

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

NUMBER


164

Interview with
George P. Lawley
November 3, 1973

Place of Interview: Odessa, Texas

Interviewer: Mr. Bill Teague

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: 
(Signature)

Date: November 3, 1973

Copyright ©2016

**THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
IN THE CITY OF DENTON, TEXAS**

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without permission in writing from the Director of the Oral History Program or the University Archivist, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas 76203

Oral History Collection

Mr. George P. Lawley

Interviewer: Mr. William J. Teague

Place of Interview: Odessa, Texas

Date: November 3, 1973

Mr. Teague: My name is Bill Teague. I'll be interviewing Mr. George P. Lawley of Odessa, Texas, concerning his experiences as a Japanese prisoner-of-war during World War II. Mr. Lawley was in the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery Regiment, of the 36th Infantry Division, Texas National Guard, which we know of today as "The Lost Battalion."

George, please give a brief biographical sketch of yourself--where you were born, when you were born, that type of thing.

Mr. Lawley: Well, I was born in Fluvanna, in Scurry County, in 1922. My folks moved to Howard County when I was about two years old, and I lived there until I finished high school and then moved to Lubbock.

Mr. Teague: That was in what year?

Mr. Lawley: That was in 1939.

Mr. Teague: You were seventeen when you got out of high school?

Mr. Lawley: Yes.

- Teague: What were your parents doing when you moved?
- Lawley: My parents were farmers, and my father died in 1936.
- Teague: You mentioned awhile ago why people joined the National Guard in 1939 and 1940. Why did you join the National Guard?
- Lawley: Really, back at that time, everyone was more or less patriotic. I think the majority of people were. Of course, at my age, I wasn't subject to the draft, but I figured I would be sooner or later because obviously we were going to war. It was kind of hard for me to see why we weren't already at war. Anyhow, the Guard was convenient, and they had openings, and I knew some people. That's what really hooks everybody into the Guard. Everybody knows somebody.
- Teague: Was that pretty much the reason why other people-- your friends--had joined the Guard?
- Lawley: Well, some of them had been in for years. And in Lubbock, the same way in every other college town, there were a lot of college students. In this particular battery, I'd say about 25 or 30 or 40 per cent were probably Texas Tech students.
- Teague: How big was this particular outfit that you were in when you first became a member?

Lawley: This particular battery, I think, had a full strength of 130 or so.

Teague: It wasn't up to full strength, though, was it?

Lawley: I don't remember, but it probably had sixty-five, seventy, or seventy-five.

Teague: Would you say that anybody joined because times were tough during the Depressions, and they joined just for that little bit of money which they might be paid?

Lawley: I'm sure they did.

Teague: But mainly it was out of patriotism and then the friendship among the people in the Guard.

Lawley: Also, people a little older than I was were subject to the draft. They felt like they knew what they were getting into. If they were to be drafted, there was always that unknown as to where they might be sent.

Teague: Kind of like today!

Lawley: Yes, like it always is.

Teague: What date was this when you joined the National Guard?

Lawley: Well, I'm not real sure. I've tried to forget all this whole danged thing, really. We were mobilized in November of 1940.

Teague: November 5, wasn't it?

Lawley: I'm not sure but I joined about a month before that.

Teague: Of course, you didn't know how long you'd be in the National Guard back in 1940, did you? What did you do? Sign up for six years?

Lawley: I don't know. Three years, I think.

Teague: You mentioned awhile ago that you were aware of the possibility that war might break out at any moment between the United States and Japan or the United States and Germany--one of the Axis powers.

Lawley: Germany, really.

Teague: You didn't expect it to come when it did against Japan?

Lawley: No one did expect that, I don't think.

Teague: Do you think that most of your friends in the Guard were aware of the possibility, or probability, of war in November of 1940?

Lawley: We didn't discuss it, but I'm sure that we have been aware.

Teague: When you first went into the Army, what type of training did you go through? The standard boot camp thing?

Lawley: Well, it was a little different in this way: the officers would swear up and down it's not true, but we had no training, really. We were at Camp Bowie

for about a year, and the only training given anybody was to the officers, and we were just there. That's the truth.

Teague: So there was really no pre-war training for any kind of survival.

Lawley: No, not that amounts to anything. As far as I'm concerned, we were very poorly trained.

Teague: But the officers did receive training?

Lawley: Well, yes. I will say that they should have benefited more than we did because it was aimed at them more than at us.

Teague: When you were at Brownwood [home of Camp Bowie], what was your Army job?

Lawley: I was a private in this field artillery battery. Of course, after we got down to Bowie, we got several draftees. We had fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, or thirty who came in. I don't know how many. We still weren't quite up to full strength, I guess.

Teague: So there were several people in your outfit who weren't native Texans? They weren't National Guard people. They were regular Army.

Lawley: Several of them. Most of them were from Texas, but some were from other places.

Teague: When you were in the National Guard and stationed there at Brownwood, at Camp Bowie, did you work around the guns themselves? Was it like an office job or what?

Lawley: I worked on a gun crew. Talking about this training, as far as my personal experiences, we didn't fire an artillery piece in all that time. We did have a little practice on the rifle range but not enough to become really proficient.

Teague: After you went into the National Guard and on active duty, where were you in the fall of 1941, say, September or October of 1941. Were you still at Camp Bowie?

Lawley: Yes. We were in Louisiana on maneuvers in August, the best I remember.

Teague: Were they pretty successful? Did they point out any weaknesses or strengths in your outfit? Were you satisfied with the outcome of the maneuvers?

Lawley: Well, as far as I'm concerned, there was no training whatsoever, other than the fact . . . of course, we were in the field quite a bit at Bowie. We had a heck of a maneuver area there. I loved it. I always enjoyed it. That was better than being . . . hell,

you was out in the open! It was killing time, but at that time, I didn't get bored. I could always find something interesting. I could always find something to read. But I'm sure it gave these officers some benefit. This was a huge exercise with a bunch of people.

Teague: When you finished this exercise in Louisiana by August or September of 1941, you were back at Camp Bowie. Were you more apprehensive or more aware that, indeed, war was becoming more and more imminent after the maneuvers?

Lawley: No.

Teague: You thought the threat was diminishing?

Lawley: I believe that while we were in Louisiana, they extended the draft by one vote. Well, to me this [war] was coming, but it didn't seem like anything was happening to push us in quicker. Really, I couldn't understand . . . I thought we should have been in from the start.

Teague: Against Germany?

Lawley: Yes. When it did come, it was a heck of a surprise!

Teague: Well, when did you leave Camp Bowie to be shipped on elsewhere?

Lawley: It seems to me we left about the 11th of November,

about Armistice Day. I'm not sure. I might be wrong about that. It was not over two weeks before then.

Teague: It must have been the first or second week of November, 1941. Where did you go from Brownwood?

Lawley: We went to the west coast by train, and they had this transfer station or depot or whatever you'd call it on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay.

Teague: How long did it take you to get to San Francisco from Brownwood?

Lawley: I should have kept a diary (laughter)! Oh, about two or three days.

Teague: By this time, you'd been in the National Guard about a year. Were you developing close ties with the fellows in your outfit?

Lawley: Oh, yes. We had lots of fun.

Teague: You'd known a lot of these people before, for a long time, didn't you?

Lawley: Well, not a whole bunch, but I knew several of them. See, I just moved to Lubbock and had been there a year or so. Since I didn't go to school in Lubbock, I didn't know these people that went to high school in Lubbock or even the boys from out of town who went

to Tech. They had more acquaintances in the outfit than I did.

Teague: But by the time you went to California, you all were pals.

Lawley: Yes, we'd all been together for at least a year.

Teague: Do you remember when you left San Francisco for overseas?

Lawley: Well, we left the day after the first Thanksgiving, I think, because I was on KP on Thanksgiving Day. Back then, I guess I had a really good appetite! I remember we had lots of food and always did while we were in the States, you know. I didn't see anything wrong with the food. There was always lots of it. But I do remember we were on KP, and they had a heck of a big Thanksgiving lunch. Since we were leaving the next day, we wouldn't have had it exactly on Thanksgiving Day, but I think it was. Fact is, we must have left on a Friday.

Teague: When you left San Francisco, George, did they tell you where you were going? Did you have any idea where you were initially to be sent?

Lawley: No, they didn't tell us. I don't even know whether the officers knew. We had this APO [Army Post Office]

address, and, well, the Philippines were about the only place we could go.

Teague: You did know you were going to be someplace west of Pearl Harbor?

Lawley: We had some idea, yes.

Teague: But no official word. They didn't tell you where you were going or why.

Lawley: No.

Teague: After you left San Francisco, I believe you were on the troopship Republic, weren't you, and it was escorted by the Pensacola, a Navy ship--all in a convoy?

Lawley: I really don't believe we picked up a convoy until we left Hawaii. Hell, we may have, but I don't remember.

Teague: How long were you in Hawaii?

Lawley: Just one day and one night. It might have been two nights.

Teague: Just to get supplies and then go on your way.

Lawley: I know I had about two or three hours' leave.

Teague: That's an interesting point. Did you notice any sort of preparations being made for the possibility of an enemy attack?

Lawley: Well, they were under some phase or some type of alert because they did have lots of MP's. I'm sure there was some type of alert. Probably not the right kind!

Teague: Not the way it turned out! Do you remember about what day you left Pearl Harbor to go on toward the Philippines?

Lawley: I'd say it was on the Thursday. It seemed like some time that day they mentioned the Texas and A&M game. I think they play on Thanksgiving. It seemed like that was the first day out. You talk about leaving Pearl. We weren't in Pearl Harbor. We were in Honolulu.

Teague: You didn't tie up at the Navy base itself but at the commercial harbor?

Lawley: Someone might have told you we did, but we didn't.

Teague: After you left Honolulu, how many days were you at sea when you heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, and on Hawaii in general?

Lawley: Just about a week. Since we left on a Thursday it might have been about ten days.

Teague: What was your initial reaction?

Lawley: I believe this was on a Sunday morning. Well, I didn't believe the version we got.

Teague: Highly censored?

Lawley: No, we did duty on these guns on this transport, and we were on duty. One of our officers came by

and told us what he understood to be true--that they had attacked Pearl Harbor and had done a lot of damage. Of course, I didn't believe that because, heck, with the strength of what I'd read that we had in the Pacific, hell, that wouldn't have happened. I didn't believe it.

Teague: But you knew something for sure had happened there but not exactly what. You had no idea they'd knocked out our air and naval strength.

Lawley: That's all he said--that they'd done lots of damage.

Teague: You had no idea they'd knocked out our air and naval strength?

Lawley: No.

Teague: What were most of your buddies' ideas? Were they pretty much the same as your's, or did they believe the official story they got?

Lawley: Well, it wasn't discussed too much.

Teague: You didn't think it was going to be such a significant event in your life--the way it looked on December 7, 1941. Hearing of the news of the Pearl Harbor attack, did you continue on to the Philippines or did you turn back?

Lawley: No, we went on to Brisbane.

Teague: Australia?

Lawley: Yes. And we learned at that time . . . of course, we were going south all the time. It seemed for the last year that all the military traffic had gone not to Brisbane, but had gone around to Darwin. But we weren't headed for the Philippines on a direct route.

Teague: When you pulled in to Australia, you thought that this was going to be a temporary thing?

Lawley: Well, we didn't know.

Teague: They still hadn't shed any light on all this--the course and turns of history?

Lawley: The best I remember, we weren't allowed . . . we weren't supposed to write home and tell where we were even then.

Teague: When you heard news of the attack on Pearl Harbor and went from mid-ocean to Australia, was your ship, the Republic, by itself or was it still in a convoy?

Lawley: No, it was in a convoy.

Teague: At this time, it was unescorted, wasn't it? Or did you have any warships with you?

Lawley: I know we had a converted yacht. I didn't know the name of that thing. I forgot it. I don't know who it belonged to.

Teague: It was a private yacht impressed into the United States Navy.

Lawley: We had this other troop transport.

Teague: How did you like being a part-time sailor on your trip across the Pacific Ocean?

Lawley: After the first day, when we got past those swells out of San Francisco and got over the seasickness, it wasn't bad at all.

Teague: It wasn't that bad at all!

Lawley: Heck, at that time anything was all right with me. Hell, every day's a new adventure!

Teague: Like at Camp Bowie! Everybody was about seventeen years old and every day was a new adventure.

Lawley: Well, of course, some people were married. Well, they were married before all this came up. Some of them got married before they enlisted; some got married before they went overseas. I'm sure some of these people were depressed. I think, looking back now, under the circumstances, I would've been, too, but I wasn't. I didn't have enough sense, I guess!

Teague: You heard the news about the attack on Pearl Harbor
and then you went directly on to . . .

Lawley: Well, we stopped in Suva.

Teague: The Fiji Islands?

Lawley: Just pulled in there.

Teague: To refuel?

Lawley: For some reason. We didn't go ashore or anything.

Teague: I'll bet things were pretty hectic around there!

Lawley: Well, no.

Teague: The war hadn't come to them [the Fiji Islands], had it?

Lawley: Except for the British citizens, and, of course,
they'd been at war for a few years.

Teague: How long were you in Brisbane, Australia?

Lawley: We got there about Christmastime, I guess. Oh,
three or four days.

Teague: Then where did you go?

Lawley: We come around to Darwin and transferred over to
. . . wait a minute. We transferred to another ship
at Brisbane. Hell, I guess it was the same one. It
was a Dutch ship. We did come into Darwin. I don't
believe we had any escort until we got up there, and
then we spent a day there. We didn't pick up any escort
until we got up there, and then we spent a day there.

We picked up . . . I believe it was a destroyer.

Hell, I don't remember!

Teague: So you left Australia. Did you go directly to Java, George?

Lawley: Well, we got up to Surabaya, and by exactly what route, I couldn't tell you.

Teague: And that was January of 1942 when you went to Surabaya?

Lawley: Yes. It seems to me we loaded at Brisbane the day after Christmas, and we were up at Darwin about New Year's. That's probably too long a time, though. We got into Surabaya in early January, I guess. Exact date, I couldn't tell you, though.

Teague: Pretty hot there even in January, wasn't it!

Lawley: Well, it's the year around.

Teague: I should have known that, having been in the same area myself. When you got to Java, were things pretty frantic there--preparations for war, the general psychology of the people who worried that attack was imminent? What was the situation when your ship got there?

Lawley: Of course, I didn't have any contact with any of the Dutch or the Javanese, as far as discussing the war

situation. They sent us out . . . we were stationed at this airfield, Malang.

Teague: Now, this was outside Surabaya.

Lawley: Yes, about thirty miles or so. It seems like about thirty miles. I wouldn't swear to that, either. Some distance, yes.

Teague: You got sent there immediately after coming into the harbor?

Lawley: We got off the ship in the afternoon and arrived at Malang that night.

Teague: What were your duties when you first arrived at the airfield?

Lawley: Well, we were supposedly to aid the Air Corps. They had some airplanes there--some bombardment group. I can't think of the number of it now. They had left the Philippines, flown to Darwin, then back to this airfield. But they didn't have any ground crews.

Teague: Just the flight crews, and that was it.

Lawley: We were told that that was our reason for being in Java.

Teague: To be the ground crew for these bombers. Were these B-17's?

Lawley: Yes, B-17's.

Teague: That was in January of 1942. The Japanese invaded Bali in February of 1942. Were you still at this airfield in February of 1942, when Bali was invaded?

Lawley: Yes. I don't remember exactly when these air attacks started, but to go back a little further, while we were in Hawaii, they picked up . . . see, we'd had these French 75 [millimeter] fieldpieces--that's how modern we were! That's what we were training with. So they picked up these American split-trail guns there, which were of after World War I design. They weren't real modern, but they were more modern than the French. They were the same gun but had more refinements. You could aim a little better, and you could get a little higher trajectory, you know. Also, we got dozens of British 75's. I suppose they were loaded on our ship in San Francisco. I don't know. But anyhow, when we went to Java, we took our equipment, which included the American 75's which they intended for us to use in the Philippines. But they also didn't know at one time how many of these damn British guns we had. So we scattered them all over the area. And apparently, as a result, the Japanese

either took pictures of all this, or they had someone in every coconut and papaya tree.

Teague: Someone behind every bush!

Lawley: Perhaps they had come to the conclusion that there was a helluva bunch of folks there because of all these damn artillery pieces. Anyhow, when they came over to bomb the airfield, the first thing they bombed . . . well, I think they came over to strafe the damn planes, the ones on the ground. But they bombed all these guns. Of course, we were on the guns, and we were even firing them at those airplanes.

Teague: With artillery pieces!

Lawley: I don't think as a tactic it was very good, but it made us feel a little better. I don't know.

Teague: You had to throw a little lead into the sky!

Lawley: We weren't just sitting there! But anyhow, they did a pretty good job of bombing all these positions we were in. They didn't kill anybody, though.

Teague: Destroyed a lot of equipment.

Lawley: Well, I don't think . . . it seems like we had one gun that was damaged, but I'm sure that on these particular runs they weren't bombing the airfield. I don't think it did them any good to bomb us. They

didn't accomplish anything and they were wasting their bombs. I think it's probably reasonable to assume that this did lead them to believe that there were a lot more combat troops there than there really was. Whether it's true or not, I don't know. It makes a good story.

Teague: Were you pretty impressed by the [Japanese] Air Force at that time? Were they effective?

Lawley: Yes! They didn't have any opposition! And their intelligence was . . . the natives would get their alert, and after a bomb or two fell, we'd get ours (laughter)! The native population had plenty of Jap agents.

Teague: Was the population on that island [Java] generally pro-Japanese in sentiment, anti-American, or neutral?

Lawley: Well, they were just for whoever was on top.

Teague: They were watching out for themselves!

Lawley: As far as I'm concerned, it may not be that way now, but I would say it's still the same way.

Teague: This was in early February of 1942. While you were at the airfield under attack by the Japanese airplanes, did you get word of the Battle of the Java Sea, where the USS Houston and the Perth and the Exeter and this group of Allied ships were sunk?

Lawley: I didn't, no. Perhaps the officers did. What was going on outside of our little area, I had no idea.

Teague: Well, that was on February 27, 1942. The next day-- correct me if I'm not right--on February 28, 1942, the Japanese actually invaded the island of Java itself.

Lawley: That's right. But in the meantime, see, we had moved to the opposite end of the island.

Teague: Oh, you weren't at the airfield anymore?

Lawley: We left one battery . . . E Battery was left in that area.

Teague: Which was your particular battery?

Lawley: F Battery. I think they surrendered the island about March 8th, didn't they? We were at the other end of the island when they invaded, and if that was the 28th, probably we left the airfield on the 26th.

Teague: When you got word of the island itself being invaded by the Japanese, what was your reaction? Did you think you could possibly defend the island?

Lawley: We hadn't been told otherwise! I still was optimistic-- awfully ignorant, but optimistic (laughter)!

Teague: Could you describe the events leading up to your capture?

Lawley: Of course, I said we were at the opposite end of the island. We actually weren't that far. We were near Bandung, which was the summer capital. We took up positions helping this Aussie battalion or brigade. There were quite a few men. They had been in the Middle East, and they hadn't been home in five years. Talking to them, they thought they were going home. Actually, they were dumped off in Singapore or somewhere in Malaya. I think it was in Singapore. Some of them may have come directly to Java, but I think most of them came to Singapore and then down to Java. And also, there was some British antiaircraft units. You can imagine what a disorganized army that was!

Teague: A motley group!

Lawley: At some place, old General Wavell inspected our battalion. I can't remember where it was, but it must have been before we left Malang. Hell, he was a pretty high-ranking officer, you know. He was the tops. He didn't make you believe they weren't serious about defending the place, but they weren't.

Teague: Had you actually been attacked at this point by the Japanese?

Lawley: We had been in a firing position for about a couple of days, as best I remember.

Teague: Did you have any close-up contact with the Japanese?

Lawley: Snipers. But as far as seeing any, I didn't see any.

Teague: This was in early March of 1942?

Lawley: Well, I would say the 5th or 6th. We surrendered on the 8th, so I guess it was a couple days before then.

Teague: How did you get word that your outfit was going to surrender?

Lawley: We got it from our officers.

Teague: What was your reaction and the reaction of the other guys in your outfit?

Lawley: Of course, my reaction was that it was a disgrace. To end up this way. I thought it was foolish. I figured when the Japs got you, you had just a very few days. I'd read these magazine articles and newspaper stories about the way the Japanese treated the people in Shanghai and every other place in China that they'd taken over. It was partly true, and maybe it wasn't the general thing that happened, but I dangd sure believed it. I figured, "So why surrender?"

Teague: Did most of the other guys feel that way, too?

Well, things like that aren't discussed much, but I'd imagine they probably felt the same way.

Teague: George, could you describe the capture itself? What exactly came about?

Lawley: For several days . . . we went into the woods, into a rubber plantation. I guess that's where we were. First thing they did, they destroyed the guns and the motors on all the vehicles. We stayed in this same area for a day or so. I'd say Bandung is probably a hundred miles from Batavia. Then they put us on a train and took us to Tanjong Priok, which is the port of Batavia. Batavia is a little inland, about twelve to fifteen miles. This was over a period of several days. I do remember on this train trip that we had to get off at one or two rivers and walk across some temporary bridges. The railroad bridges were blown, you know. How, I don't know.

Teague: But they were blown?

Lawley: Yes, at least a couple.

Teague: At this point, had you had much contact with the individual Japanese soldiers? Were you impressed by their military bearing and efficiency?

Lawley: When we first got to Tanjong Priok, that was the first time that it amounted to anything. You saw them and

their equipment, and you just couldn't believe the position we were in. They were so primitive that you just flat couldn't believe that they had done what they did.

Teague: You weren't at all impressed by their equipment?

Lawley: Well, no. It was unbelievable. The only way they did what they did was to concentrate their air force. Of course, we didn't know this. The United States wasn't ready, that's for damn sure. What we did have, we sent to Europe, which was the thing to do. We can understand that. We didn't know this at the time but we could've understood it if we had known it.

Teague: Were there any official preparations being made for surrender?

Lawley: No. They told us--and it's probably true--that the civilian population was so great there that the civilian casualties would be too great to defend it. The island is one of the most densely populated places in the world, and, of course, the native population had no reason to defend it.

Teague: At that time, how long did you think you'd be a prisoner?

Lawley: Well, at that time, I figured it'd be just for a short time. Heck, they'd kill us. But I was wrong

there. Afterwards, six months was as long as I could see. In all the places we were, if I'd known it'd last that long, I probably wouldn't have made it. I was taking it six months at a time. I was just optimistic, I guess.

Teague: When you were first captured, did you retain your personal equipment, money, and clothing?

Lawley: Yes, we kept what we could carry.

Teague: Immediately after being captured, could you describe the living conditions you found yourself in?

Lawley: Well, we still had food until we left this first bivouac area.

Teague: Was this at Bandung?

Lawley: Yes, near there. When we got to this first camp near Tanjong Priok, there was an old Dutch barracks--pretty primitive. There's where we got our first rice, and it was just floor sweepings--pretty rough. Of course, we didn't know how to cook it anyhow. It was just about as filthy rice as we got anywhere. Even if it had been good rice, it wouldn't have been any good, us not being used to it. Then they had some cheese, and it had maggots. Later, I'd been tickled to get it. You know, a thing like that is an awfully radical change in your diet.

Teague: After your capture, did you experience much harsh treatment immediately?

Lawley: No, not really, not other than this drastic change in our food. Of course, we were still a unit, and our officers were still with us--such as they were (sarcasm). But they immediately started sending us out to work.

Teague: What kind of work were you doing?

Lawley: Well, on Batavia, at that port, we salvaged stuff out of the harbor and rolled barrels. It wasn't real rough work at that time. We moved from there into Batavia, into what they called the Bicycle Camp.

Teague: The Bicycle Camp?

Lawley: And we worked possibly several different places around there. Everything we did, I considered it to be unlawful. Everything we did contributed to their war effort.

Teague: When you were doing these jobs, were you working for the Japanese officers and guards?

Lawley: There would be an American officer, I believe, who probably went out on each working party.

Teague: They [the Japanese] didn't exhibit any particular desire for harsh treatment of the prisoners at this stage?

Lawley: No, not particularly. Every now and then you would come across some.

Teague: When you first got to the Bicycle Camp, what was your first reaction? How did they move you to Bicycle Camp?

Lawley: Well, heck, I can't . . .

Teague: It's been a long time.

Lawley: We got off the train at Tanjong Priok at this huge terminal building. We walked four or five miles into Tanjong Priok. That was at night. That was really the first contact with Japs. There were lots of people trying to keep their possessions, and they couldn't carry them. But really, I suppose we must've rode trucks in there because I know even after that, after we went into Batavia, we'd go back to Tanjong Priok on working parties, and we went by trucks.

Teague: You got to Bicycle Camp in March of 1942?

Lawley: It was probably later, I guess. We were at Tanjong Priok three or four weeks.

Teague: How long were you actually at Bicycle Camp before you moved on?

Lawley: Four or five months. I know we got to Burma in October, 1942. We were about a month getting up there, so my particular group must have left Bicycle Camp in late August.

Teague: When you first got to Bicycle Camp in April of 1942, did you think your treatment would be better or worse? What were your impressions?

Lawley: Well, it was a nicer camp. Also, that was where we ran across the sailors and marines off the Houston. Also, some sailors off the Perth were in there. I don't guess there were any Australians at Tanjong Priok. It's possible but I don't believe so.

Teague: When you met these sailors and marines off the Houston, were you glad to see them?

Lawley: Of course, we didn't even know they existed. I didn't. To this extent, it didn't make things look real good when we heard their story. As far as Java was concerned, it was pretty well finished, and it didn't seem like we had made any progress as far as any of the engagements.

Teague: So you left Bicycle Camp in October of 1942. Where did you go then, George?

Lawley: We went to Singapore. We got off the ship there and stayed a couple of weeks or so. We didn't know why, but we were just waiting for a ship up to Burma. We got to Burma in October, so we must've left Bicycle Camp in August, 1942. Heck, it's not too far to

Singapore. We were several days' going there. Then we were there two or three weeks, a couple of weeks, maybe. Then we were a week going up to Rangoon.

Teague: To go to Singapore, you took a ship, didn't you?

Lawley: Yes.

Teague: Could you describe the voyage on that ship--the conditions, activities, and so forth?

Lawley: Well, it wasn't too bad. They let us stay up on top. Of course, we was crossing the equator--one of the hottest temperatures we ever experienced. Ordinarily at sea--I don't care where you are--you're going to be cool. But on this particular trip, there wasn't any wind. We were right off Sumatra. However, it wasn't too bad.

Teague: How many people were on this ship as far as POW's were concerned?

Lawley: In our group I believe there were about 130 or something.

Teague: Strictly the "Lost Battalion."

Lawley: No, in this one group they . . . of course, they wanted so many people. We were all privates and seamen. We had one corporal and one sergeant and four officers--a total of 128 or 135 or something.

Teague: They didn't tell you why you were being shipped to Singapore?

Lawley: No, they didn't tell us why we were going. We were just moving.

Teague: How was the food on this ship? Was it about the same as at the Bicycle Camp?

Lawley: Yes.

Teague: No improvement?

Lawley: No.

Teague: How long were you in Singapore?

Lawley: It seems to me like a week or ten days or longer. I don't know. It might have been five days.

Teague: Do you remember the name of this particular camp in Singapore?

Lawley: Yes, we were in Changi.

Teague: So now you had been captured for six or eight months. At Changi, what was the physical condition of the men at this time?

Lawley: We were still in pretty good health, but I didn't think so at the time.

Teague: Was there any evidence of beriberi or any of these different conditions brought about by a vitamin deficiency?

Lawley: No, not really at that time. Of course, we'd had a few men sick at Bicycle Camp. I believe there was several men off the Houston at the so-called hospital there. I'm sure we had a few men who got sick there.

Teague: How about yourself? Were you in good condition?

Lawley: Depressed.

Teague: What was the psychological shape of yourself and most of the other men?

Lawley: Well, I was still depressed over the whole surrender, and as far as being a prisoner, if you'd had a date set to get out . . . but it looked like there was no end, so it didn't cheer you up.

Teague: You mentioned the so-called hospital. From what I read, it was pretty primitive.

Lawley: We had a doctor in our battalion, and there was a doctor off the Houston. But if they ever gave me any medicine . . . the Japs . . . well, anything they'd furnish in the way of medical supplies were meager, practically non-existent. Of course, at that time, we didn't need it very bad, but they still hadn't furnished any.

Teague: At Changi, what was the conduct of the Japanese guards? Was it beginning to get rough?

Lawley: Really, it wasn't bad even at Bicycle Camp. Of course, they had us sign an oath not to try to escape. When anything like that came up, they'd put up a lot of pressure and scream and holler. I'd just about rather have one of them beat me up as holler, you know! Except for isolated instances, they didn't have much physical abuse, but we always did everything we could to avoid antagonizing them, though.

Teague: When you were in Changi, had you run into any Korean guards?

Lawley: No, I don't think so.

Teague: When did you first encounter the Koreans who were assigned to guard you?

Lawley: When we got on the Burma-Thailand railroad.

Teague: At Changi, you had some Australians and British people and some Dutch. Could you describe the relationships between the Americans and these other groups?

Lawley: Of course, we weren't supposed to mingle with them. We were confined to certain areas. We did to a certain amount, but it was on the . . .

Teague: On the sly?

Lawley: On the sly.

Teague: Did most of the American prisoners like or dislike one nationality more than another?

Lawley: We always got along pretty well with the Australians. We didn't get along too well with the British. But the thing is, you get along fine with many of the troops as individuals. As a group . . . well, you had jealousy among the officers for a lot of different reasons. We had a language problem with the Dutch. A lot of the British were cockneys or whatever the slum-dwellers are. For another thing, a lot of them were older people, and they'd been gone from home forever, you know. They were really more demoralized than we were. They had a right to be.

Teague: Were you in Changi for long?

Lawley: A couple of weeks. I know we were there long enough to go out on some work parties.

Teague: What type of work parties were you involved with at Changi?

Lawley: I know we went out to some of these gun positions and moved powder and stuff like that. I don't remember moving any of the projectiles.

Teague: When you left Changi, where did you go?

Lawley: Up to Rangoon.

Teague: How did you get from Changi to Rangoon?

Lawley: We went right up the west coast of Malaya, I guess. As best I remember, we were in sight of land all the time.

Teague: On this particular trip, what were the conditions on the ship?

Lawley: We were awfully crowded, and we were down in the bilges.

Teague: It must've taken you several days.

Lawley: Yes, three or four days.

Teague: At this point, while you were on the ship, were you bothered by American or Allied submarines?

Lawley: Well, no, not our ship. But on this trip, we came across Dr. Hekking for the first time.

Teague: Your Dutch doctor friend?

Lawley: He was on that ship.

Teague: Were there many other Dutch on the ship?

Lawley: I'm sure there were a pretty good group of Dutch and some Australians.

Teague: What kind of food did they give you?

Lawley: Some old rice and not much of it.

Teague: Then you got to Rangoon.

Lawley: We were there just overnight, I believe. Then they transferred us to another ship, and we went across to Moulmein, which is about twenty-five or thirty miles from where this railroad was started.

Teague: This was in about February of 1943?

Lawley: No, this was in October of 1942. We went into this prison there at Moulmein, which was a leper ward. Of course, this scared us all to death!

Teague: Were these lepers still there?

Lawley: No, there wasn't anybody in there. That wasn't any help to us, though. We thought we'd catch it (laughter)! We didn't know it was practically non-contagious.

Teague: When you left Moulmein, where did you go, George?

Lawley: Well, we went down to this base camp on the railroad.

Teague: Now, is that camp one of the kilo camps?

Lawley: No, it was a railhead. The railroad came out that far. I don't know where it went, but I think it went down to Thanbyuzayat. That's where the base camp was.

Teague: Were you at the base camp during most of your stay while working on the railroad?

Lawley: No, we were there only overnight, I guess. Anyhow, this is where they had this famous Nagatomo or whatever his name was, who was the camp commander. No, he wasn't the camp commander. He was a damn general, I guess. I don't know if he was just in charge of the prisoners, the railroad construction, or the

whole army. But he gave us this famous speech.

You probably read it.

Teague: What did the speech deal with?

Lawley: Well, how fortunate we were to be prisoners of such a great people, and how these armies get paid to kill people and what would happen to us if we tried to escape. He said it was sad that we were members of such an inferior race and that we didn't have much sense.

Teague: They didn't have much sympathy with people who surrendered, what with the Japanese military code, did they?

Lawley: No.

Teague: After you left the base camp, how were things after that point?

Lawley: They had thousands of natives and different civilians already working on the railroad. They built little sections at a time. Our group went out to the 42 Kilo, as best I remember. There was a group of Australians with us. We all moved dirt. We did it with what we called a "yo-yo" basket. They assigned us the same amount of work that these native Indians and Burmese did. But we were too smart for that? So instead of

messing around there all day the way we should have, we were done before noon and went back into camp. This was pretty well out in the jungle, and you had to boil the water the best way you could. The food was scarce, not much. It wasn't very long until people began getting sick with fever. It seemed like we worked a week, maybe five or six days, and they gave us a day off. I remember that the night before this holiday--whatever this Jap holiday was--I got sick for the first time. I had dysentery and vomited. It was a one-night affair, and I was so damn weak. Even though I got over the nausea and the dysentery, I was still so damn weak that I could hardly . . . well, it was just a struggle to walk. Heck, not over a week had passed on this railroad when several people had fever and were out of their heads.

Teague: Was it a malaria-type of fever?

Lawley: Yes, and dengue or whatever fevers they have. They're common up there. Of course, this was still in the dry season.

Teague: The monsoon season hadn't started?

Lawley: We were the first Americans out there, the first of

any prisoners at that end of the railroad. It didn't take long for this sickness to start.

Teague: In the meantime, the Japanese still weren't giving you any medical treatment?

Lawley: In this camp, we didn't have a medical doctor. The American doctor stayed at the first camp. He came up later and died right quick. They sent along with us this group of Australians, and these Australians had a doctor. I can't remember his name, but he wasn't much of a doctor. He was probably a pretty good fellow. Of course, there were 127 or 130 of us, and we'd had no doctor of our own. Then they sent Dr. Hekking up. I don't know how we arranged it or whose idea it was, but he did come out especially to take care of us.

Teague: At this point, had there been a large percentage of prisoners to die?

Lawley: No, not up to this point. We stayed at the camp three weeks or a month. Then they sent us back up the railroad to 18 Kilo or 25 Kilo, but I believe it was 18. The reason they sent us there was that they had an attack of cholera. There was one outbreak, and all the natives just disappeared. Of

course, we'd had some type of inoculations. I don't know whether they were any good or not. We still had our original inoculations that the Army had given us before all this, you know.

Teague: Before leaving the States?

Lawley: Anyhow, we were careful. It seems that cholera is endemic in the water more than anything else, and we were careful to boil the water. Then we went to 25 Kilo. At 25 Kilo, there was an Englishman who had smallpox. I remember that this was all in the first couple of months. But they really didn't start dying until way up in the rainy season.

Teague: While suffering from poor rations, all the fevers and diseases, vitamin deficiencies, weakness, and the monsoon season, did you begin to encounter these Korean guards at this camp?

Lawley: These Koreans were at the first camp on the railroad. Of course, you couldn't tell one from another. But they always had a Japanese in charge. The reason that the Koreans were so fierce is that they were the lowest men on the totem pole. They were less than privates, you know. And their being foreigners, too. As a result of this, they had to take it out

on somebody. The bad treatment they gave us was because they had to keep the Japanese off their necks. They were people who had no rights whatsoever. They weren't any better off than we were, except they were eating better and had clothes.

Teague: The Japanese weren't on the whole as brutal as the Koreans, were they?

Lawley: Well, yes.

Teague: They were?

Lawley: The thing is, on the railroad we had the Korean guard detachments, but they was all commanded by a corporal, sergeant, or an officer--all Japanese. They were directly under the command of the Japanese. The reason I say that they were bad just because they were Koreans is that after we got to Japan and worked in these coal mines, they had this Korean labor there. It was conscripted labor.

Teague: In these various kilo camps you've mentioned--18, 42, and 25--did you always perform the same tasks?

Lawley: It just depended on the stage of the construction.

Teague: Did you mainly lay rails, prepare roadbeds, or build bridges?

Lawley: We started out moving dirt. When we left there, someone was still moving dirt. At that particular time when I first got there, they hadn't laid any rails. A little later, we were in a camp that helped to lay rails. The rails weren't bad; it was the cross ties that was a chore. They had these little rail-laying trucks. Of course, I guess everybody had them, but they were the first I'd seen. It was a pretty modern way of doing things. We had one or two Caterpillar tractors that had come from someplace. I believe there was two of them. I don't know what size they were, but they weren't too big. Anyhow, they managed to get them to run. They were the only modern machinery in this whole damn country. They used these little truck-type locomotives to pull what trains they had up to a certain stage of construction. They then got a little bigger locomotive. The rest of it was done by the prisoners. They also had elephants and ox carts to haul timbers. You talk about primitive! It was primitive!

Teague: Primitive, and all by hand.

Lawley: Yes.

Teague: Were you surprised, being a farm boy from Texas, seeing the elephants work?

Lawley: Yes.

Teague: All this time, you'd been at the various kilo camps. When you were working on the Burma-Thailand railroad, did you ever have any thought of escape, even though you had signed these non-escape papers?

Lawley: Well, you always had these thoughts, but the situation . . . well, in the first place, there was the color of your skin and the language. If you knew the language, you might have had some hope. But being a white man in that country and having no knowledge of the native language, why, it was foolish.

Teague: No way that you could get away.

Lawley: Even under the best of circumstances, escape was impossible.

Teague: Were the natives at all friendly to the Americans?

Lawley: Oh, yes. They'd trade with you. We bought this native sugar off them when we could get the money, or we'd trade them clothes, mosquito bars--stuff like that.

Teague: How did you come up with money to use for trade?

Lawley: Well, they paid us once or twice, but most of it was just bartering off of clothes. They'd also trade for tobacco.

Teague: At this time, did you get news of the progress of the war in the rest of the world? Was there any way to get any information?

Lawley: They still had some radios. Our group had one at Bicycle Camp, and we might have had one afterward in Burma. Even at that, the information you got was a rumor when it got to you; you didn't hear it personally. While we were in Burma, they printed this paper. I believe it was the Rangoon Times. Anyhow, about once a month we'd get one of these.

Teague: Published by the English or by the Japanese?

Lawley: It was probably published by the Burmese in the English language. Of course, it was under Japanese direction.

Teague: A propaganda mouthpiece.

Lawley: It was propaganda but it was so far-fetched that it was unbelievable. If the Japanese had had any intelligence at all, they wouldn't have put out stuff like that. There were these wild stories about these Japanese heroes who always annihilated all the enemy, and the first stories we got were from the Aleutian Islands. The next ones were from Midway. They'd always win all these battles, annihilate

the enemy 100 per cent. But the next big yarn was another stepping-stone back.

Teague: They were going the wrong way if they were winning.

Lawley: Yes (laughter). So we didn't know exactly what was happening, but it was obvious from that one paper we'd get that they weren't winning.

Teague: I'm sure that gave you encouragement, too.

Lawley: Of course, even when we were in Bicycle Camp, these guards would come around and tell you in English, "San Francisco--boom, boom! New York--boom, boom! Washington, D.C.--boom, boom!" They'd say, "Lubbock--boom, boom!"

Teague: Lubbock?

Lawley: "Slaton--boom, boom!"

Teague: That's amazing!

Lawley: Sounds true, but more than likely, it wasn't.

Teague: How long was it before you saw an American warplane of some sort?

Lawley: Well, they bombed this base camp. I think it was at night because we were on the railroad. But I didn't actually see an American plane until we were back in Singapore, which was in 1943.

Teague: Was there any thought seriously given to sabotaging the building of the railroad?

Lawley: If you'd seen the way they went about building it, you'd never believe the trains there would go over it. Of course, if it hadn't been finished, we'd never got out of Burma. But even when we came out of that thing [the camp], I was scared to death the entire time while on this train (laughter). We started out on this thing . . . they made these cuts and fills level in this hilly country. No real mountains, but pretty good hills which were real rough. As soon as the rainy season got there, things were in a real mess. They saw that if they were going to complete it, they'd have to change their plans so they just went up one hill and down another.

Teague: They stopped cutting and filling?

Lawley: Yes, they just did the best they could.

Teague: Is this about the time when they started the "Speedo" campaign?

Lawley: Yes.

Teague: The "Speedo" campaign was around May of 1943, wasn't it?

Lawley: That's probably when they really got after us. Of course, in this first camp we were in, we got all our work completed before noon. If we'd had any

sense whatsoever, we'd just have plodded along like those natives. You just had to get so much dirt from where it was available, and take it to where they wanted it whether it was ten feet or a hundred yards. Whatever they assigned us to begin with, even with these primitive tools we had to move it with, why, we got done before lunch. We were stupid to do that because they increased our quota. And when the rainy season got there, there was constant rain. That was enough to kill anybody. We had to work harder and everything just mounted up.

Teague: George, when was the railroad completed? By October of 1943?

Lawley: Well, it's possible they had the thing connected by then. We left Burma in January, 1944. But, heck, you can go out there in the rainy season and finish a bridge today, and you might go back the next day, and the thing might be gone. As far as these fills . . . this is the way they built those things. We'd carry this dirt out in these baskets, and we'd dump it. It wasn't packed or anything. They'd get this fill up to where they wanted it. They'd then lay these ties and rails over it. Then they'd come along

and put this ballast down. When it started raining, the whole danged thing might disappear. But even if it didn't, the thing would start sagging. The bridge probably wouldn't settle any, but you might be going over the bridge.

Teague: When the railroad was completed, was there a ceremony to celebrate the end of this big project?

Lawley: I didn't participate in one.

Teague: The work just came to a halt?

Lawley: Well, there was so danged much maintenance. The work never did really come to an end. They must have thought they had everything under control because they sent us to Siam. Later, a lot of them went back.

Teague: Did you ever go back?

Lawley: No. When we left Siam to go to Japan, old Captain Fitzsimmons told me I didn't have to go if I didn't want to. It was pretty nice in these camps when we came out of Thailand and went into Burma.

Teague: When was this?

Lawley: You mean when we left Burma?

Teague: Yes.

Lawley: Well, I think it was in January of 1944. I'd rather take my chances there [Japan] than go back to Burma.

Hell, that was just my idea. I had it in my mind that I sure didn't want to go back there.

Teague: So you left Burma and went to Siam. How long did you stay in Siam?

Lawley: I was in one camp there at Kanchanaburi, where the railroad makes a junction. We stayed there a few days, and part of us went down to Singapore and on to Japan. There must have been around eighty of us. Thirty-some of us went down to Singapore and then on to Japan.

Teague: Were most of these people who went with you to Singapore and on to Japan members of the "Lost Battalion?"

Lawley: We had men from the Houston. We were all together after Bicycle Camp--all in one group.

Teague: How was the trip to Japan on this ship?

Lawley: We stayed in Singapore for six months. We worked in ammunition dumps. I unloaded ammunition from ships. We also went to someplace on the island where they was building a dry dock, for three or four weeks. We didn't do anything except work with stuff directly connected with the war.

Teague: All of which you thought was against the international laws of war.

Lawley: I didn't feel like it was right.

Teague: Well, you didn't have much choice. How was your treatment there when you returned to Singapore in 1944?

Lawley: I'd say that it wasn't as good as it had been in Thailand. It was better than it had been on the railroad. For one thing, it wasn't raining.

Teague: What was the food situation?

Lawley: The food might have been a little better.

Teague: What did you weigh at this time?

Lawley: I don't know, but when the war was over, I weighed ninety pounds.

Teague: Do you remember when you left for Japan?

Lawley: They put us on a boat the day before Christmas, 1944. By New Year's day, we were at the mouth of the Mekong River, I guess. There were a million ships at this anchorage.

Teague: Japanese ships?

Lawley: Yes. Freighters and warships. I don't remember. I just remember there were a lot of ships there. I learned later, after I got home, that the Navy had bombed them the very next day. From there, we followed the coast clear up to Korea, I suppose. It was cloudy.

Teague: Had it gotten cold by the time you got to Korea?

Lawley: Yes.

Teague: Did you still have your summer clothes?

Lawley: No, they had issued us some wool British uniforms at Singapore. I believe they was wool. We also got some tennis shoes. I know when we got to Japan it was colder than heck!

Teague: Did you encounter any American submarines or airplanes on your trip?

Lawley: No, it was cloudy and bad weather.

Teague: Where did you land when you got to Japan?

Lawley: Moji.

Teague: That's on the island of Kyushu, isn't it?

Lawley: The north end of the southern island.

Teague: Where did you go from there? This is in January of 1945, isn't it?

Lawley: Yes. We got on a train there and went to a coal mine in a village that was halfway between Sasebo and Nagasaki.

Teague: When I was in the service, I took that trip between these two towns. I didn't realize that you'd been there at a different point in time. When you got to Japan, in the home islands, did you detect any optimism or pessimism in the Japanese?

Lawley: Our contact, really, was with the guards since we were in an enclosed compound. In the mines we worked with these Koreans. We had no contact with the local Japanese. We had Japanese guards at this time.

Teague: Were your living conditions better than you had in the past?

Lawley: Of course, we were cold. We'd been in the tropics all these years, and our blood was thin. Besides, being in bad physical condition otherwise, we had another crazy Japanese commander.

Teague: Do you know his name?

Lawley: No. Hell, I ought to but I don't. But anyhow, he was on dope. We'd had one in Burma who was the same way. Anyway, we spent about a week or so cleaning up the camp. These Korean workers had about the same thing, but they had their families with them. They'd just conscript the whole family.

Shortly after we got there, they brought in these Red Cross packages. They were the first ones we'd seen. It seems like they gave everybody a package of cigarettes. They were going to be good to everybody! Then they had a meal cooked from it [the food packages]. These were individual packages,

but they didn't distribute them that way. There was this danged camp commander, and he had a big celebration, this big banquet. He came in and sat down. He attended it, but he didn't participate. We'd know by his presence who was responsible for all this nice food (laughter)! We got a few books.

We were living in these barracks that had, I believe, eight people to a room and no heat or anything. Anyway, we cleaned up the grounds for about a week, practiced shoveling coal, and learned these orders from these different commands.

Teague: In Japanese!

Lawley: Yes. You were supposed to crawl into the mines during the day. At night, at a certain time, at about six o'clock or whenever it was, you'd have to roll the blankets up in a neat roll. After the evening meal . . .

Teague: What was your evening meal?

Lawley: We were on maize now. After dark, we'd go to our room, sit on the blanket, and converse with one another until about nine or ten o'clock. We weren't supposed to converse, but we did so anyway for two or three hours each night. We complained of the cold

weather, so the Jap guards brought a bunch of rice straw in, and we'd make little brushes to rub our skin, circulate the blood, and things like that to warm us. By the time that week or so was up, we was glad to get into the mine because it was warm down there.

Teague: What did you do--just shovel, pick, and chip?

Lawley: We were working a vein of coal that was thirty inches thick. The Japanese and Koreans could run around and duck waddle. We were supposed to squat down and pick and shovel, but we had to sit on the floor.

Teague: Were many people hurt or killed in accidents?

Lawley: No, but it was pretty nerve-wracking. Everybody was eating this maize, and we got dysentery again. Lots of people got it from the food.

Teague: By the spring of 1945, was your physical condition deteriorating again?

Lawley: Yes.

Teague: Of course, by this time the bombing of Japan was becoming more intense. Did you see any American planes?

Lawley: When we got off the ship at Moji, we saw these high-flying bombers. Sometime later in the spring, the

Japanese had these prayer meetings. It was pretty obvious that they were upset. All that time, we had heard rumors. We did know, or hear, from the Koreans that the war was over in Europe and that Roosevelt was dead. Of course, the Japanese told us right quick that Roosevelt was dead. It tickled them, and they figured it'd tickle us, too!

Teague: Did you hear about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

Lawley: We knew something had happened because that's when these prayer meetings really got started. They were training with sharp sticks.

Teague: You could tell that they were preparing for a possible or probable invasion of Japan proper?

Lawley: Them poor folks! If a tank had come ashore, they would've attacked it with those pointed bamboo poles, I imagine.

Teague: They were fanatical and devout, weren't they?

Lawley: Had to be!

Teague: George, when did you hear that the war was over and that you were going to be liberated?

Lawley: The date escapes me, but it seems they told us one day to get up on these barracks and to paint "POW" on it. The next day the Americans came over and

dropped these food containers by parachute. When these containers hit, they were demolished. We did, however, get a little food. And they let us go . . . they took us on a conducted tour to Nagasaki. We saw the damage there. That was about thirty miles from the camp. Another day, they took us to a little resort-type ground in some damn direction. We got a meal of crawfish or something; it wasn't much. We were in this camp for five or six days, and then they told us the war was over. They came in and brought us some shoes. This was afterwards, see. These shoes had been sent in by the Red Cross probably two or three years before this. Now they decided to let us have them. We never did get all these Red Cross packages. They parceled them out a little bit at a time. I believe that if you didn't work, you didn't get any.

Teague: When did the first Americans or other Allied liberators arrive at your camp?

Lawley: They never did.

Teague: What was the procedure whereby you were released from Japanese control?

Lawley: Well, we got on a train and went down to Sasebo. They

took us out to this aircraft carrier. It was a small one, and I can't remember the name.

Teague: So you got on the aircraft carrier. Do you remember how long after the Japanese surrender that was?

Lawley: Might be two weeks after the war was over. Of course, in the meantime, all these Japanese guards disappeared.

Teague: Was there any desire for revenge against the Japanese guards?

Lawley: It seemed like everyone felt the same way, although there were isolated instances of revenge being taken. Almost everyone felt sorry for them. One day we were on the bottom of the totem pole; the next day, they were. They were in sad shape. There were a few people who went back to Asia to testify at these war crimes trials. They felt like something should have been done about this situation. As far as my feelings toward them, I have no animosity or anything.

Teague: What were your feelings at that point when you realized you were finally going home after all these years and that the end was near?

Lawley: We was kind of drained, you know. It was great we lived through this, but there wasn't any great jubilation.

Teague: Did you go directly back to the States?

Lawley: No, we went to Okinawa.

Teague: Did you stay a long time on Okinawa?

Lawley: A couple of days.

Teague: Where did you go from there?

Lawley: We went to Manila in the Philippines. They flew us there on a B-24, I believe. Then a Navy transport took us back to San Francisco.

Teague: What did you go through in the Philippines? A physical check-up, debriefings, or anything like that?

Lawley: No, not really. I remember that they had beer in the chow line (laughter). And the Red Cross was there. I remember I bought a watch. Then they put us on a hospital train at San Francisco and sent us to San Antonio.

Teague: Do you remember when you got to San Antonio?

Lawley: Well, I don't remember any dates. Anyhow, we got there early in the morning; my sister and mother were there. I went up to New Braunfels and then to Wichita Falls for the first "Lost Battalion" reunion. This was in October, I guess.

Teague: When were you mustered out of the Army?

Lawley: I got out of the Army in June.

Teague: June of 1946?

Lawley: Yes.

Teague: Had you regained your health and your weight back by June of 1946?

Lawley: I wasn't in very good health, really.

Teague: What did you say you weighed when you were liberated?

Lawley: I weighed ninety pounds when I got out.

Teague: And you weighed how much when you went into the Army?

Lawley: About 165, I imagine.

Teague: I'm sure it was hard for you to make a readjustment after your years in captivity.

Lawley: Yes, it was. I came down here to Odessa in October of 1948, which is really the first job I really had. I had worked for an optical firm in Lubbock before the war, and it was kind of a tedious job. After I came back, I was too nervous to do this kind of work, and that was kind of demoralizing and depressing. Then I decided I had to try to find some way to make a living, and that's when I went to business school.

Teague: George, concerning the morale of you yourself as an individual and that of your group while in captivity, you said at first the situation appeared to be hopeless and that you felt you wouldn't last long in the immediate

days following your capture. What about 1944 and 1945? Was morale still low among the troops?

Lawley: Well, I was still just living six months at a time. I just couldn't see any farther. That's the way I lived it, and I think the others did, too.

Teague: How was discipline maintained within your group, other than by the Japanese guards? Did the officers retain control to any degree?

Lawley: I'm sure they would tell you they did. At times, we didn't even have our officers when we left Burma. Personally, I didn't have much respect for the way they carried on. I felt this way: a good officer would have looked after his men first, which they didn't do. I wouldn't say each individual officer had this attitude. I've got some good friends who were officers, and I don't hate any of them. I do feel like they could have helped us when we got back with the Veterans Administration, et cetera. The National Guard is cliquish. Anyone who reached the rank of colonel . . . maybe it's not that way now, but back in the days of "Ma" and "Pa" Ferguson and Ross Sterling, you'd know who the officer's governor was. It was kind of like the British system.

Teague: Full of politics?

Lawley: Yes, there was too much politics involved.

Teague: George, how have your opinions and your feelings toward your experiences, the Japanese, and the POW's changed since 1945?

Lawley: I've never given it a second thought as far as the Japanese are concerned. Or any of these other things. I was real concerned about our relations with the officers. I felt they should have been prosecuted for impersonating an officer! It really wasn't that bad; I know we didn't have enough training to be sent into combat, and I don't think they did either.

Teague: Do you think that the Japanese officers should have been held personally responsible for the acts of their men which were committed against the prisoners?

Lawley: We were treated like their military criminals; that's their military law, the way they treated criminals within their army. And that's the reason we got this bad treatment. It was wrong but it wasn't the Japanese guards' decision. The decision started with their Emperor. As far as having hatred for the Japanese, I have no more for them than I have for the Germans.

Teague: I'm sure that, remembering the inequities between the officers and the enlisted men, the treatment of the Japanese guards, and all these things that occurred thirty-five years ago, you don't forget easily because of these impressions which were built up so painfully.

Lawley: Well, you don't forget them, but you don't worry about them. I don't think anybody does, really. But at that time, it didn't set real well!

Teague: I'm sure it didn't. George, thank you very much for this interview. I appreciate you giving your time and a lot of thought about these questions concerning events that occurred so many years ago.