital. I was attached to the hospital but I was out on leave most of the

time. I was still going back for treatment and observation.

Marcello: One last question, I think, to end this up. Of all the various places that you were during your sojourn as a prisoner, which one did you think was the worst? I know I mean they're all bad, but which one was the worst?

Burlage: I guess that as far as treatment and everything, you have good and bad, but I guess as far as just plain brutal treatment, I'd have to say that the one at Las Piñas was probably the worst one.

Marcello: Now this is the one outside of Manila.

Burlage: Of all of them . . . uh-huh.

Marcello: And so far as the worse conditions, would you say they occurred on the ship?

Burlage: Oh yes, by all means on the ship, because we lost so many people there. We had people that would go just crazy, and there would be . . . now maybe you won't believe this--people who just tried to bite your throat to get blood. You know, they were thirsty. Just going out of their minds. Why there was a doctor there by me one day, a fellow I got to know during the first two or three days, and this doctor had a medical bag with him, I mean, some sort of a bag, and we ended up talking. And he was a young man, and he said, "I'm not going to put up with this." I said, "Well, what's the trouble?" I said, "What trouble do you have that nobody else has?" And he said, "Well, I'm just not going to put up with it." He said, "We aren't

getting through." He said, "I have some morphine." And he reached in his bag, and he gave me some morphine, and it was broken in small pieces and he says, "If you get to hurting or something take one of these." And I did. And he took some of his too. He took all of his. He killed himself. People were doing that.

Marcello: That was on this boat to . . .

Burlage: Uh-huh.

Marcello: . . . wherever this boat was going.

Burlage: Uh-huh. And other people would, like I say, go crazy, and somebody would have to hit him, and he would fall, and that would be the end of him. It wouldn't kill him, but he would die, you know. Well, he was crazy. He was going to kill somebody, by biting a throat. I mean, it's unbelievable. These people got in the tropics like that with no water, and you'll go crazy. I don't personally think I had good sense for a long time after I got home even. (Chuckle)

Marcello: I would imagine it would take quite a while to readjust again.

Burlage: You're kind of in a daze, I might say. You're kind of in a fog maybe. You just can't see things clearly. It takes time to get perspective again.

Marcello: We talked about some of the cruelties of the Japanese. Was there ever much evidence of any compassion on the part of any individual Japanese toward the prisoners?

Burlage: I don't think there was much. The only ones I could really look

back on was in Japan itself, and these three people I mentioned a little while ago, these three bosses I work for as a driller, they were more of the family man type. They had feelings.

Marcello: How did you get to become a driller anyhow?

Burlage: I was just bigger than the rest of them, I guess.

Marcello: I see.

Burlage: They just picked eight people out of 300; that's pretty good picking, I think. It was a good move as far as I was concerned. But just like this ex-sergeant-major that was . . . well, he wasn't really an ex-sergeant-major. He was reserve. He was put way down on the reserves. He was the one who was hit in the knee and was crippled, the one that I saved his life so he said. And he told me, "I know what tomorrow is." Now this is in the summer, now. "I know what tomorrow is." "It's Independence Day." He said, "To celebrate I will bring you some salt." I hadn't tasted salt for so long I couldn't . . . well to me it was just like going home, you know. So I said, "Good! I really will appreciate it." So the next day, he came by with tears in his eyes and a uniform on and all his ribbons, and he said, "They called me up." He said, "I don't know why. We have lost the war." I said, "What are you going to do?" He was going to some beach defense area somewhere. They were going to call him back. He said, "No salt." "No. salt." He didn't bring my salt. (Chuckle)

Marcello: What factor do you think more than anything else pulled you through this ordeal?

Burlage: Well, I tell a lot of people when they ask me this question that I had a good strong body, I think. And I was healthy as far as physical fitness; I had a good body as did a lot of us. And I say that a lot of us were not like we are today. A lot of us came from where I did. I came from the farm, and a lot of people were sharecroppers, to use the word, sharecroppers' sons. They were sharecroppers. And they didn't have the best; they didn't have the best food in the world. They had, like this colored friend of mine says, "Soul food," pork and blackeyed peas or something. But the body was strong, and the mind was healthy, he had a good outlook, and a lot of luck. That was it, I think.