

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
100

Interview with
Mr. Onnie Clem, Jr.
January 11, 1972

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ron Marcello
Terms of Use: Open
Approved: Onnie Clem
(Signature)
Date: 1-11-72

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Oral History Collection

Onnie Clem

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date of Interview: January 11, 1972

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. Onnie Clem for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on January 11, 1972, in Dallas, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Clem in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Mr. Clem was a member of the Marine Corps, who had been stationed in North China, and subsequently was captured in the Philippine Islands on his way back to the United States. Mr. Clem, to begin this interview would you very briefly give us a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, would you tell me where you were born, when you were born, your education, things of this nature--just a very brief biographical sketch.

Mr. Clem: Well, I was born here in Dallas in March of 1919. I went through grade school in Dallas through high school. And after high school I joined the Marine Corps in 1938.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you join the Marine Corps?

Clem: I wanted to travel.

Marcello: This is one of the standard answers that has been given to me on occasions. Usually they either wanted to travel or they couldn't find a job, and so they entered the service.

Clem: Well, I had a job but at that time you couldn't afford to travel.

Marcello: And this looked like a pretty good way to travel.

Clem: A very good one.

Marcello: I assume that you took your boot camp at San Diego.

Clem: That's right.

Marcello: And from San Diego did you proceed right on to North China?

Clem: No, I was stationed at a Naval radio station at Point Loma for six months. After six months at Point Loma, well, then I was transferred to the American Embassy in Peking, China.

Marcello: Was this a voluntary duty station, or were you simply sent there?

Clem: When everybody came out of radio school, they either went to the Fleet Marine Force, or they went to Wake Island or Shanghai or Peking.

Marcello: What were your reactions when you learned that you were going to Peking? Was this something you were looking forward to?

Clem: That's why I had gotten in the Marine Corps.

Marcello: What was your line of work in the Marine Corps?

Clem: Radio operator.

Marcello: You were a radio operator. How long were you at Peking altogether?

Clem: Two years.

Marcello: Did you enjoy your stay in China?

Clem: Very much! I loved it--every minute of it!

Marcello: What were the functions of the Marines in North China prior to World War II?

Clem: Primarily the Marines were a guard detail at the American Embassy. And we also handled the communications for the Embassy over the Asiatic Radio Network.

Marcello: Did you ever have very much contact with any of the other foreign contingents in Peking?

Clem: Oh, yeah, we associated with the Italians and the French and the English, very seldom with the Japanese.

Marcello: Was there any special reason for that?

Clem: None other than that the Japanese were different than we were. We weren't used to Oriental people.

Marcello: And essentially then the Japanese stayed to themselves.

Clem: They stayed to themselves, and actually I don't think that they were ever encouraged by their own officers to associate with the foreigners.

Marcello: While you were in China--and you got there in 1939--at that time did you ever have any inkling that perhaps the

country would eventually be getting into a war against the Japanese? Or were most eyes turned toward Germany?

Clem: At that time, everything was directed toward Germany. The enlisted personnel in the Marine Corps didn't believe that there would be any war with Japan. Whether or not the officers knew of an impending situation, I don't know, but we didn't know of any.

Marcello: As war got closer and closer, did your training or did your duties in any way intensify in China? In other words, did the routine vary as the war got closer?

Clem: Yeah, in the radio station we had grates put up on all the windows. We had an armed guard at the gate going into the radio compound. Then every day all the command took conditioning hikes for several months.

Marcello: Do you ever remember of any incidents between the Japanese and the Americans during this period as tensions perhaps became a little bit more great?

Clem: None other than on occasions different Marines had trouble with different individual Japanese. Most of it was when somebody had too much to drink.

Marcello: I was going to say probably a good deal of the incidents that did occur probably were in the form of barroom brawls.

Clem: Cabarets--that's where most of it took place.

Marcello: Obviously, then, you were on your way back to the United States, or your tour of duty ended sometime in 1941. Is that correct?

Clem: That's right. I was supposed to come back to the States, and I left China in September of '41.

Marcello: Were you kind of glad to leave China?

Clem: Not particularly. I was looking forward to getting back to the States. It had been two years since I had been back.

Marcello: What had made the duty in China so pleasant?

Clem: The money was worth a lot, had a high exchange; everything was cheap. Living conditions were such that the Americans had everything they wanted; it didn't cost them much money.

Marcello: Another question that comes to mind, and one which would be of interest to our Far Eastern experts, exactly what was the American attitude toward the individual Chinese, that is, the American serviceman toward the individual Chinese in China?

Clem: We got along with the Chinese, but at the same time, back in the late thirties and in the early forties most of the Americans seemed to have the opinion that they were above everybody else.

Marcello: Did you ever see any occasions where American servicemen mistreated the Chinese? I know that for example the Marines did use Chinese houseboys, messboys, whatever you wish to call them. Did you yourself ever witness any mistreatment by Marines?

Clem: Not of the messboys or the houseboys that we used. They got along fine with us. The only time I ever recall anybody having any trouble with other Chinese would be if they got mad at their rickshaw boy, something like that. And if they had been drinking a lot, well, they were just as liable to knock him out as nothing.

Marcello: What sort of an attitude did you detect on the part of the Chinese toward the American servicemen? Was it one of respect, was it one of fear, was it one of contempt, or a combination of the three?

Clem: They didn't have fear for us. They didn't show contempt. I don't think they respected us. They knew that we all had a lot of money, in their eyes, and that with very little effort that we'd spend it around them. And they were all anxious to get what money they could.

Marcello: When did you leave China?

Clem: In September of '41.

Marcello: Did you proceed directly to the Philippine Islands?

Clem: We laid over two days in Shanghai and picked up some Marines in Shanghai that were due to go back to the States. And then we went to Cavite Naval Base in the Philippines.

Marcello: Let me just backtrack here a minute. I previously interviewed another Marine who had been in China, and he, too, was on his way to the Philippine Islands when

the ship that he was in was stopped on the high seas by a Japanese warship and searched. You perchance were not on that particular ship, were you?

Clem: No, I wasn't on it.

Marcello: Had you ever heard of that incident?

Clem: No, sir.

Marcello: Okay, so you got to the Philippine Islands in September of 1941?

Clem: Right.

Marcello: What did you do there? Obviously, this was at least two months before Pearl Harbor.

Clem: When we docked in Cavite, the ship was going to lay over three or four days while they unloaded and loaded cargo. During that time, they asked for volunteers to establish a radio network for the anti-aircraft batteries that they were putting up around the Naval installations. And another Marine and myself volunteered to stay over one boat to install this installation. We volunteered primarily because when we went out to China, we were in the Philippines about three or four days, and we had liked what we had seen and wanted to see a little bit more of it.

Marcello: From all I gather, it, too, was considered to be a pretty good duty station essentially for the same reasons that you gave with regard to China. The standard of living was rather low, and American money went a long way even

though as an enlisted man you obviously weren't being paid a great deal of money. Have you ever thought back on how your life might have been different had you not stayed over to put up those installations?

Clem: Yeah, the only difference I could think of was that if I had gotten back to the States, in all probability I'd have been pulled into the First Marine Division and been sent right back overseas and been in the thick of it at Guadalcanal.

Marcello: That's true. Incidentally, could you identify the unit that you were assigned to?

Clem: When we got to the Philippines, I was just attached to the Marine Guard and Naval Base at Cavite. Then, when they later in November brought the 4th Regiment down from Shanghai, China, the outfit that I was with became the 3rd Battalion of the 4th Regiment.

Marcello: When you were in the Philippines were you able to witness any of the extraordinary defensive measures that were being taken on the islands? In other words, when you got there, was the island a hubbub of activity, and was everybody preparing for the eventual war with the Japanese?

Clem: It looked that way to us because they were putting in these anti-aircraft batteries all around the Navy Yard. Then getting down closer to the date that war started, two weeks before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, we were standing general quarters at the Navy Yard. And

every night there was blackout. Now this was two weeks before the war broke out, so they knew that it was coming.

Marcello: What sort of equipment or armament were you able to observe on the Philippines? What I'm getting at here is that several of the former prisoners-of-war that I have interviewed have commented on the obsolete equipment that one saw on the Philippines. Did you observe this also?

Clem: Well, the only anti-aircraft guns they had were old three-inch 50's . . .

Marcello: . . . which I gather could not reach the Japanese bombers when they eventually did come over.

Clem: Couldn't reach them. They used a powder-train fuse, and they had a maximum range and elevation in height of approximately 10,000 feet. And when the Navy Yard was bombed, well, they could fly in at anything over 10,000 feet, and they couldn't touch them.

Marcello: Can you remember the circumstances surrounding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor? In other words, where were you when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor, and what was your reaction to it when you heard about it?

Clem: I forget what time it was. Like I say, we were at general quarters the whole time two weeks before the attack. We got word that they had attacked Pearl Harbor. Like I said, I forget the time of the day or night when

we received that information, but shortly after that--it must have been the next day--we were hit in the Philippines, oh, somewhere, if I remember, around eleven or twelve o'clock.

Marcello: I was going to say that if you were at Cavite Naval Yard, that was hit very, very shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Clem: About eleven or twelve o'clock that they hit.

Marcello: They didn't waste any time in hitting Cavite. What were your reactions when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor? Do you remember?

Clem: No, none other than "Well, it finally came."

Marcello: Did you think it would be a pretty short war? In other words, did you think that we could handle the Japanese pretty well?

Clem: We did. We thought that we could handle them real well.

Marcello: And then I'm sure your mind changed a little bit when the Japanese did hit Cavite. Can you remember that initial attack on Cavite?

Clem: I remember that very well.

Marcello: What were you doing at the time of the attack? Now as we mentioned, it occurred very shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. In fact, when those bombers were hitting Pearl Harbor, they were probably already on their way to Cavite.

Clem: I'd say it was around noon because we had just come out of eating.

Marcello: This would have been on December 8 because they hit Pearl Harbor on December 7, so that would have been December 8 your time.

Clem: Along about the 8th. We'd come out of eating, and then I was off duty. Normally, my job was in the CP on this radio network with anti-aircraft batteries. And when we came out of the mess hall, we were wondering when the Japanese were going to hit us. And then somebody spotted these planes across the bay, and--I forget now--there were something like fifty or fifty-four planes in the flight that hit us. And we didn't know if they were American planes or if they were Japanese. We had seen a lot of B-17's flying around--not that day. But when the planes came over us they were still too high to tell what they were. And we stood there watching them, and then it looked like sunlight flashing on pieces of tin foil just fluttering around in the air, and we actually didn't know what it was until we started picking up the sound of these bombs. Then we knew it was bombs being dropped.

Marcello: What did you do?

Clem: Well, when they started going off, the first thing I did was to hit my face flat on the ground like everybody else.

There wasn't any time to run anywhere.

Marcello: I assume that the base did not put up very much resistance to the Japanese attack. It was all so sudden.

Clem: The anti-aircraft batteries all opened fire. There was some strafing by Japanese fighter planes, but for the most part, the ones that weren't actually on the guns just stood around and watched the bombing and watched the Of course, the bombing raid didn't last too long because the planes just passed over us. I forget whether they hit us first or hit a field over near Manila first--one of the two. And then they were bombing the ships out in the harbor. But we watched several "dog fights" and watched all this anti-aircraft fire. It never did get up to the planes. They never lost a single plane. And for the most part, it was just a big show to us.

Marcello: What were your own personal reactions to what was taking place? This obviously was your first taste of the real thing.

Clem: First time. And it was the only time I wasn't scared because it was all new, and it didn't dawn on me that it was real, and I don't think any of us were scared at that time.

Marcello: How old were you then?

Clem: Around twenty-one.

Marcello: I assume that after this first raid, from what I have read, Cavite was in shambles.

Clem: It was. The town itself was a shambles. They knocked out all the Naval warehouses and dock facilities at the Navy Yard. Cavite, the town itself, was a small little, kind of like a country town; they knocked all of that out. The big Navy radio station there had three towers, I believe, and they knocked one of those big towers out and did some damage to outlying sections around there. But for all practical purposes, it was no longer a base.

Marcello: I was going to say after December 8th, Cavite as a Naval base ceased to exist and certainly it was no factor in the fighting which took place after that date.

Clem: Oh, no.

Marcello: Well, what happened after that?

Clem: Our detachment was sent out to a strip along the bay called . . . I believe it was Mission Beach they called it. It was a, primarily a torpedo depot where the Navy stored torpedoes out in the open. Of course, we didn't know if the Japanese were going to land or what was going to happen. But that happened to be our position. And we had foxholes dug and trenches dug facing the water. Of course, the heaviest thing we had was fifty-caliber

machine guns. But then a few days before--I forgot how long we were there--but shortly before Christmas they evacuated Manila and made it an open city. And we were all loaded in trucks, and we went to some little town there on the Bataan Peninsula.

Marcello: What did you do when you got to the Bataan Peninsula?

Clem: We were amazed at all the activity that was going on with the Army, with the Philippine Army, with the Philippine Scouts, and with the American Army.

Marcello: Now, as I gather, the troops were withdrawn into the Bataan Peninsula to fight some sort of a holding action. In other words, the theory or the thinking was that obviously the Army and the military personnel there could not defeat the Japanese, so they were supposed to form a defensive line on the Bataan Peninsula until either help came from the outside or the troops were evacuated. Was this the general thinking that was prevalent at the time among the troops also?

Clem: Yeah, it was the only defensible position on the entire island.

Marcello: Right. In other words, was it your belief that you were going to get off the island?

Clem: Oh, yes, we knew we were. Sure.

Marcello: You obviously had no idea then as to how much damage had been done at Pearl Harbor. The extent of that damage

you probably didn't know.

Clem: We were never told how much had been done. But we were sure that we could stop the Japanese there, and we knew that it wasn't going to be too many weeks before some fleet was going to be in there with reinforcements.

Marcello: What was Bataan like? Describe the peninsula from a geographic standpoint or from a physical standpoint. Was it mountainous? Was it jungle?

Clem: From what I remember, at the end of the peninsula which protected Manila Bay, oh, a couple of miles out from the end of the peninsula, was the island of Corregidor. Then over from that about a mile was a smaller island. I believe it was Fort Hughes. And the theory on Bataan was that Corregidor would protect the beaches of Bataan with the heavy guns they had.

Marcello: Naval rifles.

Clem: And the artillery that the Americans had on Bataan would keep the Japanese from advancing down the peninsula because the only mountain that I recall on Bataan was right at the end of the island, Mount Mariveles. And that was used as an observation post, and they could see for miles down the peninsula. They had the peninsula pretty well plotted, so all they had to do was call out coordinates and set the 105's that they were using. And

they did tremendous damage with the artillery that they had there.

Marcello: Now, the Bataan Peninsula was also pretty, oh, what shall I say, there was quite a bit of jungle there. Is that correct?

Clem: Heavy jungle. And in the area where Mount Mariveles was there were lots of steep canyons, lots of real steep canyons, heavy, heavy jungles, real heavy.

Marcello: Like you point out, it was a good place to establish some sort of a defensive perimeter, and certainly any attacker was going to have trouble overrunning that peninsula.

Clem: Coming into the peninsula where the Japanese had to come, most of it was cultivated ground. It was all cleared ground. They were at a decisive disadvantage.

Marcello: Like you point out, this made them inviting targets for American artillery as they came in.

Clem: We had prepared concrete positions there. They had been established twenty years before this war ever broke out.

Marcello: Were you up on the front lines, or as a radio operator were you somewhat to the rear?

Clem: Just prior to after the Marines got to Bataan they moved us to Corregidor, and we were to be the beach defense on Corregidor.

Marcello: In other words, you weren't on Bataan for a great length of time?

Clem: Well, yeah, I was because I came back to Bataan. But I was on Corregidor for, oh, probably until February of 1942. They had two portable radar outfits, the only two that were in the islands at that time. And the Marine Corps had both of them. One of them was set up on one of the coasts of Bataan, and the other one was on the opposite coast of Bataan. And it was at an air strip where we had a fighter plane strip, the P-40's there. And they sent me over to this radar detachment at this fighter strip, and we operated out of that up until shortly before the surrender.

Marcello: Let me get your itinerary straight here. You went to North China, and you were there for about two years. Then you moved over to the Philippines in September of 1941. And you were at Cavite then until shortly after Pearl Harbor, shortly after the Japanese hit the base at Cavite. And then from there you were sent into the Bataan Peninsula where you remained for a few days, the first time around. And then you were back to Corregidor. How long were you on Corregidor?

Clem: Probably two months--January and February of 1942.

Marcello: During that period on Corregidor, what sort of bombardment did the island come under?

Clem: When the Marines went to Corregidor . . . Corregidor was laid off in a kind of nomenclature of Topside, Middleside,

and Bottomside.

Marcello: And the island itself was kind of shaped like a polywog or a tadpole.

Clem: A polywog or a porkchop or something like that. But when we first got there they moved us up to the Topside, which was the parade ground . . .

Marcello: . . . this was where the barracks were, also.

Clem: In these tremendous, concrete, three-story barracks. And the Army troops that were living on Corregidor had been pulled out of there, and they were in these gun positions and on the beach. So they moved the Marines in, put them in the barracks, and the first thing they told us was that they were bombproof. We didn't have to worry about anything. So it must have been either the first day we were there or the second day we were there, right at mealtime--everybody was in the mess hall--Corregidor got its first air raid. I don't believe they had had an air raid up to that point. And the first thing that they hit was Topside, and they took out every one of the barracks that they had there and destroyed them. We were all in the mess hall.

Marcello: Those bombproof barracks.

Clem: Bombproof! Those bombs would go through the roof, the third floor, and explode on the second floor. We were

all in the mess hall, and everybody was underneath the tables. And when the air raid was over, the whole place was just full of all the concrete that had fallen down from the above floors. But our casualties, we didn't have anybody killed in that raid, the Marines didn't. We had some of them that were hurt, but nobody was killed in it.

Marcello: Were the air raids a rather regular occurrence then from that time on?

Clem: After that they became a regular thing.

Marcello: Did you ever become accustomed to the air raids?

Clem: No, I didn't. I never became accustomed to them.

Marcello: How would those constant air raids work upon one's mind, let's say, or upon one physically?

Clem: Well, what happened to most of us that if you're in a chow line and somebody would drop a cup, well, everybody figured something was going to happen, and they just flatten down on the ground. The Japanese kept on hammering Corregidor, and Corregidor's defenses had some five-inch anti-aircraft guns which were new, and I understand that they brought in some proximity fuses, and when that happened, well then they started getting quite a few Japanese planes with the anti-aircraft fire. But up until that time, they didn't get any of them.

Marcello: I assume it did wonders for the morale when the Japanese plane was knocked down.

Clem: One time it was good for everybody's morale. There was two planes that came over, and one battery fired two shots and got both of them there. Usually they'd fire fifty shots and miss them. But Corregidor was set up kind of like Singapore was--for a defense against the sea. Singapore had the same trouble; the Japanese came in the back door, and they couldn't turn those coastal rifles around. Corregidor was set up for firing out to sea.

Marcello: And I understand the major armaments on Corregidor were what they call Naval rifles, which shoot a flat trajectory, which meant that in addition to not being able to turn those guns around, those Naval rifles couldn't shoot over those hills.

Clem: They had those guns camouflaged real well. I never did see any of the rifles or big mortars that were on Corregidor. I've seen pictures of them that were made prior to the war. I've seen pictures of the remains of them after some of them had been knocked out, but I never did see any at the time because after they hit us there at Topside, they moved the Marines from up there and put us in these concrete trenches all around the island. And they moved us into these concrete trenches.

Marcello: Did most people feel rather secure on Corregidor?

Clem: They didn't think that it was going to fall. When I say

they, most of the generals probably knew what the handwriting was, but most of the troops felt very secure there. The only thing they could do was just sweat out the air raids.

Marcello: And here, too, you were quite sure that help was on its way; it was just a matter of time. What was your opinion of General MacArthur? He was on Corregidor for a great deal of the time. What was your opinion, or from what you could detect, what was the opinion of most of the other men toward MacArthur?

Clem: We didn't care much for him. The main reason was that we never got to see the man. There were a lot of other general officers that would come around to different positions, but old "Dugout Doug" never got around to visiting the Marines, and we always figured he just didn't want to get too far away from that tunnel that he stayed in.

Marcello: Did you ever have a chance to go into any of the tunnels on Corregidor? In particular, I'm referring primarily to Malinta Tunnel.

Clem: Yeah, I had to go into Malinta Tunnel as a runner.

Marcello: I suppose that was one of the safest places on the island, was it not?

Clem: The safest. I had always heard about it, and I was amazed when I saw it. They had railway tracks in there,

and anyway I went into Malinta Tunnel as a runner. I forget now what it was about. I was taking some papers to somebody in there, and I got in there and all the personnel had on starched, clean khakis, and I hadn't had a bath in probably three weeks, and I stunk and my clothes were mildewed and in shreds. Everybody in there would turn their noses up at me. But that was the only time I was ever in one of the tunnels, and I was glad to get back out and get back out with the rest of our outfit.

Marcello: Why do you say that? Simply because of the attitude of the people that were in there?

Clem: Yeah, yeah.

Marcello: Now, what were in the tunnels? The hospital had been moved into the tunnel, had it not?

Clem: Yeah, the hospital.

Marcello: And I guess the command post was in the tunnel.

Clem: There was an awful lot of brass in the tunnel as far as I could tell.

Marcello: What was your own physical condition at this time? Were you still in pretty good shape?

Clem: I was in good shape. I was in real good shape.

Marcello: Had Corregidor been living on short rations at this point yet?

Clem: No, we had plenty of food. We didn't get any short rations until, oh, I'd say, probably . . . well, when I got back to Bataan, well, the food was real scarce when I got back over there, and that was probably in February.

Marcello: Were you ever subjected to any artillery bombardment while you were on Corregidor, or were most of the attacks at that time from the air?

Clem: They were all from the air.

Marcello: I guess the Japanese didn't subject Corregidor to the artillery barrages until after they had subdued Bataan. Is this correct?

Clem: Then they were able to move up some big mortars, about 240 mm mortars, that they moved in. And they kept up a constant bombardment with those things.

Marcello: Why did they send you back to the Bataan Peninsula again in February?

Clem: They just needed some more help with this one radar unit that they had at this air strip, and they picked me to go over there.

Marcello: Did anything eventful happen at that air strip? I would assume the air strip perhaps was subjected to some aerial attacks by the Japanese.

Clem: After I had been there probably, oh, maybe two weeks,

well, we had lost all the planes.

Marcello: These were the P-40's.

Clem: P-40's.

Marcello: Which apparently were not any match for the Japanese Zeroes.

Clem: No, they weren't. One of the last P-40's I saw there was a flight of either three or four that came in, and they were playing "follow the leader" to come into land, and there was a Zero that came in with them; he was the last man, and he just picked them off one at a time.

Marcello: I suppose this was another example of some of the obsolescent equipment that the American forces had on the Philippines because the P-40's were no match at all for the Japanese Zeroes.

Clem: Well, no one had ever seen a Zero. They were amazed that they had such a versatile airplane. After the war started, after that first bombardment, well, we didn't have very many P-40's left.

Marcello: I guess the Japanese knocked most of those off out on the ground, had they not?

Clem: That's what I understand because they immediately put all of the Air Corps personnel into the infantry.

Marcello: Well, let's talk about the events leading up to your capture. Can you relate the immediate events by which you were captured?

Clem: We received orders from Corregidor to dismantle this radar equipment--it was all in a big van--dismantle it and get it all packed in the van, and to leave this site we were at. And we were supposed to go down to . . . I forget the name of the town, right on the end of the peninsula.

Marcello: Not Mariveles?

Clem: Mariveles. Well, it could be. I forget the name of the town. But we were to board ship there and be taken to Australia. Now that was the word that our C.O. gave us.

Marcello: At this time, you were still expecting that you were going to get off the island and go to some place of safety.

Clem: We didn't really buy going to Australia. We figured that they would have some barges or something down there to take us over to Corregidor, and Corregidor looked like a pretty safe place to be. But anyway we got word to move back down the peninsula, and it was during the night that we pulled out of there. And it was a chaotic mess. There were convoys headed the direction we were headed, and there were convoys headed back up towards the fighting, and it was just utter chaos.

Marcello: Now at this time, were you on relatively short rations on Bataan?

Clem: Yes, we were on short rations, real short.

Marcello: What was your physical condition at this time? Had you contracted malaria or any other tropical diseases yet?

Clem: I hadn't contracted malaria. We were in the first stages, I'm sure, of malnutrition. None of this stuff actually showed up until after we were in prison camp, but on several occasions we had a large-sized can of sardines. That went to six men for one day's meal.

Marcello: How did you manage to supplement your diet, or were there things on Bataan that you could use to supplement your diet? By that I'm referring to any tropical fruit or monkey meat or anything else.

Clem: Up until this time, there had been. Yeah, we had monkey meat, but monkeys got scarce and snakes got scarce. Game had been killed off and eaten up. The peninsula was supporting many thousands of Philippine refugees, and . . .

Marcello: Which I think was one of the things that the Japanese wanted it to do.

Clem: And most of our food was going into these refugee camps. But we were on real short rations then, and somedays we might miss one or two days even eating. I remember when the Japanese first started feeding us, well, we were getting more food from them than we were the last few days before we surrendered.

Marcello: What was your weight when you were in your peak condition when you were in the service?

Clem: I carried 172 most of the whole time.

Marcello: I'm asking you this because later on I'm sure I'll ask you again how much of your weight dropped afterwards. But you weighed 172 pounds when you were at your peak.

Clem: When the war started, that's what I weighed.

Marcello: Okay, so here you were then; you had been given the orders to head down the coast toward this little town on the coast. Proceed from there.

Clem: Yeah, we got down there, and it took all night to get there. We got the word, oh, it was sometime the next morning. I don't even remember how we got the word now, but word was passed along in some form or fashion that the islands had been surrendered to the Japanese. And prior to that time, that morning, everybody on the roads was getting a lot of strafings, a lot of bombings. And after the word was passed that the islands had surrendered, well, these Jap planes must have been given the word because these Jap planes were buzzing us, but they weren't shooting anymore. Actually it was a sense of relief really. The first thing was a sense of relief. You'd see these planes fly over, and they wouldn't do anything.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what your reactions were when you

learned that the Americans had surrendered. What was your reaction?

Clem: We knew that we were going to be able to get over to Corregidor. They hadn't surrendered Corregidor.

Marcello: Right.

Clem: They surrendered the Bataan Peninsula. And we were sure that what Americans were there were going to be able to get to Corregidor, and that we would be all right over there. We were damned glad to get off the peninsula itself. I didn't have any feeling of regret that they had surrendered the peninsula because I knew that it was just going to keep on going. It was going to be a few days of respite from what we had been going through. But when word was passed that they had surrendered, well, our C.O. told us that we'd have to destroy this equipment because when we got down there to the beach there wasn't any transportation. So we destroyed the equipment with grenades, and then he told our group--fifteen or twenty men--that we were being released from any responsibilities. If we wanted to try to make our way to Corregidor we could, because they would probably be sending boats over for anybody that could. Since the islands had been surrendered, if we wanted to try to work farther up into the northern part of Luzon where they had some guerrillas up there we could. We could do whatever we wanted to. We had been

released from any responsibility to the United States Government. That's what he told us. And another Marine and I decided that . . . we were down there--I forget now--probably a day or two trying to figure out how to get to Corregidor.

Marcello: In other words, the barges didn't come.

Clem: There weren't any boats that came over. No boats came over. We saw several people that had been able to get dugout canoes, and we could see them paddling over there. But I didn't feel like trying to swim it, and I'm a good swimmer but at the same time there were a lot of sharks out in that water, and I didn't want to mess with them. And this other fellow and I decided that our best bet was to try to work our way back through the Japanese lines, back up into the northern part of Luzon where we could contact some of the guerrilla units that were up there.

Marcello: At this time, I assume, there were all sorts of rumors floating around, and was it a general rumor that the Japanese did not take any prisoners, that they were going to kill everybody?

Clem: I didn't hear that. No, I didn't hear that. There were rumors that half the Japanese troops were women and that they were chained to machine guns, and like you say, there were all kinds of rumors going on. I hadn't heard that

they didn't take any prisoners though.

Marcello: What made you decide to try and work your way through Japanese lines and go up into the northern end of the island?

Clem: Well, I sure didn't want to spend some time as a prisoner-of-war. I mean, no matter who it was, I didn't want . . . I'd seen the way the Japanese lived while they were in China, the way their troops lived, and they had a pretty Spartan life, and we figured that if conditions were as rough with their regular troops in peacetime, it'd be pretty bad for the prisoners in wartime. But that was the prime reason along with not wanting to be a prisoner and figuring, well, it wouldn't be too long before help got there, and if we'd get up there with those guerrillas, it'd be all right.

Marcello: Well, what happened then? Did you make your attempt to get up to the northern part of the island?

Clem: The first thing we did, instead of going around this Mount Mariveles, we went over the top of it. And we were out, this other fellow and I, probably four or five days. I forget now.

Marcello: Did you see any Japanese troops? Did you have any close brushes with Japanese troops?

Clem: Yeah, yeah. We got picked up once by Japanese troops, and when they weren't paying any attention to us, well, we

slipped off from them. They took us into camp, and . . .

Marcello: When you say "into camp" you mean one of their camps?

Clem: I'm trying to think. We got picked up twice. The first time they took us into a camp, a bivouac area that they had. And now they had been in control of the peninsula for four or five days by then, and they told us to go on down the road where there were some more American prisoners. They figured we couldn't do anything, so they just sent us on down the road. So instead of going on down this road, well, we cut back off into the jungle. And we came around a bend on this little trail one day, and there must have been eight or nine of them. They had seen us coming down this trail, and they were just laying and waiting for us. So they took us prisoner and took us into another Japanese camp.

Marcello: Did they rough you up any?

Clem: No, not at the time. They took us into another camp, took us over to an officer's tent, and one of the officers spoke English. And he kept asking us where we had been, what we had on Corregidor. He wanted to get some information. And they fed us and asked us if we would like to drive some trucks for them there on the peninsula. They said they needed some truck drivers. And we declined the invitation, and they told us that the next day they would take us down to this main road that ran along up

the peninsula.

Marcello: In other words, they didn't force you to drive the trucks. They actually did ask you to drive.

Clem: No, they asked us to do work. All these fellows were combat troops, and they had a lot of respect for us, and we had a lot of respect for them. They were good soldiers, and they treated us real . . . the combat troops treated us very nice. But anyway they took us down to where all these Americans were that had been caught and were still there. The Filipinos had been taken back off the peninsula in what has been referred to as the Bataan Death March.

Marcello: In other words, the group that they had taken you back to were more or less stragglers, I suppose you could say, like yourself.

Clem: Yes. And we were fortunate enough that the group they took us to, well, the Japanese--I forget how it worked out now--but the Japanese got to talking to some other Japs, and we got to ride in a truck up to the first stop. We didn't have to do the actual marching ourselves.

Marcello: Where was the first stop? Did you go to O'Donnell?

Clem: Yes, I was at O'Donnell, but there was a town that they took everybody to. I forget the name of the town now. And they kept everybody in the schoolyard there. And then they would take us out . . .

Marcello: This wasn't San Fernando, was it?

Clem: It could be. I believe it is. I believe it was. I'm not positive, but I think that's where it was. So we were kept in a schoolyard, and they moved out groups from there to Camp O'Donnell. And I couldn't even tell you how we got to Camp O'Donnell from this town. I don't even remember if we hiked or went by train or truck. I don't remember how we got there.

Marcello: This was at least part way to O'Donnell in other words. On your way to O'Donnell did you see any of the aftermath perhaps of the Bataan Death March? Was there any evidence along the road to indicate that something terrible had happened there at some time previous to this?

Clem: Now we passed several groups and witnessed the Japanese guards beating on any of the men that fell down.

Marcello: You did see that on numerous occasions?

Clem: I saw that several times. Now when we got to O'Donnell and got to talking to other Americans that had been there prior to us arriving and that had walked out of Bataan, then we started picking up stories of shooting them on the road, and all they brought out all that. When we got to San Fernando, there was a Filipino. Everybody that came in there that I recall, well, he always told them, "If you have anything Japanese, well, throw it away because they will probably think that you got it off of a Japanese corpse." And they'd just as soon

shoot you if they thought that, you know. So when we got to San Fernando, I don't even remember if they fed us there.

Marcello: Did they rough you up at all--your group?

Clem: Not there, not there.

Marcello: You were still in pretty good shape physically, I gather?

Clem: No, because, you see, we were on such short rations before the surrender, and then there was that four or five or six day trek through the mountains with very little to eat--whatever we could find we ate--and we had no supplies with us. Well, that pulled us way down. And I don't know what my weight was. I had a pair of Air Corps coveralls, and when I first got those coveralls, they fit fine. But they just hung on me by that time.

Marcello: What other sort of equipment did you have at the time you were captured? Or let me put it this way: What sort of equipment were you allowed to take along with you to O'Donnell? I assume you had your canteen, your mess kit.

Clem: When we were captured we had a .45 and some ammunition and a canteen. We didn't have a mess kit or anything. We had no extra clothes. I had on shoes and socks and these Air Corps dungarees, and this fellow I was with had the same thing on. And when they captured us, they took our .45's. They did leave us a canteen. But that's all that we had.

Marcello: What was your reaction upon being captured? Did you think, "Well, it's only going to last for a short while, and help's going to come, and this whole thing's going to be over in a short amount of time." Or were you starting to have more sober thoughts by this time?

Clem: I think everybody suddenly realized that they were in pretty dire straits and kind of sobered up to the fact that they were prisoners. It was hard to visualize that here you are, you've never been caged up in your life, and all of a sudden you're caged up, and somebody has the power of life and death over you. And it was a very sobering thought, and it was actually hard to get that through everybody's mind that that was the predicament that they were in.

Marcello: What were conditions like at O'Donnell when you got there?

Clem: We couldn't believe it actually. These open latrines they had, there was men laying all around those things, and it was the fellows that had diarrhea, so they just stayed there at the latrines. The stench was horrible! Everything was covered with big green blowflies, and the only good thing about it--at least we thought it was good at that time--was that they fed us a couple of times a day. The food, from what I remember, that they gave us was plain rice that we got at O'Donnell, but it was more than we had been getting. And also when we got in there,

it was kind of a relief to get in with a lot more of the Americans. They had a fence dividing the camp. They kept the Filipinos separated from the Americans. That was the scene when I first got there, but after we were there awhile--by awhile, probably a couple of days--there wasn't anything to do to keep busy, and people started dying off at a pretty fast rate.

Marcello: Did you ever have to participate in any of the burial details?

Clem: Oh, yeah, I caught that. What they would do when any of the Americans would die, they'd line all of the bodies up in a row, and you couldn't bury them that day.

Marcello: Why was that?

Clem: Well, I think it was probably just orneriness on the part of the Japanese commander because they'd get a lot of bodies out there, and by a lot, I mean there might be in a couple of rows fifty or a hundred bodies lying out there.

Marcello: The attrition rate was that great?

Clem: I had heard what it was. I forget what it is now. It seems to me that we were losing . . . I believe our losses started running to between fifty to a hundred a day. The Filipinos' were about ten times what we were running, and they would run anywhere from 500 to 1,000 in a day. But your burial detail consisted of . . . you'd dig a hole probably ten feet square.

Marcello: I understand the depth of the hole a lot of times depended upon the patience or impatience of the Japanese guards, too. Is this correct?

Clem: Two to three feet was probably about it. After they had one crew digging this grave, this mass grave, these fellows that were able to walk would bring up a file of Americans, and they'd take two men to each body. One of them would get hold of the corpse's foot, the other would get hold of it by the hands. Like I say, they wouldn't let you bury them the first day. They had to lay out there in the sun a day or two before you could bury them, and then when you picked them up, one of the first things that happened--and bodies had bloated up in the tropics--the first thing that happened was that the skin would split when you picked it up. And generally, they were so bloated their bellies would rupture, and we had to carry them about maybe 500 yards to where these graves were; now there wasn't any exact number. You'd just keep throwing bodies in there and then cover them up with what dirt was left.

Marcello: I understand they were more or less stacked like cordwood or something, is this correct?

Clem: Well, they weren't there. They were just thrown on top of each other. And you'd get a rain come through there, and the ground would settle a little bit, and you'd have

arms sticking out, and you'd have legs sticking out. And, of course, that contributed to the disease factor so much that I believe the only reason the Japanese ever moved us out of O'Donnell was that some of their men started dying. We'd see them holding cremation ceremonies, and they started losing personnel, and they were losing some with this dysentery that most of the Americans had. There wasn't any medicine; nobody had any or they wouldn't give us any. And what killed most of them was a combination of malaria--the malaria kept them from eating what little food the Japanese gave us--and then this dysentery. Their guts were just coming out of them.

Marcello: I understand this was perhaps the biggest killer--dysentery in combination with the malaria perhaps.

Clem: They'd form a sick line, and American doctors would prescribe for them. They'd tell them to go down to the cook fire and get charcoal and chew this charcoal. This was all they had for dysentery. I was pretty unique. I hadn't had a bowel movement in probably two months at that time, the whole time several weeks before we moved out of camp, and then about the four or five days we were up in the mountains, and after we got to O'Donnell, probably a couple of weeks after I'd been there. So I was kind of worried about it, and I fell in this sick line one morning. I went up there to the doctor, and

everybody was telling him what their trouble was, and he'd say "Take some charcoal, take some charcoal." He was sitting there with his head down and he said, "Next." And I said, "Doctor, I can't get my bowels to move." And he looked up, and he said, "What'd you say, son?" And I told him. He said, "Well, let me shake your hand." He said, "I can get them started, but they'll never quit." He said, "You're the luckiest man in this camp!" And I never did run into that amoebic dysentery.

Marcello: What did that come from? The drinking water or were there other things involved?

Clem: I don't know. The flies would get on these corpses that they had out there laying around, and when they would put out the food, these flies would get on the food. And they were around the latrine and all this mucous and stuff that men were passing, well, the flies were eating that, and they would get on the food, too, and it would get transmitted like that.

Marcello: It was just one vicious cycle in other words.

Clem: Just a vicious circle. I don't even remember now how long we were at O'Donnell. We might have been there a month, maybe two months.

Marcello: In other words, during this time that you were at O'Donnell, there were very few work details of any sort. There were the burial details . . .

Clem: . . . the only thing I got on was the burial details.

Marcello: . . . maybe chop some wood or something like that for the cook fire.

Clem: No, I never did that. I didn't have to do that.

Marcello: What do you know about any escape attempts at O'Donnell?

Clem: I never heard of any at O'Donnell.

Marcello: I think everybody was probably so weak at O'Donnell that the primary concern was simply to stay alive.

Clem: They were. They were weak and they were tired; stay alive, that's what they wanted to do.

Marcello: Did you ever observe many of the prisoners being roughed up or beaten at O'Donnell?

Clem: Not at O'Donnell. Not at O'Donnell. I heard tales of that when they came. Now when we first came into camp-- the group I came with--they searched everybody's equipment, if you were still fortunate enough to have anything with you. We didn't have any to start with, but the ones that did, I think the Jap troops on the highway coming up probably confiscated most of it. But they searched everybody coming into camp. I heard stories that they had found some men come in that had Japanese money on them, and they had been killed. And that's why this fellow at San Fernando, had been warned. He had heard about it. Nobody in our group had anything. They searched everybody and let them go on in.

Marcello: Did the Japanese take things like watches and rings and items of that sort?

Clem: Yeah.

Marcello: This was something, I suppose, they considered as one of the booties of war.

Clem: Well, they acted like they had never seen a wristwatch. They were all "tickled to death" to get hold of American watches. And I had a Marine Corps ring that I had had made out in China that I wore all the time except when there were any Japanese around. Then I kept it up my rectum the whole time any Japs were around.

Marcello: And they never did confiscate it?

Clem: I eventually lost it, but I was able to keep it for about two and one-half years.

Marcello: Is there anything else that stands out at O'Donnell that you think ought to be a part of the record? I gather that O'Donnell was more or less a transit station, you might say, until they could send you to some other place.

Clem: Either that or maybe they thought they had enough facilities there to take care of everybody, and then they found out what was happening.

Marcello: Well, did you detect that perhaps the Japanese were simply overwhelmed with the number of prisoners that

they had and really didn't know how to take care of them.

Clem: Yes. They were kind of in awe at us. They'd look at us and I think they were amazed that we were prisoners, that we weren't all killed. I think that's what amazed them. I don't believe they could understand that. The intellectuals, I'm sure they could. But just the rank-and-file, they had that . . . death for the emperor drilled into them so much. I think they were rather surprised that anybody would go through a war and be captured.

Marcello: From a physical standpoint, what did O'Donnell look like? Describe the compound itself.

Clem: If I'm not mistaken, O'Donnell was probably in the middle of a bunch of rice paddies, and the barracks that we were in, they weren't barracks; they were just kind of like a pole barn with thatched roofs, no sides to it. There was one big building in there. It's hazy and I don't remember too much about that. I just remember a big building being there. And the camp part where we were was kind of down in a . . . oh, it was off the side of a hill, I guess you'd say. The Japanese were all quartered upon this hill. But I don't remember any of the physical characteristics of it.

Marcello: From O'Donnell I gather that you then proceeded to Cabanatuan.

Clem: Yeah, we went back by freight car.

Marcello: You went by freight car to Cabanatuan. Describe this trip to Cabanatuan.

Clem: I don't remember how far it was to the railroad. We marched to the railroad, and then they loaded us on boxcars. And they would pack as many as they could get in a car, and then they'd close the doors.

Marcello: What do you estimate the temperature was inside those boxcars?

Clem: It was way over a 100 degrees. It had to be! It must have been up around a 130, 140 degrees.

Marcello: I was going to say it was probably close to 100 degrees on the outside.

Clem: It was about like being in one of these automobiles left out on a summer day when you get in it with all the windows up--about the same thing. But we were packed in these cars, and, gosh, I don't even remember how long the trip was to Cabanatuan.

Marcello: I don't think it was a real long trip as I recall, but nevertheless did you lose very many people on this trip to Cabanatuan?

Clem: I don't think we lost any people. I don't think any of them lost their life on this trip.

Marcello: By this time, had most of the weak ones been killed, or had most of the weak ones been "weeded out," I guess might

be a little better way of putting it?

Clem: Yeah, and most of them were the younger ones, too; a lot of these boys in the National Guard that were youngsters didn't know how to take care of themselves. When we got to Cabanatuan, our death rate dropped drastically.

Marcello: Conditions were much better at Cabanatuan?

Clem: The camp was cleaner. Yeah, it didn't have all these diseases.

Marcello: Now this was a Filipino Army camp, wasn't it, or it had been at one time?

Clem: Well, O'Donnell was too. Both of them were. Cabanatuan was one and it seemed to me we had a great many more men at O'Donnell than we had at Cabanatuan while I was there. And they had barracks with floors in them; they were clean, and it was a real clean camp.

Marcello: Did you have any blankets or mats or anything of that nature to sleep on?

Clem: I acquired a blanket. No, we didn't have any mats. I acquired a blanket, but I don't for the life of me know where I got it. I don't remember where I got it.

Marcello: How long were you at Cabanatuan altogether?

Clem: Probably five or six months, something like that.

Marcello: What was a typical day like at Cabanatuan? In other words, describe a day at Cabanatuan from the time you get up in the morning until you went to sleep in the evening.

Clem: In 1942 at Cabanatuan there were very few work details. The only work detail I got on was the firewood detail. One of the main things that occupied your time was standing in line to a water faucet. The Japanese allowed the water to be--I forget now how long--but they allowed it to be on maybe an hour in the morning and maybe an hour in the afternoon. I don't remember. But to get water you just stood in line and just waited until it was your turn. When there weren't any work parties, everybody was sitting around talking about food. That was what they were discussing.

Marcello: I'm sure that was the major topic of conversation at all times throughout their tenure as a prisoner.

Clem: Everybody was really getting hungry by that time. Food was very serious then. The rice diets we were on wouldn't sustain life. And the Japanese, while I was at Cabanatuan, didn't supplement your diet very much. I understand later on it became a pretty good place, but at that time food was skimpy.

Marcello: Did you get the sweet potato vines as a soup?

Clem: Not there. We had that on down the road, not at Cabanatuan. But, like I say, the only work I was on was a logging detail, and when you came in from work, well, about the only thing you'd do was go stand in line and wait your time to get water. And the guards didn't interfere with

you. And about that time some of the fellows started trying to escape, and that's the first time that I had seen them put into effect the business that if one man escaped, they'd shoot ten others.

Marcello: They divided you into squads of ten men, isn't that correct?

Clem: At that time, I think what they did when a man escaped, they'd just walk into camp and pull out ten men. I don't think they were segregated into groups at that particular time, but we then had two fellows who attempted to escape, and they killed ten men for each one of those on two occasions.

Marcello: Did you witness this?

Clem: Yes, I saw that.

Marcello: Can you describe that incident?

Clem: The only thing I really remember is one long, tall, red-headed boy. They took the ten men that they were gonna' shoot, and they tied them up to consecutive posts on a fence, and they left them out there all day long in the sun. They wouldn't give them any water, and it seems to me they were out there a couple of days. And this red-headed boy managed to escape, get himself untied. And he ran down to one of the barracks. All he wanted to get was some water. He wasn't trying to run off, but the guards came down and got him, and they beat the devil

out of him and took him back up there and tied him up again. And then anytime a Filipino would walk down the road, well, they'd call the Filipino over and give him a stick or a club and tell him to start beating on the Americans. And if the Filipino wouldn't do it, well, then they'd work over the Filipino. But they kept these fellows up there about two days, and then they took them--I don't remember if they had to dig a grave or there's another group dug it--they took them up on this hill and executed them with a firing squad. And in the volley, everybody went down but this red-headed fellow that had broke loose. Oh, we were probably a 100 yards, a 100 or 200 yards away. And he staggered, and they shot him again, and he still didn't go down. And before they could shoot him a third time, well, his knees finally buckled. Then the officer went up, and he only fired one shot. I always heard that they gave him a coup de grace. They'd fire a shot to the head. But they shot just one man. We don't know who. They'd shot somebody that wasn't dead apparently.

And then the second time they had an execution it was held the same way. And they tied the men out to a fence for a couple of days and wouldn't give them any water. And that must have been probably in, oh, I don't know, around July, or something like that, of 1942. And while I was there, that was the only two attempted escapes.

Marcello: I assume that after those two incidents everybody started to get the message.

Clem: Yeah, that was a good way to give it to them. Well, it not only endangered somebody else's life, it just scared the hell out of them, too, to know that they would go ahead and kill us for it.

Marcello: I assume that even if one did escape one's troubles had just begun because you had to face a hostile jungle, and I suppose you couldn't be sure whether the Filipinos would be loyal or not in a good many cases.

Clem: After we finally did get away from the Japanese, we found out--not at Cabanatuan but in the other camp I was at--we found out that there were lots of Philippine guerrillas not far from our camp that were there for the sole purpose of any American that did escape to pick them up and take them to where they would be safe. Now had we known that, the whole camp would have left. And we did find that the guerilla organization had gotten word to the American camp commander that they could take care of all them, but he wouldn't do it because he was afraid that his crippled men, his sick personnel that were in the hospital, would not be able to get away and that the Japanese would retaliate by killing them.

Marcello: Did you ever see or suspect anyone of collaborating with the Japanese in order to get more food or some other

special favor?

Clem: Not where you would call them collaborators. Not at this point, no, we didn't run into it at this point.

Marcello: How about supplementing your diet? Were dogs and cats safe if they managed to stray into the camp?

Clem: One time at Cabanatuan there was a goat that got in camp, and it was just like a tremendous football tackle. It was just a solid mass of fellows in a big pile, and when it cleared away, one of them would walk out with a piece of leg in his hand or a piece of skin in his hand chewing on it. They ate him alive there. But there were not cats and dogs in there. There had been, and they had been eaten. And the work parties we were on at Cabanatuan were in areas where we could not get any food supplements. The Filipinos around the camp were scared to attempt to get anything to us. So as far as we were concerned, it was just strictly rice there.

Marcello: Now at Cabanatuan are there any individual Japanese who stand out in your mind, either for some act of compassion or for some act of cruelty that they may have committed.

Clem: Not as an individual, no.

Marcello: Did you ever have any nicknames for any of the guards here at Cabanatuan?

Clem: I'm sure we did, but I don't remember them. I just don't remember them.

Marcello: Some of the ones I've heard come up in conversation from time to time was one by the name of "Donald Duck." And there was another one that I think was called "Air Raid."

Clem: Every camp had a "Donald Duck" in it.

Marcello: Is that right?

Clem: But I don't remember any particular one that we called that at Cabanatuan. We weren't associated with the guards very much there.

Marcello: Did you yourself ever manage to get beat up by any of the guards or roughed up while there?

Clem: I did later on but not there at Cabanatuan. This was after I had been moved from there.

Marcello: What was discipline like at Cabanatuan? Were you still obeying your officers for the most part?

Clem: They kept the Marines segregated. The Japanese always had a lot of respect for the Marine Corps, and they kept all the Marines segregated from the Army personnel. We were in a barracks all to our own--nobody but Marines in there. And the Marine Corps had a lot of discipline. We followed orders and instructions from the officers we had, and we got to know them real well being a prisoner. Of course, back at that time, there was a lot of distinction between an officer and enlisted personnel, and we were very surprised to find out some of these officers who we thought

had been "son-of-a-bitches" could actually be human beings. But there wasn't anybody that fussed with what the officers asked them to do.

Marcello: I assume that you did not have very much contact with the Japanese officers. Was it not true that orders usually went from the Japanese command to an interpreter who perhaps then gave it to your officers, who in turn gave it to you.

Clem: He gave it to the American camp commander, and he passed it out to individual groups.

Marcello: Is there anything else that stands out from your stay at Cabanatuan that you think ought to be a part of the record, either from a serious standpoint or from a humorous standpoint?

Clem: From a humorous standpoint, I was standing in the line one day to get water, and I got up to the spigot; it was my turn. And they had an American officer on each spigot in camp to cut the water on while you held your canteen there and then cut it off. And the fellow that was there was a boy that I had graduated from high school with here in Dallas, had gone all through high school with him. I hadn't seen him after we got out of high school. And this fellow was named Bob Lang, who was a lieutenant in the Air Corps. Bob never did make it; he never got back. And the Marine that I was captured with there on Bataan,

this fellow Rice from Louisiana, he died at Cabanatuan. And the only burial detail I got on at Cabanatuan was on the burial detail when we buried him. And all the Marine troops that were in our group, well, we all fell out for his funeral, and we were right proud of ourselves. All the dogface boys, they'd just been thrown in these pits, and he was the only Marine that died there, and we were able to hold a semblance of a military funeral for him, which we were real proud of at the time.

But again, at Cabanatuan there wasn't much work, and if you're in that condition and you're confined and you're underfed and you're half sick and there's no outlet through work or something like that, well, your mind gets dull and one day just meshes right into the next to where you lose all count of time. And consequently everything's just kind of a blur. I guess your mind just blocks it out.

Marcello: What did you do to occupy your time? Was there anything you could do? Did you play cards? Obviously you didn't have any reading material or anything like that.

Clem: No cards to play. No, we didn't have anything. There wasn't anything to do.

Marcello: Except sit around and dream about recipes, I suppose.

Clem: Talk about food, yes. That's about it.

Marcello: I understand that there were all sorts of recipes that . . .

Clem: The wilder they got, well, the better they sounded.

Marcello: I know some people have told me that their imaginations would play tricks on them, and they actually believed that they could smell various types of food cooking from time to time, and they'd simply roam over the camp trying to find out where these odors were coming from.

Clem: Well, I'll tell you what you could do. You could sit there and listen to somebody describe how you would fix a certain dish, and you could taste it. You could taste it just like you were eating it.

Marcello: When did you leave Cabanatuan?

Clem: Around November of '42. Let's see, at Cabanatuan, before we got there, that was the first time they apparently registered everybody. They put out a big questionnaire-- your name, serial number, where you were born, and a kind of personal history. And that's where they got their first . . . well, it was the only time they ever did get the names of who they had. And then--I believe it was November of 1942--they picked out a 1,000 men. I don't know how they picked them or what, but anyway, several of the Marines in our group were told that we were leaving the next morning. They didn't know where we were going, but the next morning we were leaving-- these 1,000 men. And they took us by train to Manila.

Marcello: Was this a rather uneventful ride?

Clem: Very uneventful. This time we weren't all crowded in

boxcars. We had a lot of us in the cars, but the conditions weren't like they were. As a matter of fact, we went in cattle cars is what we went in. They were slatted, and there was air, and we had food and drink at the stops.

Marcello: What was your morale at this time?

Clem: The morale was always good. We never did have bad morale.

Marcello: Did you live from day to day or from month to month?

Clem: Day to day. If you could get by one day, you had that much made.

Marcello: Did you still feel that help was on its way?

Clem: Yeah, we didn't know where the hell it was, that's all. We just wanted to know why it hadn't gotten there. But when we got to Manila, they put us aboard a Japanese ship. The Americans had practically free run of the ship. You could get on deck. You couldn't get up in the superstructure or anything. The Jap galley was in the back towards the fantail. And we had all the food that we could eat on that ship. They were Merchant Marines, and they kept cooking constantly for the Americans that were on there. They gave us all we wanted to eat on that thing. That was the first time we'd had anything.

Marcello: Why do you think there was this change so far as the amount of food that they were giving you. Do you think that they simply had more available?

Clem: No, I think it was because they were the Merchant Marines and the Jap soldiers; it was the Merchant Marines. Most of the fellows that were in it were older men, and they'd been probably in most of the ports of the world, and they'd had contacts with the Caucasian race and probably wanted to help us to some extent. But they treated us very nice. We were on the ship for several days. We didn't know where we were going, but we didn't make any stops. We stayed in the islands; we didn't get out on the seaward side, and we didn't see any signs of American subs. We didn't see any signs of Jap naval craft. And when we did dock, it was at Davao on the island of Mindanao. And they took us off the ship, and as we were unloading, there was another ship in there that Americans were loading onto. And they were American troops that had been down on Mindanao. Well, there was no fighting on Mindanao. There was no hardship. They had just surrendered with the rest of the island.

Marcello: Were these soldiers in pretty good shape from what you could tell?

Clem: They were in good shape. Their clothes were nice; their khakis were clean. They were in good shape. They were loading, but where they went, I don't know. But then we came in and we looked like hell. And we were actually resentful towards the way those fellows did look. But

anyway they got us unloaded and herded us into a field, and we sat around this field for, oh, I don't know, three or four hours, and then we started to march. And we marched to this Davao Penal Colony, which was a Philippine penal colony.

Marcello: In other words, it had been a prison for civilians before the war?

Clem: Very well established. It was out in the middle of nowhere. It was a big farm. They had a railroad track out there with a little diesel train on it, narrow gauge. They had tremendous rice fields, and they had lemon groves, and they had avocado groves, trees probably 30 or 40 years old. It was just a big farm, was what it was. But they marched us to that thing, and, oh, it took us a day and a night marching to get there. They fed us well on the way. Some trucks came in from the penal colony and met us and brought in hot food, and there was some Americans on the trucks that brought it in to us. And when we got to the penal colony, well, they had metal-roofed barracks, and it was kind of a luxury; it was luxurious as far as we were concerned.

Marcello: It was quite an improvement over O'Donnell and Cabanatuan, especially Cabanatuan.

Clem: Yeah, it was very luxurious as far as we were concerned. But then when we got there, well, then the food . . . they

brought us this good food on this hike. By good food, there was rice and there was soup. The soup had meat in it and vegetables. But when they started feeding us at the penal colony, well, they went back to this rice diet again. And then they started getting the potato vines and the watercrest, or vines growing on the creeks, and they'd bring that in, and we'd cook that up into a soup. But they told us there that our job was to grow our own food, that we'd have plenty to eat because you could grow your own. But as fast as it was harvested, well, the Japanese would take it because their money was no good. And the only way they could get products was to barter. They'd trade food to the Filipinos for whatever they wanted. But as a prison camp, life wasn't too bad there. There was a lot of hard work. You were up before daylight.

Marcello: What did you do?

Clem: Oh, I worked in the rice fields for several months, and I worked just general farm work for several months. But you started before daylight, and it'd be dark when you got in. Several of us grew some tobacco. We got to plant a little plot and grew tobacco, and we'd roll cigars. And we'd trade the cigars to other Americans there to somebody who had been out on a work detail and got some bananas or something like that. We'd trade the

cigars for something to eat.

And while I was there I worked in a rice mill where they polished rice. And we had one old boy that had made him a pair of wooden shoes, and he hollowed these wooden shoes out. And he was working in this rice mill, and he'd fill these hollow shoes with rice, and he'd walk back into camp with it, and he'd have rice to cook that night. Well, one day then on coming back in, his shoe broke and here this rice spilled out. And the Japanese were very indignant about it. They held a trial and sentenced him to death, and they executed him with a firing squad.

Marcello: You witnessed this also?

Clem: Yes. And they got me one day for . . . I was on detail and I stole a can of condensed milk. I forget how they found that damned can of milk. They lined all of us up, and we agreed if anybody did anything that they would own up to it because everybody would get in trouble if they wouldn't. There must have been ten or twelve of us, and this guy goes down the line and asks us, "Did you take it?" "No, sir." "Did you?" "No, sir." "Did you?" "No, sir." And he got to me and he said, "Did you take it?" And I said, "Yeah." So he goes on past me and asks the next man, and then it dawned on him that

I had admitted it. Well, he got in front of me and chewed me out thoroughly in Japanese, and I didn't know what to expect. I mean he could have pulled out a pistol and shot me or whatever.

Marcello: Was this an officer or an enlisted man?

Clem: A Japanese sergeant. And after he got through doing all of his chewing out, well, then he reaches up and he just flicks me on the nose, and that was all there was to it. One guy stole some rice and they shot him. I stole a can of milk and I get chewed out and flicked on the nose. So you really couldn't figure out what they were going to do.

Marcello: Did you ever think about what possibly could have happened to you at the time that you stole that can of condensed milk? Or were you so hungry that it didn't make any difference?

Clem: You mean prior to doing it?

Marcello: Right, at the time you did it.

Clem: No, I didn't pay any attention to what the consequences would be. It was there and I had the chance to take it.

Marcello: Was it simply because your hunger was so great?

Clem: I was hungry and wanted it. But then there was a change in the attitude of the guards. They took out the regular Army, and they brought in a bunch of the youngsters--we

called them young; they were younger than we were--from Formosa.

Marcello: Now were these native Formosans, or were these still Japanese?

Clem: I don't know. We just knew that they had come from Formosa, and at that time I'd been by the island a couple of times, and I didn't know who or what the population was or anything on it. I knew it was a Japanese-held island. But they dealt us misery, these boys did. They weren't combat troops or anything; they were youngsters. They had the power of life and death over us. On the slightest provocation, they just beat the devil out of somebody just to be doing it. They would stand somebody up out there and practice acting like they were going to take pistols and just pull the trigger pointing it at him. It wasn't even loaded, but they'd just do it. But you never knew if one of them . . . they had the power to go ahead and kill you if they wanted to. But they kept your nerves on edge with all this harassing that they'd do.

Marcello: Were you ever subjected to any beatings by these new troops?

Clem: Not at this camp. I was later but not at this one. And we were there just strictly to work.

Marcello: Were there ever any escape attempts here at Davao?

Clem: There was one escape attempt. Ten men left. Incidentally,

they all got back to the United States, too. There we'd been divided into groups, and we knew who was in our group. So if one man left, hell, the other nine might as well to go with him. But when these ten took off, they were from varied groups.

Marcello: Oh, these were not all the same group of ten?

Clem: No. So what the Japanese did, they just went down the row. I don't know how they picked them out, but they picked out a hundred men. About a mile from the prison camp was a camp within a prison camp. It must have been for habitual criminals or something, but it was a stockade with some buildings inside of it. I'd call it a maximum security place. But anyway, I was one of the one hundred men they took over there after this escape, and we were pretty sure what it was for. And we were trying to make plans ourselves for one hundred men to try and make a mad escape. We might get by with it. Anyway we sat in this thing; we thought we'd be there two or three days before something would be decided. But we were there about two weeks, and . . .

Marcello: Were you getting your normal rations?

Clem: Normal food and everything. We were just completely segregated from everybody, and we weren't sent out on any work parties. And after about two weeks, well, they

called us all out late one evening, had a formation, called us out. And this Jap officer had these papers, and he started reading it off. And we could understand very little Japanese at that time, and he'd read awhile, and then he'd call somebody's name in English. And he'd read a little further, and then he'd call somebody else's till he'd called everybody's name. And we figured that's what the sentence was, which is what it was. But after he got through, the Japanese interpreter told us that they were supposed to shoot one hundred men, shoot the hundred of us, and there was so many that the camp commander didn't want to take it on himself to execute one hundred men. So he had gone to his superiors with the problem, and they wanted to know what he had done with us, and he told them that he had us locked up separate for a couple of weeks and that we hadn't been working. And they figured that to work was a blessing, I guess. But since we hadn't been working and had been segregated for two weeks, that was punishment enough for us. So they let us go back to the other group.

Marcello: What were your feelings when they let you go back? Was it one of relief?

Clem: Oh, yeah, sure it was. Very much so. We knew we were off the hook, and then after that happened though, we decided that we would start being bolder as far as stealing

food and doing things that we weren't supposed to do because we figured some change had happened somewhere in the Japanese line of thinking. And after that, for instance, we'd go out on work parties. The only clothing we had was a loincloth that we'd wear. And we'd go on these work parties and get bananas and pineapples and casabas and potatoes and lemons, and we'd put it in these loincloths. Then about fifty of us would come marching into camp.

Marcello: Theoretically, you still were not supposed to have any of this food.

Clem: We weren't supposed to have a thing. We'd come marching up to the gate, and the guards would go down the line searching everybody barehanded, nothing in the hands or anything. So one day they got wise to it, and they wouldn't do it every time. Most of the time, though, they'd bring you up, and then they'd have everybody take their loincloth off there at the gate. And everybody'd take his loincloth off, and all the food would fall out. And then they'd march you on in, if there was fifty men, there was fifty little piles of food sitting around. And they wouldn't discipline them about that. They'd just confiscate the food themselves because they wanted it. But life there was, oh, it was hard.

Marcello: How were the sanitary facilities? I mean as far as clean bathing facilities and things of this nature.

Clem: They were good; they were good there. We had some wells there, and we drew water out of five-gallon buckets. And then when you worked in the rice fields, there was a river that after you got through working you could go swimming in, which we didn't know but found out after we go back to the States that most of the fellows there picked up these parasites, this schistosomiasis in the river. I got it in the river there. That's where we got it, swimming in this infected water. But the hardest work there was working in the rice fields, and the hardest part about working in the rice fields was the starting of new paddies because you'd clear out the jungle and you'd build these little dikes and clear the jungle out, and they'd leave that laying in there to rot, and then when you'd go in there to plow it up, well, everybody was barefooted, and it was full of stickers and thorns, and your feet took a terrible beating doing that.

Marcello: And I suppose you were subjected to hookworm or whatever else you might get under such circumstances.

Clem: Well, yeah, and at that time, well, malnutrition. Everybody was coming down with malaria at that time. I never got malaria because I had had it in the States, and I must have been immuned to it. But I came down with dinky fever. We came down at that time with beriberi; we came down with pellagra; we came down with yellow jaundice.

Marcello: Most of these came from dietary deficiencies.

Clem: Right, right.

Marcello: How about tropical ulcers?

Clem: There was a lot of those, and if you had picked up tropical ulcers, the Japanese would put you on the rice field work because if you had them on your legs, you'd be in all that goeey mud, and it seemed to help. They'd heal up in that mud where they wouldn't if you weren't in the mud. But everybody had scars and ulcers all over their legs. And you'd get out in those rice paddies--you'd probably have to be out there about a week or ten days--and they'd clear up on you. But the only thing that bothered us there was that everybody started coming . . . by that time we'd been on bad food so long that our system was finally starting to wear down on us.

Marcello: You just had no resistance, in other words.

Clem: Not much, not much. And then they broke us up into smaller details about that . . . oh, I don't know, it was just prior, I guess it was Christmas of '43 or something like that. And they sent me with 100 of us back down to Davao. And we found out we were going to join a group of Japanese-Filipino civilians there and build an airstrip.

Marcello: Were you kind of glad to get out of Davao?

Clem: Very glad, yeah.

Marcello: I assume it was by far the worst place you had been to

so far.

Clem: No, I think it was the best.

Marcello: Really?

Clem: Because mainly there was something to do. You could keep busy. And the smaller the group of men that you were in, well, we figured the better off we were.

Marcello: By this time, was it more or less every man for himself? Were you looking out for your buddy?

Clem: No, no. Everybody was helping everybody else out. Everything we had we split, we shared.

Marcello: Did you ever have much of a problem with thievery, that is, one prisoner perhaps stealing food from another or something of that nature?

Clem: Not much, no, not much. I really don't recall an instance of it. But when they sent us down to this place to work on an airstrip, that's where everybody's troubles really started.

Marcello: Why was that?

Clem: Well, we thought that by getting in a small group that we could get along with the Japanese better. And we couldn't get along with the Japanese better. That's when we started to take a lot of physical beatings from them. The guards that we had on that particular detail were a pretty sorry bunch. And we had a Japanese interpreter that just hated the Americans. And the work was hard in

building this airstrip. What it consisted of mostly was that the Americans would quarry this coral rock out of a cliff, and the temperatures run about 140 degrees in this quarry. And these large boulders were trucked down to the airstrip and dumped out, and then the Americans would make little ones out of big ones. And then they would carry it on these poles on the shoulder with a basket on each end and distribute it out where it would be rolled down. But walking on this coral, everybody's feet were just cut to ribbons. And swinging those sledgehammers and carrying that rock was terribly hard work. I got lucky. I finally got put on a bulldozer. And one night, oh, it was around midnight . . . I was the first man on this platform we slept on, and I guess that's why they picked me. We went out the gate and went out in the middle of a coconut grove. He told me to go to work, and I said, "Doing what?" And he said "That." And I couldn't even see and I felt up there. It was a big tractor, bulldozer. The closest I had ever seen one was to pass it on the highway. So I told this guard I didn't know how to run it. And he hits me across the head with a rifle butt and knocks me out. And I come to, and I get up, and he tells me to go to work, and I say, "I don't savvy." So he lays me out again. Well, I come to and he says go to work, and about that time a Japanese civilian

comes up and spoke English and asked me what was the matter. And I said, "I was trying to tell this monkey that I don't know how to drive this thing." He said, "Well, I'll show you how." And I said, "All right." And it had a little gasoline started motor on it. I didn't know that. He started it and he told me what these controls did, and I crawled up in it and tore down all these trees and ran that thing all night long practicing with it. And then that was my job for almost a year after that--to operate the bulldozer. Well, then I got to miss all this walking on coral that we had done for several months. I got away from that, and by working on the bulldozer, I was able to get food from some Filipinos that we would run across. We were always having to tell the guards that we had to go to town to get a certain part. If we could find a part for the truck, and since I was in the motor pool, two or three Americans and two or three guards would pile in the truck and go into town. The guards would stop somewhere to have a beer, and they'd go in and have a beer and leave us sitting out in the truck. Well, there wouldn't be any place to go, but the Filipinos would come by, and they'd hand us food to eat.

Marcello: Did you ever make any close friends with any of the guards?

Clem: Not any of the guards, but we had a Japanese civil engineer named Nomura. We were working at night with him,

and he had an American .45. And he wanted to know if I'd show him how to take that gun apart, and I took it apart for him. And after that, he would bring sake out on these work parties when he could. And if the Jap guards found out about it, they would get him in trouble because he wasn't supposed to fraternize with us. He was just supposed to oversee our work. But he would bring us food when he could, and if there weren't any guards around, he'd tell us to quit working, let us rest. And he spoke real good English. And we always figured he was a white man instead of a Japanese at the time.

Marcello: At this stage, had you been receiving any news at all from the outside world, either from your family or with regard to the progress of the war?

Clem: Nothing in the progress of the war. While at Davao Penal Colony, just prior to being sent down to this place where we were building an airfield, I received a cablegram, and it was saying that my sister had a daughter. That was the first word that anybody in this camp that I was in had had any word at all. Now when we got to this airfield, they had some postcards that were made out-- multiple-choice: I am: (sick, well, feel fine.).

Marcello: And, of course, everybody had to put in the "feel fine" category, or else the card didn't get home.

- Clem: Oh, yeah, you had to put that. Like one guy had put down, "I now weigh 140." Well, before he got in there he might have weighed 240, you see. But it was multiple choice answers mostly, and we sent those out.
- Marcello: I've seen some of those cards. In fact, we've gotten xerox copies of some of them and have included them in the interview.
- Clem: I think my mother had one or two that she finally received from me. But I believe that was all the mail I received-- just that one cablegram.
- Marcello: How about Red Cross packages? Did you ever receive any of those?
- Clem: We got our first Red Cross package on this airstrip. The first thing we got was a pair of brand new GI shoes, which the Japanese wouldn't allow us to wear. All we could do was hang them up and look at them. They wouldn't let us wear them.
- Marcello: Why did they do that?
- Clem: I don't know. Unless they figured that if we got shoes on our feet, we'd take off through the jungle sure enough. It was quite awhile after the Christmas of '43 that we were issued two Red Cross boxes. That was the first ones that we got.
- Marcello: Was there ever any evidence that the Japanese may have gone through these packages before they distributed them to you?

Clem: Not ours. Ours were all sealed up and in good shape and everything. That gave us a lot of trading material. The Japs liked to trade. And we liked to drink by that time. This work kept us so damned keyed up and whatnot that we'd drink anything we'd get hold of. And we liked to trade whatever we could get to the Japanese for sake. They'd bring us this sake. We could work half-shot a heck of a lot better, and it wouldn't bother you near as much as if you were cold sober. But then we also started getting money, running into these Filipino groups. The Americans were counterfeiting Japanese invasion money and sending it into the islands. And these guerillas would get it, and they'd pass it to the people in town, and it ruined the Japanese economy. And they were giving us money, and the Japs never could understand why we had more money than they did. All the Americans at that time had a lot of money. And they finally found out what was going on when they ran across, I believe it was a 100 peso bill that the Americans had, and the Japanese had not even issued it into the islands yet. And we got just a little bit ahead of the regular channels. But that's when they knew that their money was being counterfeited.

Marcello: Generally speaking, did you have a fairly close rapport with the Japanese civilians there? Or were these Filipino

civilians?

Clem: Filipino civilians, not the Japanese civilians. The Philippine-Japanese civilians that were working on this airstrip were kept entirely away from the Americans.

Marcello: Did most of the guys who were working in these coral pits suffering quite a bit from cuts and scratches and what have you?

Clem: Yeah, it was a rotation. I mean, you might do it two or three days, and then you were hauling it on one of these yaho poles for several days. All except the bunch in the motor pool, and they made them permanent. We had two steam rollers and about three trucks and this bulldozer that I was on. And I think they had ten men out of a hundred; ninety of them were out there working with a pick and shovel, and the other ten were in the motor pool, and we were the ones that got all of the food and brought it into camp for the others. We'd share it with all the other fellows in there. And we started getting pretty healthy down there. Working conditions were bad; the guards were beating everybody up on the slightest provocation. But the motor pool bunch working with this one Japanese civil engineer had it a lot better than the rest of them did.

Marcello: Did you yourself ever receive any permanent injuries of any sort from any of the beatings that were administered

to you? You've mentioned already that on several occasions you'd been tromped around pretty well.

Clem: No, no permanent injuries. A lot of wounded pride. But this work there on this airstrip . . . we built a damned good airstrip for them. We built a real good one.

Marcello: Did you ever do anything to sabotage the work?

Clem: Yeah. In the construction of it, oh, there were probably two, maybe three, guards that the Americans were able to kill and make it look like an accident. For instance, they had a guard riding on one of these big steam rollers, and he dozed off to sleep, and one of the operators pushed him off and let the steam roller run over him and tell the officials that he just fell off. After this airstrip was completed, they were using these "Betty" bombers, and it was my job, if a plane crashed, to clear it off the runway with this bulldozer. And then if it was disabled and didn't crash, well, I was to take the bulldozer and tow it to a revetment. And the first plane I pulled off, well, the Japanese wrapped this cable around the fuselage right back by the tail section and told me to go on and drag it off. And I told them that I was going to cut that plane in two, and they said, "No, you won't. Go ahead and drag it off." So instead of keeping a tight line on that cable, well, I just gunned it and hit the end of that thing, and it cut it right in two,

and they thought it was funny. They got a big charge out of that.

Marcello: That was a pretty good case of sabotage there.

Clem: Yeah, I had an airplane to my credit. That's more than a lot of pilots could say; I did get a plane. More and more planes started coming in there that had been shot up. And that was the first inkling we got that there was some fighting going on relatively close by. It might be a thousand miles, but it was getting close. And then the Japanese started putting in anti-aircraft batteries. So they used the Americans to put in the batteries.

Marcello: Could you detect any changes in the attitudes of the Japanese? Obviously, the war was getting closer and the tide had turned.

Clem: We measured everything by the amount of food we got. That was the barometer. And food didn't change. There was a slight change in food. They took us off the rice and gave us cornmeal. Well, the first two or three days the cornmeal was absolutely superb. It was cornmeal mush. But after two meals a day of cornmeal mush, well, then you started looking for rice again. And we told them we wanted rice, and they said, "Well, you were always saying that rice wouldn't go enough for you. So now we give you what the Americans eat, which is corn, and now you

want our Oriental rice back." But the treatment the guards gave us, they weren't as harsh. That was the only change. But we didn't pay any attention to that because, I mean, hell, normally they could go along for a week and everything would be "peaches and cream," and then something would happen and all of them would blow their stack. So you never knew; that wasn't the barometer. Like I say, food was our only barometer.

Marcello: Did you ever have any scores to settle with guards? In other words, did you ever say to yourself, "Well, when and if I ever get out of here, I'm gonna' beat the hell out of him?"

Clem: Oh, every one of them. Every one I had. I wasn't going to beat the hell out of them; I was going to kill every one I could. And I think everybody else felt the same way at the time.

Let's see, sabotage, yeah. They were going to put in the anti-aircraft batteries at the same time above this coral quarry, and they were building placements for some eight-inch naval rifles--big eight-inch guns. And being the bulldozer operator, it was my job to help to get these eight-inch rifles up this cliff. Through myself and a couple of the other guys working with me on this bulldozer, well, we never did get those eight-inch guns up there. They never made it. We'd spend all day

long getting almost to the top, and about the time we got there, the cable would break, and here'd they go. And I guess we spent two months, those Japs did, trying to get those rifles up there. And when we left, they never had gotten any up. And then they had us build anti-aircraft emplacements, and their anti-aircraft emplacements were constructed as follows: they'd dig a pit, and they would take a steel plate with long bolts clear around the circumference of this steel plate, drop it down this hole, pour reinforced concrete on top of it, and this was a hole probably four feet deep. These bolts came clear out of the ground, and then they poured this concrete on it and then let it set, and then the threaded part of the bolt sticking up, they'd put a plate down on top of that and then the anti-aircraft base bolted to that. Well, we would do all of that, but they'd cut the bolts off in the motor pool, and at this time the guards weren't paying any attention. Somebody could get a guard off over there and slip him a shot of sake and get to talking to him or something, and they wasn't paying any attention to what the rest were doing. Well, they'd lay this plate down and just stick these bolts down in the concrete about an inch or two, let it harden, and then after two or three days a crew would come along and bolt this top plate, and the

Japs thought it was securely anchored down in the ground in on this concrete, and then they mounted gun bases to that. And after we got these guns in, we were only there about two weeks, and they moved us out. We were fortunate that they didn't test fire them while we were there because we know the first time it was fired the whole damned gun and crew went up in the air.

And then we got word we were leaving, and this bulldozer which had come from Singapore was the only piece of equipment like it on the island of Mindanao. So I convinced this Jap engineer that the thing needed a complete overhaul, and he said, "All right." So we stripped it down, and we took this big V-eight caterpillar bulldozer, and we had a warehouse full of parts. And every night when we'd go into camp, for the first two or three nights, we each took a main bearing, and we'd put it in our G-string and took it into camp and dropped it down the latrine. Well, that was all we had to get rid of. So then we messed around with the thing for about a week, and we knew we were leaving because they had already told us we wouldn't be there much longer, and we acted like we were trying to put the thing back together. We didn't know what we were doing though; we never could have put it together. And we finally got orders to leave, and this Jap civil engineer that had treated us real nice,

he begged the military commander to leave a couple of us there to put this bulldozer back together because they needed it. But he said he couldn't do that. And so we left out of there. And that was the only sabotage that we were able to get by with. We had some detailed maps made of the field, and of all the gun positions, revetments, and everything, which were turned over later to the Naval authorities, and they wiped out that field using these particular maps that we had.

Marcello: How did you get those maps to the Naval authorities?
Was this after your liberation?

Clem: No, we've got a lot more talking to do.

Marcello: Well, it seems as though this is perhaps as good a place as any to bring this in. Or did this perhaps occur later?

Clem: Let me just put it this way. They moved us out of this airstrip. There was a hundred of us, and then there was 500 men building another airstrip. And then there was 150 men left in the Davao Penal Colony. They had moved everybody else out to Japan, and we were the last Americans on Mindanao. And they loaded us aboard a ship. We didn't know where we were going or anything; we had no idea. But they put us aboard a ship and brought all these groups down to the docks.

Marcello: Were you kind of sad to leave Davao, or didn't it make any difference to you?

Clem: No, we wanted to get out. We were expecting those anti-aircraft guns to go off, and we wanted out of there because they would have probably shot everyone of us. And they brought these three groups of men, 750 of us, together and put us on this ship. And it wasn't like the ship they brought us down on. They put everybody down in the hold, and there was no room in the hold for everybody. You had to stand up. It was just like being in an elevator, and you just stood that way for several days. And they would lower water to you once or twice a day, lower a bucket of water, and they would jiggle on the rope and slosh it out. And the crew of that ship, they were a bunch of bastards.

Marcello: I assume you were not allowed up on deck.

Clem: You couldn't get on deck, no. You were packed down in there, and it was hot.

Marcello: Were there any toilet facilities?

Clem: None at all. If you went, you just went jammed up right next to the guy in front or back of you. We had several fellows that died down in there. And they wouldn't even take out their bodies. They just left them wedged in there. So after a few hours of that, well, then the stench from those corpses became terrible. But we were on that ship several days.

Marcello: You had no idea where you were going?

Clem: Didn't have any idea, no idea where we were going. We were on that ship several days, and then we stopped and they transferred us to another ship that they'd pulled up next to. And we found out that we were at the port of Zamboagna which is in Mindanao. It's on a peninsula. It's a pretty important seaport there. Anyway, they put us on this other ship, and everybody wasn't in one hold. They put 250 of us in this forward hold, and in the afterhold they put the other 500 men. Well, you had room on that ship to sit down and lay down. There was room. The food was a little better. You got water. The ship would travel a little ways and stop. It might stop several hours and start up again. Well, we were aboard ship altogether I think it was nineteen days and eighteen nights. Most of us had been on this first ship under these terrible, terrible conditions. And late one afternoon, well, we heard the bugler blowing the general quarters, the Japanese bugle call for general quarters. And in the process of blowing it, well, he just trailed off. He just pooped out on blowing it, hit some sour notes. His bugle notes just faded out on these sour notes. And there was hatch covers over the hatch. And the Japs pulled these hatch covers off and dropped hand grenades down in there and then turned machine guns down in the hold. Well, just about the time they started that, well,

there was this explosion. And what had happened, a torpedo had hit this ship. And personally, the only thing that I remember was that I just saw a flash, everything turned red, an orangish-colored red. No feeling, no nothing; everything just turned red--a solid color.

Marcello: Now let me get this straight. Right before this torpedo hit, you mentioned that they threw hand grenades down in the hold.

Clem: Yeah, they ripped the hatch covers up, and you could see them dropping these grenades down. And then they started shooting.

Marcello: The grenades exploded?

Clem: I don't know if the grenades went off first or the torpedo. I don't know because it all just meshed right in together.

Marcello: Fortunately, you weren't in the path of any of the grenades.

Clem: No, but you could see the fire coming out of the machine guns. You could see the grenades fall, and everything turned red for me. And I assume that that was when the torpedo hit. And the next thing I knew, I was kind of flying, just twisting and turning, and there were clouds all around me and everything.

Marcello: You were still in the hold of the ship?

Clem: I didn't know it, but I was. I couldn't see anything. All these billowy forms like pillows, and I was just

having a good time of it. I thought I was dead. Actually, there is life after death because I'm dead and I'm alive, too. And then I opened my eyes, and reality came back. I was under water in the hold of this ship, and these pillows were other guys in there, bodies. Some of them were dead; some of them were trying to get out. And the ship was filling up with water. And I thought the ship had already sunk, and I was trapped down in it, and I was going to die sure enough. So I figured the quickest way to get it over with was to go ahead and drown myself. So I just opened my mouth and thought I'd drink in some water, and my head was above water, and I was just gulping air. So I started gulping air and then looked up, and I could see light coming in through this open hatch. And then I thought, "Well, I can get out of here." So in the meantime all this water was rushing up towards this hatch, and the ship was filling up and sinking.

Marcello: Now were you at anchor?

Clem: No, we were out in the . . .

Marcello: You were out in the sea somewhere.

Clem: Deep water, yeah. I worked my way up, and I was up in one corner. I was away from the hatch. I'd been forced up into a corner. And that was one place that was everybody for themselves--survival of the fittest. And everybody was clawing at each other trying to. . . you'd

pull one person out of the way to get a little farther towards the hatch. So I reached the hatch, and there was two other fellows, one on each side, and all three of us pulled ourself up out of the hatch at the same time. And up on the bridge there was a machine gun just spraying the hatch. And the same burst of machine gun fire caught all three of us and knocked us all back down in the hold, and all these guys trying to get out just pulled us on under, and they kept trying to get up.

Marcello: None of you had been hit by machine gun bullets though?

Clem: Yeah, we'd all been hit. I knew the guys; they never did get off the ship. I assume that they were killed. When I got hit, I got plowed in the skull right across here, and one of them bracketed me and chipped out my chin here.

Marcello: That's about as close as you can get, I guess.

Clem: It sure was. It cut my skull half in two. But I finally was able to work myself back up on the deck, and I was eyeing that bridge when I came out that time. But the gun was up there, but the gunner was laying out on the deck. Somebody had apparently got around and got up there and killed him so the others could get out all right. And all I had on was a loincloth, and this ship was sitting at an angle about like that. (gesture)

Marcello: You had no idea where you were, other than the fact that you were somewhere in the ocean?

Clem: In the ocean. You could see land, and we found out later that we were somewhere between two and three miles out. And so all I had on was this loincloth, and all I could think of was getting over to that land and getting some water, coconut milk.

Marcello: Were you hurt very badly? Or weren't you cognizant of your wounds?

Clem: I couldn't see out of this eye on account of the blood. I was blind in this eye. And I knew I'd been shot. I'd reach up there and see the blood, and I'd reach up there and I knew I'd been shot, and I figured it was pretty bad. But I wanted to get over there and try to get something to drink. We were thirsty.

Marcello: How far away did you think this land was?

Clem: Well, I didn't know; I had no idea. You could barely see it. You could see the land. There was a big land mass. You could barely see trees on it. I couldn't judge distance on water. Like I say, we were told it was two or three miles off. So the first thing I thought was that I had a long swim, and I pulled this G-string off so that nothing would encumber me in swimming. Now we'd been down in these holds on these ships, no exercise or anything, for nineteen days and eighteen nights.

Marcello: Obviously, you weren't at full peak so far as your strength

was concerned.

Clem: No. But anyway, I dove over the side and started to swim, and when I hit the water I happened to look up, and there was a lifeboat that the Japanese were lowering. Well, in the meantime, all around the ship there were other lifeboats. And this convoy--we first found out we were in a convoy--the other ships had put out lifeboats, and they were picking up the Japanese, and they were shooting all the Americans. They weren't picking them up. They would shoot them, or some of the officers were taking swipes at their heads with these samurai sabers. And this lifeboat that was being lowered, well, hell, that thing was coming right down on top of me, and there wasn't any place that I could go. And I started praying that that boat would sink when it touched the water. And sure enough, that damned thing . . . when it hit the water, I said, "Uh-oh, here it comes now!" because it was as far as from me to the wall. Well, as it hit the water, it must have been riddled with holes or something because as fast as it touched down, it filled up and the damned thing never did float.

Marcello: You were in the water now with some Japanese?

Clem: Oh, there were Japs all around me. Hell, there was a lot of Jap troops on this ship.

Marcello: Was yours the only one that was hit?

Clem: The only ship that was hit! A seven-ship convoy, and the only one that was hit had us on it. So everybody's main object was to get away from what Japs were there, and any lifeboats, get away from them and head for shore.

Well, then there was a patrol plane, a seaplane, that was patrolling for this convoy, I guess. And then we had him to contend with. He'd make a pass, and the white bodies in the water, bleached out down in this hold, well, he'd come along and he'd strafe all those. So I couldn't hear a thing, and I later found out that both eardrums had been perforated in the concussion of this explosion. I was as deaf as I could be. And in swimming, all I could sense was little shocks in the water, and I didn't know what it was. I could feel these little shocks, and I'd look around and the water would be spraying up, and it was where somebody was shooting. And the only thing that I was afraid of . . . I'd look down in that water, and you could see probably down to 200 feet. I'd see those long, white legs of mine bleached out, and all I could think of was sharks because they had some big ones out there. And there was a lot of blood in the water. And we figured out later that the only thing that kept the sharks away was that in the distance there was a destroyer that was dropping depth charges after this American sub. And the concussion probably scared the fish off. But the only thing that

I was scared of was the sharks. And we swam and we swam. And this plane would buzz over and start machine gunning you, and you'd go under water. And he could see you, but the water would be between you and him.

And my right arm just finally got to where I couldn't swim, couldn't move it, couldn't pull it over my head. It was completely paralyzed, useless. And I found out later what had happened. While I was swimming I'd been shot twice--once in the arm and once back here in this shoulder.

So we got into the beach a little bit before sundown. There was another fellow and I. They were coming in on the beach at several places. But the two of us were the only two together coming in at this one spot. And one of the ships in the convoy had beached itself to get away from this submarine. And they had some machine guns set up on this ship, and their job, I guess, was that if anybody came up on the beach to try to get them. But he was quite a way off, and we got up where we'd quit swimming and waded up through the surf, and he was shooting at us, but he couldn't hit us.

And when we got up into some trees, well, there was one Filipino who walked up. We still didn't know where we were. Hell, we could've been in China; we didn't know. But this Filipino walked out, and we asked him where we

were, and he said, "Welcome to USAFFE." Well, that was what they called the United States Armed Forces of the Far East. It went under the name of USAFFE. And we said, "Where are we?" And he said "You're on Mindanao." We were on the northern part of Mindanao.

Marcello: You had moved from the southern part where Davao is to the northern part.

Clem: I thought I knew the name of that port we were at.

Marcello: It took you nineteen days to get from one end of Mindanao to the other.

Clem: We found out why these ships were stopped for several hours. There were American planes flying around. And so he said, "What can I do for you?" And I said, "I want some coconut milk and a pair of pants." And he had on a pair of cut-off sailor dungarees, and he just takes them off and gives them to me and climbs up this coconut tree and gets a bunch of coconuts and cuts them down for us. And we're standing there drinking that coconut juice, and about that time a motorboat comes by with some Japs in it, and they see us out there, and they start shooting at us. So we dove in the bushes, and it was getting dark fast, and this Filipino told us to wait right there. He said, "I'm going to get some more men." And we waited there awhile, and it was getting dark. And we could hear these Jap boats out there in the water and still shooting out

in the water.

Marcello: They weren't coming into shore though?

Clem: Well, we didn't know what they were going to do. So we didn't want to wait around right then and find out because we figured we'd better get inland a little. So we went inland, and I don't know how far we walked, maybe a mile. And we ran across this Filipino hut. We could see a light inside, and we knocked on the door. Nobody answered. We turned around and there was several Filipinos standing in back of us with these long bolos. And none of them understood English. And we found out that they were Moros. And so we kept saying, "Americanos" because there was a lot of Spanish language, dialect, used. We used, "Americano, Americano," so "Quiere agua, quiere agua." We wanted water, wanted water. I never could get enough water. So they understood that, and they gave us some water and told us to come on with them. And they took us to a village probably five or six miles from there, and then they started bringing other Americans into this village.

Marcello: Off the same ship?

Clem: Off the ship that we were on. So then we stayed there all night long, and I think there was eighty-three of us that showed up. They had 750 on the ship and there was eighty-three of us that got ashore. And they moved us to

a place way back in the hills, on back in the hills probably ten miles, into a main guerrilla camp. There was a lot of guerrilla activity there. And one of these boys was one of these kind that was always goldbricking, and he was complaining that something was the matter when nothing was the matter. Well, he was complaining about his side hurting him, and nobody would believe him at all. And sure enough, what had happened in this sinking of this ship, he'd broke some of his ribs, and they'd punctured his lungs and he died from it. But nobody would believe that there was anything wrong with him. So eighty-two of us got out of it. But they kept us in this camp for, oh golly, we stayed there for maybe a week.

Marcello: In the meantime, you had seen no sign of the Japanese?

Clem: No, we didn't see any. And the Filipinos told us that they had got this ship that they had beached off the beach, and the convoy had gone on. And then they said we were the only survivors out of it.

Marcello: How was your own health?

Clem: Well, outside of being shot in the head, and I had a slug in my back and one in my arm, and being bleached out, dried out on that ship, well, I was in pretty good health.

Marcello: All things considered.

Clem: Something was the matter with . . . I don't know what it was, but when I went to lay down, I'd get almost all the way down and I couldn't go clear down. When I'd lay down and go to sit up, the first three or four inches I couldn't make it; I needed help. But that passed in several days. But then they moved us down to the coast and put us in some outrigger canoes and took us up the coast. It was all day and one night on that trip. And they moved us into another guerrilla outfit where there were several Americans that were in charge of the guerrillas.

Marcello: Were you getting very much food?

Clem: Oh, then the Filipinos were feeding us. They fed us good. And they'd get goats and barbecue those things and give us anything we wanted. We had a lot of food. And this native beer that they made out of coconut juice, and "tuba" is what they called it. It was fermented coconut sap.

Marcello: Sounds like it would be pretty wicked.

Clem: It was powerful. It was good and we drank a lot of that and . . .

Marcello: It got the job done! (chuckle)

Clem: (Chuckle) Yes. But they moved us to this other camp. And then the ones that could navigate started running patrols with the guerrillas that were there.

Marcello: Did you ever have your wounds attended to?

Clem: Oh, yes. Yes, but this up here I didn't. And I had a slug in this arm that they took out. In my back, they never did get that. Everytime they X-ray my chest now, well, it shows up. And they want to know what's the matter.

Marcello: Oh, it's still in there yet?

Clem: It's still there. But it had healed over by the time I got to a medical doctor, and there wasn't any use in digging into it. Buy anyway, they moved us to this guerrilla encampment, and they were in radio communication with Australia. And they had promised that the next time they brought a shipment of supplies in to the guerrillas they would take out the wounded.

Marcello: I assume those shipments were coming in by submarines.

Clem: Submarines. So we were supposed to be down on this beach at a certain time one night after we had been with the guerrillas about a month. We'd go down on the beach and waited all night and nothing happened. Next night, all night long, nothing happened. Third night, well, this submarine surfaced out there. And it was the USS Narwhal. At that time it was the biggest submarine they had. They made a cargo sub out of it. So they decided that they could take all of us out. So the Filipinos would take us out to the sub in dugout canoes, and that thing looked like a battleship. God, it was big!

Marcello: By this time, of course, I'm sure that the guerrillas had been filling you in on the progress of the war.

Clem: We knew what was going on in the war by then. You asked me about the guerrilla's feeding us; they were giving us all the food they could give us. Now they didn't have too much. We were still lacking a lot of food, because the first time we weighed was on the submarine. And I told you earlier that when the war started I weighed 172. But when I weighed on the sub, I was . . . had gotten back to 85 pounds. And your skeleton is almost that heavy probably.

Marcello: You were a real heavyweight then.

Clem: I was skin and bones. Yeah. So we got on the sub, and that's why they decided to take us. I mean, we looked so pitiful. And everybody got aboard the sub. The first thing they wanted was food, and it was just open food for us. They had something like 130 men on this sub as the crew. It was a big sub. But in the first three meals the eighty-three of us ate something like six weeks' rations for the crew. So they were going to run out of food. So they had to put a strict ration on everybody's food the rest of the trip. And this sub took us to a PT boat base down in the Celebes Islands.

Marcello: How did it feel to be free?

Clem: Oh, it felt fine. It felt fine. Except after we got on . . . everybody was nervous anyway, and we got on this sub, and the first thing that happened, the diving planes stick. And the crew was scared to death. We're dumb; we don't know what could happen, but we could see the crew was scared. And they passed word for everybody that wasn't on duty to get aft in the ship.

Marcello: They were trying to stabilize it.

Clem: Yeah. They finally straightened that thing up about the time we scraped the bottom. And then the crew tells us what could have happened, and we got scared. We went through a mine field, and to take everybody's mind off of it, they'd hold a King Neptune initiation. And in this mine field, well, we'd pick up some of these mine cables that dragged the . . . the bow of the sub touches it and it drags the entire length of the sub, and we're all shot by then. We were just complete wrecks by then.

Marcello: And I can understand. You'd come through all this, only to end . . .

Clem: I would never want to get on a submarine again. Anything you do, they have to blow a horn, and it scares you. The slightest sound is going to make you jump anyway, and that claxon goes off and it tears you up. But they took us to this PT boat base and . . .

Marcello: That was a pretty good trip then from Mindanao down to the Celebes.

Clem: About a week. It was about a week on this sub.

Marcello: The Celebes are down in the Dutch East Indies.

Clem: One good thing, we got clean clothes. I got some clothes, got to take showers, get clean. My hair looked like the present-day hippies; I had a beard; I hadn't had a shave or a haircut in almost three years. And we all looked horrible. But we got down to this PT boat base. And this sub had salt-water showers that we had taken. So we had fresh showers, and then they had a big meal for us. And the doctors had told us, our doctors that we were in prison with, kept saying, "You're going to be on milktoast and soft-boiled eggs and all this kind of . . . jello." Well, this first big meal that we had was fried eggs and french-fried potatoes and steak and beer. And everybody would eat all they could eat, and they'd go outside and stick their hand down their throat and throw up, and then go back in and eat just to keep tasting the food, the way it tasted. They took us from there to an airstrip on some island--I forget what it was now--by PT boat. It took probably six or seven hours in a PT boat. They took us over there and put us in these old twin-engine transports that they had and flew us down to Brisbane, Australia. They took us into Townsend, Australia. We spent one night at the hospital. And we were strictly freaks. From then on we were the freaks

of that part of the world. And then the next day we went to Brisbane, Australia, and they put us in the 42nd General Hospital, issued everybody beds and clothes. The next morning the nurse comes in, and there's not a soul in bed. Everybody's laying on the floor; the bed's too soft, can't sleep on it. And it took several days before we could sleep on the bed. They gave us shoes; nobody could wear them. By then your feet were just like pieces of wood. It took us several days to even try to wear any shoes. But we stayed in the hospital about a month in Australia, and then they put us on the SS Monterrey, one of those Luriline steamers, and we came back to San Francisco. We never did see land between Australia and San Francisco.

Marcello: At that time did you foster any resentment against the Japanese?

Clem: Oh, yeah. Oh, when I got back, I was very bitter, yeah. I'm sure at that time that if I'd had an opportunity, I wouldn't have hesitated in killing any of them that I saw. I had a bitter, bitter hatred for them.

Marcello: Has time healed those wounds?

Clem: I've got a Japanese stereo.

Marcello: I'm glad you mentioned that because I've got a Japanese car and a Japanese stereo just like yours. (chuckle) I noticed yours a little while ago.

Clem: Yeah, I've got a Japanese stereo. Time heals most everything I guess.

Marcello: As you look back on it, what do you think the key was to your survival?

Clem: I think a lot of it was luck. I guess I was fortunate enough to be in a particular place when something happened. It might have been that if I'd come back to the States instead of staying in the Philippines, I could have been in Guadalcanal. If I hadn't gone from one prison camp to another, something could have happened back at this other one. And I think a lot of it was luck. My parents say it was an awful lot of praying on their part. I did a lot of praying on my part.

Marcello: Did men get religious pretty quickly in those prison camps?

Clem: Very quickly, very quickly. I think that that's the only time in my life that I could go to sleep saying my prayers every single night. But everybody was very religious while they were under those circumstances.

Marcello: I assume that you did see a lot of men who simply did give up and lay down and died.

Clem: Well, I think that with that high, high death rate we had at first, there were so many men that came down with

dysentery, that had malaria, and that were able to survive more or less just with will power. And the ones that just said, "Well, it's just too much for me. I give up .". . . This friend of mine, this fellow Rice, this Marine that I was with that died, he was a big, strapping fellow. His biceps were bigger than the calves in my legs--a big, well-built man. And he started losing weight and losing weight like everybody did, and he got down to where his biceps were only a couple of inches in diameter. And it got to him, and he gave up. He just flat gave up. And when he gave up, by the next day he was dead. He told us that he just wasn't going to fight it anymore, and within twenty-four hours he was dead.

Marcello: Did you ever notice that the big ones perhaps suffered more than those who were of small stature? I've heard several prisoners mention this, and I wonder if you observed it?

Clem: There were several little, wiry fellows. We had some Mexican boys that were small, and they probably never weighed over 125 pounds in their life, and it didn't seem to bother them at all. They seemed to take it in stride. But the older the person was, the better off he seemed to be. It was the young kids that died real quick. I was fortunate because the two years I'd been

out in China prior to going to the Philippines, well, I had been eating Chinese food for two years, and my system was accustomed to different types of food. I'd been eating raw vegetables out there, and I was supposed to eat cooked vegetables. All of them that I ate were raw. I'd been drinking their water for a long time. And my system was in good shape. But these boys that just came right out from the States with the New Mexico National Guard, well, they didn't have a chance.

Marcello: There are a couple of incidents you've mentioned to me that you failed to relate awhile ago, and one of them involved that rather personal ring that you had had made in China. You'd mentioned that you had lost it during that torpedo attack. Would you go over that incident?

Clem: Well, this gold Marine ring that I had made out in China, I had kept it all through prison camp. And anytime a guard held a shakedown or searched us or got around, the only place I could conceal it would be in my rectum until the Japs weren't around us. And then I could take it out and put it on my finger. But on this ship just prior to our being torpedoed, I had this ring on. And we'd lost so much weight by then that when we were torpedoed and water started coming in this ship and filling it up, well, the ring just slid off of my finger. And I could see the reflection of it in the sunlight filtering

down through the water. And I was more concerned for the moment to get that ring rather than get out of the hold. So I tried to dive back down in there and get the ring, but it sank faster than I could swim after it so I never did get it.

Marcello: Also, you were mentioning an incident which took place at Davao, I think it was. It involved the raising of the American flag or something of that nature on July 4th.

Clem: Well, the Japanese let us take a group and stage a show for everybody, for the other American prisoners. And I wasn't one of them that was in the show. I was one of the spectators. And some of the guys that could sing, they sang and told jokes and had a couple of skits. Just before the closing ceremonies, well, the master of ceremonies said that he wanted everybody to stand up and sing God Bless America. So everybody stood up, and they started singing. You could hear the guards; they recognized what the song was. They didn't like it. They were hollering to cut it out, quit singing. And you could hear, oh, all the night sounds you hear out in the jungle. Well, two of these Americans, they got up and they had a blanket they were carrying. And they unfolded the blanket, and pinned to it was this American flag. And they had managed to hide that thing for two and a half years through all these searches that had been going on. And

they had a pretty good idea what would happen to them if they had ever been caught with it. And that was the first time any of the rest of us even knew that they had it, the first time we'd seen an American flag in two and a half years. And before these fellows stood up with it, well, everybody was singing kind of raggedly, and they just didn't give a damn, didn't feel like singing. But then they all got to singing real loud and drowned out all the noises out in the jungle. Even the guards, they quit muttering and saying anything about it. They could sense that there was something; they didn't know what it was. And we just all got through singing. And everybody was pretty hard-bitten, but when they got through with that, well, there wasn't a dry eye in the whole crowd of them.