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Interview with  
GRANVILLE T. SUMMERLIN  
June 9, 1981

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved:

Granville T. Summerlin,  
(Signature)

Date:

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Oral History Collection

Granville T. Summerlin

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: June 9, 1981

Dr. Marcello: This is Ronald E. Marcello interviewing Granville T. Summerlin for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on June 9, 1981, in Denton, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Summerlin in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. More specifically, Mr. Summerlin was a member of Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery. This unit was originally a part of the 36th Division, which was the Texas National Guard. The unit was captured intact on the Island of Java in March, 1942, and subsequently spent the rest of the war in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps throughout Asia.

Mr. Summerlin, to begin this interview just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me where you were born, your education-- things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Summerlin: Well, I was born in Hughes Springs, Texas, 24th of April, 1919. I was educated in the Marshall School System, and I finished high school.

Marcello: Describe the procedure by which you got into the Army.

Summerlin: Well, I was working as a machinist's apprentice with the Texas and Pacific Railway, and that is when I was drafted into the service.

Marcello: When did this occur, approximately?

Summerlin: I believe it was 1940.

Marcello: At the time you were drafted, how closely were you keeping abreast of current events and world affairs and things of that nature?

Summerlin: At the time we didn't seem to be too involved, but, of course, we were watching the schedule on who was going to be drafted and whatnot.

Marcello: So I gather, then, that you were fully expecting to be drafted?

Summerlin: Right.

Marcello: And where were you inducted?

Summerlin: I was inducted in Brownwood, Camp Bowie.

Marcello: In other words, immediately after you received your draft notice, you were then taken to Camp Bowie in Brownwood.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: At that time for what length of time were you to be drafted? Do you recall?

Summerlin: I really don't recall the length of time,

Marcello: One year sticks in my mind, but I'm not sure if that is the case or not,

Summerlin: I believe that I was drafted sooner than that. We made the Louisiana maneuvers with the 36th Division,

Marcello: But I guess what I am saying is, when you were drafted, how long were you expected to serve?

Summerlin: Possibly a year,

Marcello: You mentioned that you proceeded to Camp Bowie. Into which particular unit were you placed at that time? What happened when you got to Camp Bowie?

Summerlin: Well, when we got to Camp Bowie,,well, I can't really recall if we were placed in a barracks, We did a lot of training, I believe, before we were put into a unit.

Marcello: So in other words, you did undergo your basic training there at Camp Bowie?

Summerlin: Right,

Marcello: Of what did the basic training consist of at that time? Describe a little about the basic training.

Summerlin: Mostly it was drill work, foot work,

Marcello: In other words, would it be what we consider the common infantry training?

Summerlin: Right. Of course, at that particular time we only had civilian shoes that we did it in,

Marcello: Did you have the standard Army weapons and so on and so

forth? I know that in some of the units there was a shortage of this kind of equipment.

Summerlin: Well, we didn't have any for some time, but I don't recall how long it was before we were fitted out.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you made the Louisiana maneuvers. When you made those maneuvers, were you at that time a part of the 131st Field Artillery yet?

Summerlin: Right.

Marcello: You were a member of the 131st Field Artillery.

Summerlin: Right.

Marcello: Describe the process, then, by which you actually got into the 131st Field Artillery and into Headquarters Company, or Headquarters Battery, I guess it was, wasn't it?

Summerlin: The best that I can remember, they just...it seems to me... like I said, we had some basic training, and then different ones were transferred to different outfits. I was placed in Headquarters Battery.

Marcello: I do recall at that time a lot of the older men and the married men were given the option of getting out of the unit because evidently they had already decided to send this unit overseas. Do you remember if that had anything to do with your transfer into the 131st Field Artillery?

Summerlin: I don't recall that it does. I really don't.

Marcello: What sort of reception did you get when you went into

Headquarters Battery? After all, as I recall, this was a pretty close-knit group of men, since they had all come from the same hometowns or the same areas and so on and so forth. Describe what kind of reception that you got when you initially entered the unit.

Summerlin: Well, most of the guys there seemed awful friendly, the best I can remember. They accepted us,

Marcello: Approximately how many of you were there who were transferred. Was this a company or a battery?

Summerlin: This is a battery,

Marcello: Headquarters Battery.

Summerlin: A company was infantry,

Marcello: So how many of you were transferred? Do you know?

Summerlin: I really don't know, but I would say it was in the neighborhood of thirty or forty.

Marcello: And were most of you Texas boys?

Summerlin: Right.

Marcello: So in that sense, then, the unit still had a very distinct Texas flavor.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: You mentioned that you went on the Louisiana maneuvers with the 131st Field Artillery. Describe what took place during those maneuvers, so far as you personally were concerned.

Summerlin: Well, during the maneuvers we did just exactly like you

would do in the field during wartime. At the time I was on the telephone part of it, and we strung wire from here to there and whatnot. We had maneuvers just like you would have in real wartime.

Marcello: According to what I have heard--and I have not read anything official on this--the 131st Field Artillery supposedly made a good record for itself on those maneuvers.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: What do you know about this?

Summerlin: Well, I really didn't know all that much about it until we got back, but we were picked as one of the crack units of that maneuvers.

Marcello: And I have also heard that this is the reason why it was ultimately selected to be sent overseas.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: Now something else also took place after you got back from those Louisiana maneuvers. There was a reorganization throughout the entire Army. You may recall that the Army reorganized its divisions from the so-called square division into the triangular division. Do you know anything about that reorganization?

Summerlin: I really don't recall too much about it.

Marcello: Well, again, I have also read that this is perhaps why the 131st Field Artillery was detached from the 36th



Division, The triangular division was evidently a smaller division, and the detached units then would be used to flesh out other similarly detached units, I guess.

Summerlin: I don't recall that.

Marcello: Okay, by this time, that is, by the time you get back from those Louisiana maneuvers, how seriously is this training being taken?

Summerlin: Well, it seemed like they were taking it pretty seriously, but at that particular time I still didn't know that we were going to be shipped overseas.

Marcello: Okay, ultimately, you left Camp Bowie, and this occurred on November 11, 1941, and your destination was code-named "PLUM," What were the rumors going around as to what "PLUM" represented?

Summerlin: The Philippines.

Marcello: Even in the rumors? That's what everybody thought that "PLUM" stood for?

Summerlin: That we were going to the Philippines.

Marcello: What did you think of the idea of going overseas?

Summerlin: Well, at that time it didn't seem all that bad, but, of course, farther down the line it did (chuckle).

Marcello: Without putting words in your mouth, when you thought about the country getting into a war at that time, is it safe to say your eyes were turned more toward Europe

than they were toward the Far East?

Summerlin: Well, I really wouldn't think so because we had heard so much about Rommel in the desert, and it seemed that there was quite a lot of activity going on over that way.

Marcello: Describe the trip from Camp Bowie to San Francisco, which, of course, was your ultimate destination.

Summerlin: Well, the best I remember--I presume--we just took a train ride all the way, but I just don't remember the stopping and starting places.

Marcello: Do you recall how long it took in terms of days?

Summerlin: I think probably about four days.

Marcello: What did you do to occupy your time on that trip?

Summerlin: Well, you talked mostly and played cards and whatnot.

Marcello: At that time were you married?

Summerlin: Oh, no.

Marcello: How about most of the other men in the unit?

Summerlin: There were quite a few that were married.

Marcello: Would these, however, have been mainly the non-coms and officers and people like that?

Summerlin: Right. The National Guard unit mostly. The ones that were in the National Guard.

Marcello: Okay, you go to San Francisco, and actually you are assigned to Angel Island. What did you do during that brief period that you were in San Francisco?

Summerlin: Well, one of the first things that they did was to send me down to the dentist's office, and he examined my teeth. I don't remember if it was the next day or the third day, but I was called back, and he extracted my wisdom teeth. I will remember that. My face was swollen and whatnot.

Marcello: So I gather, then, that during most of that time at Angel Island, you were more or less incapacitated.

Summerlin: Right. They were given shots, the best I remember, and whatnot.

Marcello: Did you get an opportunity to visit San Francisco itself?

Summerlin: I don't recall that I did.

Marcello: I don't think that you guys had too much money at that time. As I recall you had not been paid.

Summerlin: We sure hadn't.

Marcello: Do you recall that?

Summerlin: I don't recall it, but I recall that we didn't have much money to spend.

Marcello: Okay, on November 21, 1941, you go aboard an Army transport, the USS Republic, and you are off on your first leg of your journey. There were also other units on the Republic, I recall, besides the 131 Field Artillery. I think that the 26th Brigade was aboard, and I believe a lot of those people would eventually join you when you got to Java.

Summerlin: I believe so.

Marcello: And I think that the 22nd Bombardment Group was also aboard that ship. Describe what the Republic was like from the physical standpoint, that is, in terms of your quarters and the living conditions aboard ship and that sort of thing.

Summerlin: Well, it was a huge ship. I'd never been on a ship before. Of course, in your quarters you had these bunks. After we were seaward-bound, a lot of the guys began to get seasick. In fact, some were seasick until we got on land.

Marcello: How about you?

Summerlin: That didn't bother me. And, of course, in the facilities where we ate, we mostly stood up at little table deals. I don't know what they call them now; I don't remember. But I would recall a lot of instances where the guys would come to lunch and whatnot, and the first thing you know, they would turn around and run off. I guess it was because they were sick, and that sickness is something else, evidently.

Marcello: I understand that the stench was just terrific down in the living quarters and so on.

Summerlin: Correct. When you get sick, there is no stopping (chuckle).

Marcello: Do you recall what the Navy served that first day for

chow?

Summerlin: I sure don't,

Marcello: I have heard that it was cabbage and fish, I believe.

Summerlin: Well, that was a good one to make them sick (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, you get to Honolulu on November 28th. That's amazing to me, because it took you seven days to go from San Francisco to Honolulu. I gather that the Republic was not very fast,

Summerlin: It wasn't very fast.

Marcello: Most of the people got a brief shore leave when you got to Honolulu. Do you recall if you got it?

Summerlin: I recall getting off and touring a short time on the island, but I don't recall exactly what we saw or anything else.

Marcello: Did you confine your activities mainly to the downtown area?

Summerlin: Right. Just what we could walk to see.

Marcello: Did you notice any sort of a war footing or anything of that nature in Honolulu at that time?

Summerlin: Well, at that particular time, I didn't. I am sure that maybe some of the older ones might have.

Marcello: Okay, you are only there for a very short period of time, and then once again you are on your way aboard the Republic, and supposedly you are going to the Philippines. Now at this time, the Republic was part

of a convoy, was it not?

Summerlin: That's right. I don't recall the ships that were with us, but I know there was a destroyer, or maybe two. I don't remember now, but I know that we were escorted. I know that.

Marcello: Okay, of course, on December 7, 1941, Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. You and your group had been out of Honolulu for perhaps a little bit less than a week. Describe how you received the news of the Japanese attack and what the reactions were of you and your buddies when you did hear it.

Summerlin: Well, we were just stunned to believe that they could bomb Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: How did you receive the news?

Summerlin: By radio, I presume. Of course, it came down through from different ones on the ship--personnel. At that particular time, when we heard the news, it wasn't long that we heard that we were headed toward Australia then.

Marcello: At the time that you heard the news, when you thought of a typical Japanese, what kind of person did you usually conjure up in your own mind?

Summerlin: Well, I would presume he would be a guy without a conscience, a very mean-type person. That's what we had heard about them.

Marcello: How long was this war going to last? Were you and your

buddies speculating about it?

Summerlin: Not over a year,

Marcello: What steps or precedures were taken aboard the Republic in the aftermath of the attack? How did your routine change?

Summerlin: There would be no smoking on deck and all that kind of stuff where there would be any lights or anything after dark. Of course, I don't remember whether we ran across any submarines or not on the Republic, but we did stop at the Fiji Islands before going on to Australia,

Marcello: As I recall that was only a short visit in the Fiji Islands, wasn't it?

Summerlin: That's right,

Marcello: What was the purpose in stopping there?

Summerlin: Well, I really don't know.

Marcello: I think that one of the things that was done was that you took on fresh water and provisions.

Summerlin: Probably some kind of supplies, probably,

Marcello: Do you recall whether or not any of the fieldpieces were put out on deck or anything of that nature after Pearl Harbor?

Summerlin: Well, they did assemble machine guns, I know that. Of course, I don't know about the others. In fact, what we thought we had ammunition for was not for. The

ammunition that they had on the ship to go over was supposed to be for the 37-millimeter anti-tank guns, and it wound up to be for the ack-ack on the ships. So our guns weren't any good--what we had,

Marcello: I assume that you were supposed to pick up your proper ammunition either in Australia or wherever you were going.

Summerlin: Right. And the boys were running out of cigarettes, that's one thing for sure, And I do recall one thing on the Fiji Islands about the policemen. They carried no guns, barefooted, in shorts, and they carried billyclubs.

Marcello: I think sometimes they were referred to as the "fuzzy-wuzzies," were they not?

Summerlin: They claimed that they could outrun anybody on two feet, but I don't know (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, so you get into Brisbane, Australia, on December 21, 1941. What did you do while you were in Brisbane?

Summerlin: We were camped at a racetrack, and I can't recall the name of the racetrack.

Marcello: Ascot, was it not?

Summerlin: I believe so. Of course, that was near Christmastime, and I believe we did have turkey and mutton and whatnot for Christmas.

Marcello: What kind of quarters did you have there at Ascot Racetrack?



Summerlin: I believe it was tents, the best I remember,

Marcello: What kind of training did you undergo during that short period that you were there at Brisbane?

Summerlin: Well, I think mostly what we did there was probably some close-order drill, but I don't recall exactly.

Marcello: What kind of reception did you get from the Australians when you landed there in Brisbane?

Summerlin: We were well-received in Australia. The people were real nice to us. Most of the younger people were off at war, and most of the older folks were what was left in Australia.

Marcello: I have heard several men remark about that fact. They were astounded by the lack of young men that they found there.

Summerlin: The people there treated us like we were something, I'll tell you (chuckle).

Marcello: I know that several of the men were invited into Australian homes for Christmas. How about you?

Summerlin: I don't think that I was invited in at that particular time, but I was invited to go out with some of the people. They took us out for lunch and whatnot. They did what they thought they could for us. But I do recall that a lot were invited into homes,

Marcello: How did you take to mutton?

Summerlin: I don't like mutton.

Marcello: Evidently, that was the reaction of most of the Texas boys there.

Summerlin: Of course, we didn't have all the trimmings with the turkey, but we had the turkey.

Marcello: On December 28, 1941, which would be about a week later, you boarded a Dutch motor transport, the Bloemfontein, and you were on your way to Java. Now up until this time, had you been told where you were going or why you were going where you were going?

Summerlin: As I recall, nothing. We were not told anything at that particular time,

Marcello: Compare the Bloemfontein with the Republic,

Summerlin: Well, the Bloemfontein was a lot smaller ship and was faster, and I do recall at night maneuvering like we were maneuvering like there were submarines in the area. At least the radar indicated that, and they would turn and twist and turn all night long or zig-zag, I should say,

Marcello: At this time what kind of a relationship was there between the officers and the enlisted men? Now when I say "at this time," let me be a little more clear. I am referring to that period of time before the actual capture. Between the time you entered the unit at Camp Bowie up until the time of the capture, what kind of relationship was there between officer and enlisted man

in the unit,

Summerlin: Well, as I recall most of the officers and men got along real well in our outfit, and, of course, up until that time it was more or less "military" until the time of capture,

Marcello: Who was your commanding officer in Headquarters Battery?

Summerlin: Captain Cates, as I recall. Like I said, I have forgotten names, but I do recall them if I mention things.

Marcello: As I recall, Headquarters Battery had originally been established over in Decatur, isn't that correct?

Summerlin: That's correct.

Marcello: I think a lot of those Decatur boys were obviously in Headquarters Battery. Now on January 11, 1942, you landed in Surabaya, Java. Okay, what happens once you get ashore?

Summerlin: When we got ashore, we were taken to...I can't recall whether we were taken to that Dutch deal or not. Or was that after we were taken prisoner?

Marcello: Well, most of the men, I know, upon landing in Surabaya, were taken to Camp Singosari.

Summerlin: That's correct. I recall that name now.

Marcello: And I think that Singosari was close to the town of Malang. Do you recall how you got from Surabaya to Singosari, that is, whether it was by truck or train?

Summerlin: I think that it was by truck.

Marcello: You went by truck, Describe what Singosari looked liked from a physical standpoint. In other words, I want you to think back, and suppose you are entering Camp Singosari, What did it look like from a physical standpoint? What buildings and so on might one find in Singosari?

Summerlin: I may be confusing Bicycle Camp, as I recall it, but I can't really remember, I have lost contact with all the fellows in my area; I mean, I live far from them until,,well, we just never talked about it, and eventually, after thirty-some years, you forget it,

Marcello: Do you recall what your quarters were like there at Singosari?

Summerlin: Well, it was just a cot more or less, It seems like they were small rooms, but that is about all that I can say for it, It seems it was like an ol' masonry-type construction,

Marcello: Who were you buddying up with at this time? Did you have some individuals with whom you seemed to do things?

Summerlin: Well, there was the Summers boys, Mark and J. L. Summers, and there was a tall,,,I can't think of his name now. That's funny how you can forget names in such a short time, but he was a tall fellow, and he was a draftee, same as I was, And there was Kuykendall from Harleton, a small town out from Marshall, and a big guy that they

called "Gheedus" Bailey. There was a number of draftees, and we all kind of kept together.

Marcello: In other words, the draftees did kind of do things together, and the original members of the unit went their way, too.

Summerlin: Right.

Marcello: What kind of activities did Headquarters Battery, and you in particular, undertake after you got to Singosari. What did you do?

Summerlin: Well, we had different duties to perform just like we did at other places--mess hall duties, latrine duties, and so forth. And then, of course, the best I can remember, we did close-order drill; we always did that. It is pretty dull in my mind what we really did do.

Marcello: How closely were you associated with the actual firing batteries while you were a member of Headquarters Battery?

Summerlin: I wasn't associated with the firing batteries too much other than, like I said, I was with the telephones. The actual firing of the equipment, I didn't have any part to do with that.

Marcello: During this period did you ever have an occasion to go into Malang?

Summerlin: It seems like we were given a pass to go in.

Marcello: Do you recall what there was to do there?

Summerlin: I remember what we were not supposed to do when we went in, but a lot of the boys did (chuckle).

Marcello: What were you not supposed to do?

Summerlin: We weren't supposed to associate with the girls there on account of all the diseases and whatnot, Of course, a lot of them strayed off (chuckle).

Marcello: Awhile ago we were mentioning the very welcome reception that you received from the Australians. What kind of reception did you get from the Dutch and the native Javanese?

Summerlin: Well, they were a little more distant than the Australians. The Australians were real friendly, but they seemed to be a little distant to us.

Marcello: Now the Dutch actually controlled Camp Singosari, did they not? I assume that you were under Dutch command.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: Now when you got to Singosari, had the 19th Bomb Group already arrived out of the Philippines, or did they come in after you got there?

Summerlin: Well, we were not too far from this airfield, and the best I can remember, we got there before they did.

Marcello: Now were you in any way associated with the 19th Bomb Group? In other words, I do know that a lot of the personnel out of the 131st Field Artillery were used as ground personnel, support personnel, for those airplanes.

I was wondering if you got involved in any of that kind of activity.

Summerlin: Well, what I did was helping haul stuff, but as far as actually working on the airplanes and so forth, that part I didn't do.

Marcello: Now on February 3, 1942, the first Japanese air raid occurred. Describe this experience.

Summerlin: Well, when they sounded the sirens, we all took off to the banana grove, and they told us to go out and lay on the ground. Of course, they destroyed one or two planes on that first raid. But I do recall later on that we repaired a plane, and it went up for test flight with no guns on it, and the Japs came in and shot the plane down. I know we took the 75-millimeter guns out into this banana grove and dug a hole and dropped the trail down in the hole so that we could shoot up, and when the Japs came over, they just shot a barrage up. After that they came in and dropped bombs on this banana grove, but we were lucky. Only one man was killed.

Marcello: Now describe that first raid in more detail. In other words, was there bombing, strafing, or what?

Summerlin: Well, it was a little of both. They said those Japanese bamboo airplanes weren't any good, but they were. They were more maneuverable than the planes that we had.

Marcello: From where you were located in this banana grove, did you

have an opportunity to observe what was happening at the base during this raid?

Summerlin: Not directly because it was camouflaged, kind of, with all the trees and whatnot, But you could see what was going on up in the air.

Marcello: What kind of physical damage was done to the base itself, that is, to the quarters and things of that nature?

Summerlin: The bombs that they dropped weren't very large, but the shrapnel did quite a bit of damage. I know the shrapnel would go through,,when they got through, we found pin holes through some of the thick metal of some of the guns there. It was amazing to see what a little piece of hot shrapnel will do.

Marcello: What were your own emotions and thoughts when this air raid was taking place?

Summerlin: Well, we thought we were getting close to the end of the world (chuckle), the way it looked. We figured that it would be a short time before we got some help. Of course, that was our feelings from day to day, year to year.

Marcello: But at the particular time, you were thinking in terms of either receiving reinforcements or getting off the island again?

Summerlin: That's true. That's what kept our hopes alive.

Marcello: Do you recall what time of day that air raid occurred?

Summerlin: Well, I would think that it was more up in the day than



early or late, the best I can recall.

Marcello: Now there were several other raids that occurred after that. Did most of those occur at the same time?

Summerlin: Well, I don't believe so. I know it seemed like they had some dogfights, too, over the air base there several times.

Marcello: What procedures did you normally follow when one of these air raids would occur?

Summerlin: We'd take to the bushes because that was the only protection that we had. We didn't have anyplace to go otherwise.

Marcello: Were you normally given ample warning as to when one of these raids were going to occur?

Summerlin: It seemed like normally we did. Well, I don't know if it would be ample or not, but we were notified in time.

Marcello: Did you take any other precautions such as digging slit trenches or anything of that nature?

Summerlin: We dug some holes and whatnot out in the edge of the camp there.

Marcello: Approximately how many of these air raids took place? You will obviously have to estimate this.

Summerlin: I would say probably...I don't recall exactly...probably a half-dozen or so.

Marcello: And again, was it normally strafing, bombing, or a combination of both?

Summerlin: A combination of both.

Marcello: Which did you hate the worst?

Summerlin: The bombing.

Marcello: Is that right? Why was that?

Summerlin: Well, it seemed like you could get out of the way of those bullets, but with those bombs you never know where they are going to fall.

Marcello: Now as a result of these raids, how much damage was being done to the base over a period of time?

Summerlin: Well, really and truly it didn't seem to be all that much damage because a lot of the time the bombs would hit where they didn't do a lot of damage, and, like I said, they were small.

Marcello: What did the Japanese seem to be targeting?

Summerlin: Well, the airplanes...the area over that way mostly, but it seemed like after the first raid, there were a couple of raids made around the camp area.

Marcello: But generally speaking, they seemed to be after those planes over at the runway area?

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: How much damage was being done over there?

Summerlin: It seemed like they done pretty good damage over there.

Marcello: That is, the planes, the runway, or what?

Summerlin: Mostly the runway and a few planes. Of course, they never did have a whole lot of planes that I ever saw.

Marcello: I guess the runway could be very easily repaired. It was just a grass strip, wasn't it?

Summerlin: I don't recall, but I think that it was.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how was the morale of the men holding up under these air raids?

Summerlin: Well, the men seemed to be holding up real well. As we were always saying, it wouldn't be long until we had help in. Reinforcements would be coming in.

Marcello: The 19th Bomb Group evacuated on February 27, 1942, and on the night of February 28, 1942, the Japanese landed on Java. What was your reaction and that of your buddies when you found out that the 19th Bomb Group was leaving and you were still staying?

Summerlin: We had a pretty good idea that we were in trouble, but we also heard that the Houston was supposed to pick us up, and, of course, we had our hopes set on that. I, of course, recall that when we left there, we had one building that was loaded with Pet milk, and we were told to destroy it before we left. We went from there, but I can't recall now just exactly where we did go to the next spot after we left there.

Marcello: So in other words, very shortly after the Japanese landed, your unit evacuated Singosari.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: And as I recall, the unit just more or less wandered in a rather haphazard course around the Island of Java.

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: When did most of this movement take place, that is, at day or at night?

Summerlin: Well, most of ours took place at night, I believe. But the English did a lot of their moving in the daytime on the roads. In fact, I recall very well one outfit that stopped. We were up in a banana plantation camouflaged, and I am sure that it was all Englishmen. They were stopped on the highway, and, in fact, they were brewing tea and were strafed by the Japanese. We never could understand why anybody would make a maneuver like that.

Marcello: During the maneuvering and moving, did you have any weapon--you personally?

Summerlin: We did have a rifle. We had our rifles.

Marcello: What contact did you have with the Japanese during this moving around?

Summerlin: Not any other than the bombing part and whatnot.

Marcello: So you were never engaged with any skirmishes with the Japanese after you left Singosari.

Summerlin: That's right. The guys with the 75's were engaged some, but I wasn't.

Marcello: What were you doing while this maneuvering was taking place? Did you have any particular function?

Summerlin: Well, truthfully, I wasn't doing a whole lot of anything other than working around with the cook truck and whatnot and a few other details.

Marcello: So you were moving by truck then?

Summerlin: Right,

Marcello: Were you able to notice any change in the attitudes of the native Javanese by this time, as you passed through villages and this sort of thing?

Summerlin: Oh, sure, you could see the change. They were changing from us to the Japanese more or less. That is the way the trend seemed to be going.

Marcello: Did they show this change in any way that you recall?

Summerlin: In other words, they just weren't very helpful to us in any way at all, that I can recall. Of course, I am sure that they made signs and said things along the way. Of course, I didn't understand exactly what they were talking about.

Marcello: On March 8, 1942, the island capitulated. Now I want you to think back to that day, and I want you to describe how you heard the news and what your reaction was when you heard it?

Summerlin: Well, we were told of the news by one of the officers, but I don't recall which one told us. Of course, we were

like anybody else--we were scared and didn't know what was going to take place.

Marcello: What were the rumors going around among the men?

Summerlin: Well, we had rumors going around that they would probably line us up and shoot us and what-have-you from all the things that we had heard from what they did. There were rumors around that we would probably be put on ships and be taken back to Japan, too, and we didn't want to do that.

Marcello: Now at this point were you more or less on your own?

Summerlin: That's right. The Dutch had abandoned us, and we didn't have any gasoline, so we couldn't go anywhere, so we just had to bivouac and stay put.

Marcello: I guess that I didn't ask my question properly. What I was referring to was this: is it not true that you were given a choice of staying with the unit or trying to head toward the coast and somehow get off the island?

Summerlin: Well, that might be true, but it seems to me that the officers said that if we would stay together, we would be better off.

Marcello: What did you do with regard to your equipment at this point now that you had surrendered?

Summerlin: We destroyed all the equipment that would have been any benefit to the Japanese.

Marcello: In what way did you destroy it?

Summerlin: Well, the rifles and so forth, we would pull the breach pin out and throw it away, bend the barrels and what have you, And it was the same way on the big guns, I presume they did that, too.

Marcello: How about your vehicles?

Summerlin: Well, it seems like they poured sand in the motors, and they did a lot of things to the vehicles so that they wouldn't be any use to them, They punctured the tires and so forth--just anything to keep them from being operable,

Marcello: But I assume that you were still keeping enough vehicles for your own transportation,

Summerlin: That's true,

Marcello: Now what happens at this point?

Summerlin: Well, we were out of food, for one thing, practically, and I do recall them getting a goat or something from the natives there and cooking it. In our group, I remember that, Well, we were left just waiting for the Japanese because there wasn't anyplace to go, and we didn't have any gasoline to move,

Marcello: I assume that you were not in a town as such at this time?

Summerlin: Not at this particular time,

Marcello: When did you actually see your first Japanese?

Summerlin: I would say it was about the second or third day as the

island capitulated,

Marcello: Describe that encounter,

Summerlin: Well, the best thing I can say was that it was kind of horrifying to see what was going to happen. Then when they came up, well, it was surprising to find that they could speak such good English. I can't recall all the details that went on after that,

Marcello: Were you more or less curious to see what they did look like?

Summerlin: I sure was,

Marcello: Describe their physical appearance,

Summerlin: Well, they seemed very healthy, very active. Of course, they are of dark complexion, and then they had those dark green uniforms on. Of course, the way they talked and the way they hollered had a bearing on the way that you felt (chuckle). They did seem to me to do more screaming than they did talking,

Marcello: Okay, where did you go from this point? To where did you proceed?

Summerlin: We went up on a mountain someplace where they had a tea plantation,

Marcello: Now let me ask you this before we get to that point. Did you not move first to another place called the Garoet Racetrack? Didn't you go to another racetrack in here? Do you recall that?



Summerlin: I don't recall it offhand. We might have, but I don't recall it.

Marcello: But you do remember the move up to the tea plantation?

Summerlin: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Were you accompanied by any Japanese on that move?

Summerlin: I don't recall being accompanied up there. We might have had one or two with us, but I know that after we got there, we had plenty of Japanese company.

Marcello: What did you do while you were at that tea plantation?

Summerlin: I don't even remember.

Marcello: How long were you there, approximately?

Summerlin: I don't recall, but it seems to me like it was probably about a week or something like that.

Marcello: And you mentioned that some Japanese did come up to the tea plantation? What happened when they arrived?

Summerlin: Well, one of them could speak pretty good English and told us what we would have to do, the best I remember, and that we would be taken to a camp. But I don't recall all the orders they did give us at that particular time.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that they seemed to do a lot of yelling and screaming when they talked. What was your reaction to this sort of conduct?

Summerlin: Well, it made them seem more abusive or whatever you want to call it--the way they talked--and we figured

that it would be the way they acted.

Marcello: Now at this point, that is, up until the time you were at the tea plantation, had they harassed you physically in any way yet?

Summerlin: Not that I recall. Not to amount to anything.

Marcello: Okay, you leave the tea plantation, and the first prison camp in which the unit was incarcerated was at Tandjong Priok, which was down close to the...well, I guess Tandjong Priok is the port city for Batavia, is it not?

Summerlin: Right.

Marcello: Do you recall how you got from the tea plantation to Tandjong Priok?

Summerlin: We walked, I believe, is the way we got there.

Marcello: What kind of equipment did you have--you personally? What did you have in your procession at that time?

Summerlin: Well, I think that I kept a blanket and my mess kit and canteen and a few little personal items that I had.

Marcello: What kind of extra clothing did you have?

Summerlin: Well, we had a pair of fatigues, I think, but when you starting walking, you don't carry too much. You kind of got rid of a lot as time went on (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you see people throwing things away on the march?

Summerlin: That's right. That is correct.

Marcello: Did you throw anything away?

Summerlin: I sure did.

Marcello: Do you recall what it was?

Summerlin: I threw away some of the clothes that I had. I hung on to my blanket and my shoes, but, of course, it didn't take long until we didn't have any shoes.

Marcello: Now during this march from the tea plantation to Tandjong Priok, what were the Japanese doing?

Summerlin: Well, there would be one group that would come on and walk with us for a certain distance, and then they would stop and another crew would take over. It seems to me that it was in the neighborhood of forty miles or forty kilos or something like that distance that we walked that time.

Marcello: Describe the conduct of the Japanese during this march?

Summerlin: Well, they didn't seem to bother us too much on the trip, you know, the best I can remember. I don't recall if any incident to amount to anything, myself, that they did at that particular time.

Marcello: Did they seem to be trying to hurry you up and move you along very rapidly?

Summerlin: That's correct.

Marcello: Were most of the Headquarters Battery people more or less staying together?

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: You mentioned that Captain Cates was your commanding

officer. What kind of man was he?

Summerlin: Now he was a good military man. He expected you to respect him and do what you were supposed to do, but otherwise he seemed like a fine fellow and knew what he was doing. It is kind of confusing to me now because we had another captain that was with him, but I can't recall his name.

Marcello: Okay, you get to Tandjong Priok on March 31, 1942. Again, I want you to make an imaginary tour with me and describe what Tandjong Priok looked like from a physical standpoint. Let's assume that we are now just entering the camp itself. Describe what one would see as one would enter Tandjong Priok. Not Bicycle Camp. I am talking about Tandjong Priok.

Summerlin: Well, I would say it would be more like going into a prison.

Marcello: Why do you say that?

Summerlin: Well, under the circumstances, it would point to that fact. It looked similar, I guess, but I don't recall a whole lot about it. I recall more about Batavia than I do about it; I mean, I recall more about Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: What kind of enclosure was there around Tandjong Priok?

Summerlin: Well, I don't recall if it had a walled fence around it

or what it had around it, I just don't remember,

Marcello: What were your quarters like there in Tandjong Priok?

Summerlin: You know, I can't recall that camp too well. I know it was what bed we had ourselves, mostly, our blankets and so forth.

Marcello: Are you saying, in effect, that you recall sleeping on the floor?

Summerlin: The best I can remember. We did so much of that that I can't separate it now.

Marcello: I know that this is the first encounter to any extent that the men in the unit had with the rice diet. Describe what the rice and the other food was like there in Tandjong Priok? Do you recall that?

Summerlin: Well, I don't recall how the condition the rice was there. Of course, I do farther on down the line, but I don't recall it there.

Marcello: I have heard that several of the men say that the rice here was of a poor quality, and it reminded them of sweepings off a warehouse floor.

Summerlin: That's true. Of course, the rice we ate most of the time while we were over there had weevils and bugs, worms, and we got to joking about it that when we threw the worms out we threw our meat ration away.

Marcello: What was your first reaction to this rice when you discovered the weevils the bugs and the worms and so

on in it?

Summerlin: Well, my reaction, and several others, was that if we were going to survive, we were going to eat it,

Marcello: Even from the very beginning?

Summerlin: That's right. And some of them from the very beginning decided that they didn't want to eat it, and, of course, those are the ones that didn't live too long.

Marcello: I also gather that it took your cooks awhile to learn how to cook the rice. Do you recall that?

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: Describe their early efforts.

Summerlin: Well, during the first part, they just made mush out of it or a gooey-type of rice. They learned to steam it, and it was better. Of course, with those big wa-jongs, it was something for them to learn, too.

Marcello: What other foods did you have here at Tandjong Priok to supplement your diet?

Summerlin: Well, I don't know if we had fish heads or not, but we had some type of fish. I believe we had some boiled vegetables, but I am not sure--some type of boiled vegetables, soupy vegetables.

Marcello: Approximately how much rice did you get per meal there at Tandjong Priok?

Summerlin: Well, I wouldn't know how much in ounces and whatnot but probably half a mess kit.

Marcello: Describe the work details that went out of Tandjong Priok, that is, the work details that you went on,

Summerlin: The work detail that I encountered was stacking oil barrels and whatnot. I do recall that some of us got together, and we would stack them and loosen the cap on the barrels. Of course, we didn't know if we were hindering our position or helping the Japs or hindering them or whatever. We figured that if the gasoline was there, if we could do anything to it, we would, and we did.

Marcello: In general, what kind of work would be taking place on these details? You have mentioned the fact of the stacking of oil barrels,

Summerlin: And we carried those bags of rice.

Marcello: Describe the carrying of those bags of rice,

Summerlin: Those 100-kilo bags of rice were something to carry for some of us, but we managed to do it. That is all that I remember that we really did on details, was carrying rice and unloading oil barrels.

Marcello: Now were you assigned to these work details, or were they voluntary,

Summerlin: You were assigned to them.

Marcello: What opportunities were there to steal food or trade with the natives on these work details?

Summerlin: Well, I did that myself. I did a lot of that myself.

We'd trade gold or anything that we could to swap for food--bananas, peanuts,

Marcello: When you say that you would trade gold, are you referring to watches and rings?

Summerlin: Right,

Marcello: Up until this time--and, again, we are describing that period before you get into Bicycle Camp--what processing in terms of records did the Japanese undertake? Do you recall any processing at this time?

Summerlin: I can't recall exactly, but I know that they gave us a number--I know that--but when they did that, I don't recall,

Marcello: When you say that they gave you a number, was that on a card or a piece of wood or a piece of metal?

Summerlin: It was a piece of cloth, and it was sewed in. I probably did that myself--the number--and I still have that number,

Marcello: Is that right?

Summerlin: I still have it,

Marcello: The piece of cloth was sewed on?

Summerlin: That's right,

Marcello: Now describe the conduct of the guards here in Tandjong Priok,

Summerlin: Well, as I recall, most of the guards that we had there were Japanese, and as long as you did what they asked



you to do or whatnot, we didn't have a whole lot of trouble with them. Of course, if you didn't want to do what they said, they might punch you with a gun butt and whatnot.

Marcello: Are you saying, then, that in a lot of cases the physical punishment occurred because the prisoners didn't do what they were supposed to do, or they'd get caught stealing or something along those lines?

Summerlin: Well, both. If you were caught stealing or something, they didn't think much of that at all.

Marcello: And what would be the usual punishment be if one was caught stealing?

Summerlin: Now the punishment that I recall was farther down the line, so I really don't know what happened there.

Marcello: What kind of bathing and toilet facilities did you have there at Tandjong Priok?

Summerlin: Not a whole lot, as far as I can recall, there.

Marcello: Well, did you have showers or faucets, or what sort of facilities did you have?

Summerlin: I think it was faucets more or less. It might have been some showers, but I don't recall them. Of course, the latrines, I just don't remember now what facilities were there.

Marcello: Generally speaking, was the health of the people holding up pretty well here?

Summerlin: Well, the ones that were taking it in stride were, but the ones that were fighting it and wouldn't go along with it were the ones that were going down. Of course, the group that I was with had always stated that the only way they were going to get rid of us was to kill us. As long as we could get along and a little something to eat, we were going to stay with them.

Marcello: Okay, on May 14, 1942, you were transferred from Tandjong Priok into Bicycle Camp. How far was Bicycle Camp from Tandjong Priok?

Summerlin: I don't recall, but it was quite a walk. All those trips, as I recall, were done by walking to those camps. I know that it was far enough that we had big blisters on our feet when we got there. A lot of them we had to help, and it was tough.

Marcello: Okay, let's take that imaginary tour again, and we are approaching Bicycle Camp. Describe what it was like on the inside from the physical standpoint.

Summerlin: This was much better than what we had been in--the buildings were.

Marcello: Describe your barracks or your living quarters.

Summerlin: This is the one that I recall. It seems like it had a lot of masonry, and it seems like it had a brick wall around it or something, as best that I can recall.

Marcello: Describe what the inside of your barracks was like.

Summerlin: You know it is funny but I can't...the only ones that I can remember were up and down that jungle where we worked.

Marcello: As I recall these barracks had a veranda or porch on them.

Summerlin: That's true, I remember that. Yes, I remember that now that you mention it. And it seemed like they had tile roofs or something on the buildings.

Marcello: Now were you housed in one large room, or were you in cubicles here in Bicycle Camp.

Summerlin: A lot of it was cubicles. I remember that a lot of it was smaller rooms, and then they had some larger rooms.

Marcello: What kind of fence or enclosure was around this camp?

Summerlin: Well, I don't recall if it was a lot of brick or a lot of masonry-type or part of it was a metal fence.

Marcello: Any barbed wire?

Summerlin: Oh, yes, I believe there was on the outside. I don't believe it was on the inside. Of course, I am not sure of that.

Marcello: When you arrived in Bicycle Camp, you encountered the survivors off the USS Houston, describe their condition.

Summerlin: They seemed to be in the same fix that we were in. In fact, they didn't have any clothes or anything like

that. I presume they had just what they had on when they left the ship, I don't recall if they had any shoes or not.

Marcello: What did the 131st Artillery do to help the Houston survivors?

Summerlin: The best that I can remember, the officers, when they came in, got them together and told them the situation there and kind of assigned them to certain place to go because the Japs left it up to some of the senior officers to interpret what was to be done.

Marcello: I know that on many occasions artillery personnel gave clothing and shoes and other things like that to the Houston personnel. Do you remember this taking place?

Summerlin: I don't recall.

Marcello: Describe what the food was like here at Bicycle Camp.

Summerlin: Well, it was still the same stuff. It was rice, watery soup, and probably some type of fish or fish heads or whatever they called it. That is what we called it. It had an awful odor.

Marcello: How often would you be fed?

Summerlin: Twice a day.

Marcello: And when would that occur?

Summerlin: Well, early in the morning and late in the evening.

Marcello: In other words, there would not be a breakfast, lunch, and dinner setup like we think of here?

Summerlin: No, not that I recall. Of course, the officers had their separate mess hall from ours.

Marcello: Describe this,

Summerlin: About the only thing that I can say is that we ate in one area, and they ate in another. We really didn't know what they were eating, but, of course, I guess they knew what we were eating.

Marcello: Did they have their own cooks preparing their own food?

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: So in other words, the officers didn't go through the usual chow line?

Summerlin: That's true. They did not.

Marcello: Describe the feeding procedure. It is time for chow, so what happens at that time?

Summerlin: We would just line up, and they got a rice thing and a stew thing. You would go through with your mess kit, and they would give you a dip of the rice and a dip of that other stuff to put on it.

Marcello: How did they measure out the rice? I am sure that you guys must have been watching that rice like a bunch of hawks to make sure that somebody didn't get more than someone else.

Summerlin: The best that I can remember, they had a ladle, and they would either give you one dip or two dips or something like that. But it was pretty uniform. Now that's true

because it didn't satisfy your appetite.

Marcello: Okay, you have gone through the chow line. Now you have your food, which, like you say, consists of rice and some kind of a watery stew. Normally, was the stew put right on top of the rice?

Summerlin: That's true. They poured it right on top of your rice.

Marcello: I guess that you were looking for anything that would give the rice some sort of favor,

Summerlin: We sure were.

Marcello: What would you do at that point then?

Summerlin: Then we'd go over and sit down someplace and start eating. Some would start picking worms out, and the others would just eat the whole thing. Of course, you got used to that because farther down the line you ate in the dark and left in the dark and came in the dark, so it didn't make any difference.

Marcello: So the rice did not improve any after you got to Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: Well, I can't recall because it was just up-and-down. It never was just really good.

Marcello: Normally, how long would it take you to eat?

Summerlin: It wouldn't take long--probably three or four minutes.

Marcello: What happened at that point? Then what would you do?

Summerlin: Well, you would rinse your mess kit out.

Marcello: You mentioned that you would rinse your mess kit out. Describe this procedure because I think that this is an important procedure.

Summerlin: Like I said, some of that stuff I just can't recall just what we did do. I don't remember the water facilities, but we would clean them some way or the other. I really don't recall now.

Marcello: As I can recall, there was a large container or barrel of boiling water.

Summerlin: That's it. It comes back to my memory now. It sure does. They boiled a big barrel of water, and we dipped them to sterilize them.

Marcello: In fact, was it not true that you had to do this even before you went through the chow line? Wasn't this the first thing that you did?

Summerlin: I believe so because dysentery and stuff like that was just everywhere.

Marcello: Even here in Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: Well, it started, yes.

Marcello: What chances were there to get seconds?

Summerlin: Very little. There may have been a few times, but very little.

Marcello: Talk a little about the work details here at Bicycle Camp. Describe how the work details were set up here.

Summerlin: They were set up similar to the other places, but I

don't recall exactly what details we did on the outside there. Like I said, it was quite a ways from the other place. I don't recall exactly what we did do there. All the other details that we had farther down the line just clouds all of that.

Marcello: I also know that when the 131st Field Artillery moved into Bicycle Camp, they had company funds, and these funds were used to buy food on the outside with the approval of the Japanese. Do you recall this?

Summerlin: Yes, I recall that.

Marcello: Describe how that worked.

Summerlin: The Japanese would allow them to buy so many bananas, so many peanuts, or whatever was available as long as the money held out, and we used that in the mess hall.

Marcello: Who would be doing the buying?

Summerlin: The best that I can remember, the officers would.

Marcello: There were some rumors going around that the officers seemed to be eating better than the enlisted men.

Summerlin: Now that was the rumors,

Marcello: What do you know about it beyond the rumors?

Summerlin: Like I said, I really never did really see exactly what they were eating, but I am almost certain that it was probably a little bit better than ours. If it hadn't been better, they would have been eating in the same line that we were.



Marcello: Do you recall whether or not if this caused any dissension and grumbling and that sort of thing?

Summerlin: Well, it caused some trouble between the men and officers in a way. There was a lot of grumbling and griping about it.

Marcello: At this point, then, do you find the beginning of a breakdown in the relationship between the officers and the enlisted men?

Summerlin: I did. I noticed that you had less respect for them, I will put it that way.

Marcello: Now while we are on this subject, it is true, is it not, that by this time military courtesies and formalities have been dropped?

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: In other words, you are not saluting any longer, and you are not observing any of those kinds of courtesies. This was done by mutual agreement, wasn't it?

Summerlin: I think so. I think more or less it just came along, and they agreed to it.

Marcello: Now generally speaking, were you still following orders?

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: How important was discipline going to be for your survival?

Summerlin: The military discipline end of it was dropped, but as far as trying to keep together and trying to do what

we were told, we did that.

Marcello: To a great extent, you can't act as individuals,

Summerlin: That's true. That's right. I couldn't see where you could because you had to work as a group.

Marcello: Let's talk a little about the conduct of the Japanese here in Bicycle Camp. Describe the relationship between the prisoners and the Japanese guards.

Summerlin: I can't say that we had a lot of a relationship with them. I do recall the times that we were taken out and questioned as a group. In fact, they had some machine guns set up, and they were asking questions about different things. Of course, we didn't know anything to tell them because we didn't know what was going on in the outside world because we'd been without contact so long. They did think that we had a lot more men on Java than we had.

Marcello: Okay, now you get into Bicycle Camp in May of 1942, and you have been a prisoner since March of 1942. What adjustments are you having to make in order to avoid the wrath of these Japanese guards? What do you have to do?

Summerlin: The main thing is to do what they tell you, and if you do anything out of line, well, some of them would call you up and stand on something and slap you.

Marcello: Why would they stand on something and slap you?

Summerlin: Because they were too short and couldn't reach  
(chuckle) some of them tall Texans.

Marcello: Did this ever happen to you?

Summerlin: I don't recall them ever slapping me, but I have been  
punched with gun butts,

Marcello: What formalities would you have to observe when you  
encountered a Japanese?

Summerlin: What formalities?

Marcello: In other words, suppose you were in Bicycle Camp, and  
you were walking down one of the streets, and you  
encountered a Japanese guard...

Summerlin: Oh, you had to bow to him. Anytime that you passed a  
Japanese, you bowed to him. If you didn't he would  
remind you,

Marcello: I have heard it said that on some occasions, just to  
harass the Japanese, a group of prisoners would string  
out in a line when they saw a Japanese coming in such  
a manner that this Japanese would have to bow to each  
one of these prisoners, right on down the line.

Summerlin: That's right. They sure did. In fact, we had one  
Japanese who could speak excellent English, and one of  
the guys was kind of buddying up to him; but one day  
it backfired on him, and he got pretty well beat up  
by him,

Marcello: Now did this happen here in Bicycle Camp, or did this

happen up in the jungle?

Summerlin: Well, it seems to me that we had one of these in Bicycle Camp like that, too. I know we had some in the jungle that were that way,

Marcello: I understand that they were always counting, too, is that correct?

Summerlin: Yes, you were subject to a count almost anytime. If they decided something was wrong, then they would call you out for a count.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that these little things would become irritating after awhile?

Summerlin: Well, they did for a while, but then they became such a habit that you just didn't pay any attention to it.

Marcello: I guess that you had to count in Japanese pretty fast, didn't you?

Summerlin: That's right. I could understand some of that Japanese, but I never could learn to speak any of it, except a few words.

Marcello: What would happen if they would get you out and count you, and the count didn't come out right?

Summerlin: Well, they would make you stand at attention until they located what was missing, and that got to be pretty tiresome sometimes.

Marcello: Are they still screaming and hollering?

Summerlin: Oh, they still do that,

Marcello: How about them coming through the barracks? Would there be inspections and things of this nature periodically?

Summerlin: They came through pretty often for that.

Marcello: How often?

Summerlin: Well, I would say probably a couple of times in the daytime and a couple of times at night. Of course, it wasn't all at the same time; it was different times.

Marcello: What would happen when they would hit the front door of the barracks?

Summerlin: We would all jump up to attention, and, of course, when they came along, we would all bow. Sometimes he would be walking along, and he would punch someone with a gun butt or something because he saw something he didn't like.

Marcello: What would they be coming through the barracks for?

Summerlin: I presume checking to see if we had anything concealed, that we might have out.

Marcello: What weren't you allowed to have?

Summerlin: A radio. That was one thing for sure, but we had one.

Marcello: Describe that.

Summerlin: We had it broken down--I don't know how many pieces, but it was broken down--and carried from camp to camp. We

had one guy there that could put it back together, I believe that his name was Stanbrough. He could put it back together, and we could get the news late at night. We could usually do that.

Marcello: How would this be done?

Summerlin: We would put up guards, too, to watch while he would put it together; and if we saw any commotion or anything coming back, we would relay the word on back, and they would get it put up.

Marcello: How would the news be distributed?

Summerlin: From individual to individual.

Marcello: By word-of-mouth?

Summerlin: That's right, by mouth.

Marcello: How about writing utensils? Could you have that sort of thing.

Summerlin: What kind?

Marcello: Writing utensils such as pens, paper...

Summerlin: Well, I think that we could have pencils. If you had one, I think that you could have it, as far as I can recall. Of course, knives and things like that you were not allowed. Of course, some of us had them. If you were caught with it, you would probably get a little bashing, and then they would take it away from you.

Marcello: What kind of punishment were the common forms here at Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: Slapping and punching with a gun butt,

Marcello: When you say slapping, are you talking about an open-hand slap?

Summerlin: An open-hand slap,

Marcello: Is this something that's more humiliating than harmful, shall we say?

Summerlin: It was but you had to swallow it if you wanted to live, and we knew that from all indications,

Marcello: Where would they usually hit you with the gun butt?

Summerlin: They would hit you in the stomach or the chest, or if they were behind you, they would hit you in the back with it. But I never did see anyone offhand just clubbed to death with a gun butt. I didn't see that,

Marcello: What were some of the more extreme forms of punishment that you noticed here at Bicycle Camp? Did you see any forms of punishment beyond the slapping and gun butts?

Summerlin: Offhand, I don't recall any, not at Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: What means did you have here at Bicycle Camp to supplement your food?

Summerlin: As I said, they bought this food with that money, but I don't believe that we did a whole lot of trading of the gold there because we were able to buy with the extra money they had,

Marcello: I have heard some of the men to speak rather fondly of Eagle Brand milk,

Summerlin: That was delicious!

Marcello: Did you get any of it here at Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: I got a taste of it,

Marcello: What would you do with it once you got hold of some of that?

Summerlin: You would just sip on it along for a good while and try to make it last as long as you could,

Marcello: Is it safe to say that you were not worked very hard here at Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: We weren't worked very hard there, that I recall.

Marcello: What did you do during your spare time?

Summerlin: Well, we played cards. I think that there were some cards around. We played some blackjack, and I believe that was the only thing that I ever saw played. I believe there were some dice in the camp.

Marcello: When you sat around in your bull sessions, what did you talk about?

Summerlin: Food. We talked about mostly food because it done got to that point already. And we'd always talked about that it wasn't going to be too long before somebody was going to be here. They were going to rescue us before too long. That was a common thing to talk about,



Marcello: How about family?

Summerlin: Far as I can remember, not a great deal. At times there would be some talk. We swapped tales about the families and whatnot.

Marcello: What foods were you wanting most?

Summerlin: I guess what you craved for most was sweets--I believe mostly, Meats and sweets.

Marcello: I understand that there were a lot of recipes made up during these bull sessions.

Summerlin: There probably were. I don't recall what any of them made up, but they were always fixing up concoctions of some kind or talking about it.

Marcello: What activities were there in the way of sports or entertainment here at Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: It seems to me like we played some volleyball or something there in Batavia. I believe that that is about the extent of it. I don't know if we had any baseball or softball. I don't recall.

Marcello: How about stage shows? Do you remember those?

Summerlin: Farther down the line.

Marcello: But you don't remember them here in Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: I don't remember them in Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: What other nationalities were there in Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: I believe that we had some Australians here, but I don't know for sure.

Marcello: How about British? Were there any British there?

Summerlin: At times I know there were some British, but I don't recall whether they were there or not.

Marcello: On July 4, 1942, the Japanese tried to get all the prisoners to sign a non-escape pledge. Do you recall this incident?

Summerlin: Yes.

Marcello: Describe it.

Summerlin: I believe that they gathered us up or had like a roll count, the best I can remember, and asked us to sign this, I remember it, but I just don't recall the procedures of it.

Marcello: You used the term "asked," I assume that they ordered you to sign it.

Summerlin: We figured, "What the heck!" It didn't make any difference whether we signed it or didn't sign it, as far as our end of it, because if we had the opportunity to escape, we would have done it, anyway. But as far as I know, we just went ahead and signed it.

Marcello: Did they threaten you in any way if you didn't sign it?

Summerlin: Well, they threatened us, and that might have been one of the ways that they threatened us with that machine gun, but I don't really recall. But I know that they did try to get information.

Marcello: What advice did you receive from your officers about the non-escape pledge?

Summerlin: To go ahead and sign it.

Marcello: Was there ever any hesitation on your part about signing it?

Summerlin: Not mine, because there wouldn't be any point in it.

Marcello: Do any of the Japanese guards stand out in your mind here at Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: Not at Bicycle Camp, but there are some farther down the line that did.

Marcello: Just a moment ago, we were talking about the non-escape pledge. What talk was there about escape here at Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: I don't recall a whole lot of escaping. There might have been, but I don't recall a whole lot about it here at Bicycle Camp. I don't recall. With the conditions that were there, I don't see what good it would have done.

Marcello: What do you mean?

Summerlin: We didn't have anywhere to go; we didn't have anything to take with us; we had no means of fighting whatsoever.

Marcello: And what threats did the Japanese make if one did escape and were recaptured?

Summerlin: First, I recall they said that he would be severely punished, and later they mentioned that if he was

caught, he would be shot,

Marcello: Did you have any reason to doubt this?

Summerlin: I didn't doubt it,

Marcello: Generally speaking, how was your health holding up here at Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: So far, fairly well,

Marcello: Were you able to bathe rather regularly here?

Summerlin: It seemed like we were, We had running water, I am sure, there,

Marcello: What kind of facilities?

Summerlin: It seemed like we had a shower head or something in a big room, It might have been two or three of them because I think, after all, that was a military camp or something,

Marcello: And how often could you and would you take a bath?

Summerlin: I think once a day,

Marcello: By this time I assume that you would have run out of certain ordinary things that we take for granted, like soap and toothpaste and that sort of thing?

Summerlin: That's right. In fact, I don't remember the last toothbrush that I had after I had got in there,

Marcello: Of course, you didn't have much food to get caught between your teeth, anyway (chuckle).

Summerlin: That's true. That was more or less a liquid diet,

Marcello: In October, 1942, they began moving people out of

Bicycle Camp. The first group that went out left on October 7, 1942, and this was the Fitzsimmons group, mainly because it was headed by Captain Arch Fitzsimmons. Did you leave in that group, or did you leave later on?

Summerlin: I don't remember leaving in the first group,

Marcello: How did the Japanese prepare you for this move? In other words, did they notify you that the move would be taking place and so on and so forth, let's say, a week in advance or something like that?

Summerlin: Oh, no, they didn't notify us in a week in advance, as far as I remember. It seemed to me that it was more like a day's notice.

Marcello: But, of course, if the Fitzsimmons group did leave at first, then you at least knew that sooner or later you would be leaving, too.

Summerlin: That's right. We knew we were going to go someplace.

Marcello: What reactions or feelings did you have about leaving Bicycle Camp?

Summerlin: Well, we knew where we were going or where we were heading probably wouldn't be as good as it was there. We knew that it was going to be tough from then on.

Marcello: Despite the conditions at Bicycle Camp, is it safe to say that, had you been able to stay there under those circumstances, survival wouldn't have been too

difficult?

Summerlin: That's true. It would have been better. Of course, the food situation,,,as time went on we ran out of money, and the food wasn't too good.

Marcello: Now describe your moving out of Bicycle Camp, Describe what took place,

Summerlin: I can't even recall where we went after we left Bicycle Camp. I got a place or two in mind, but I think that it was at a different time. You may have to pick me up on that part because I can't recall where we went,

Marcello: Well, of course, first of all, I think that you were taken down to the docks again, and you boarded a ship.

Summerlin: That's right,

Marcello: And I believe your destination on this leg of your journey was Singapore. Actually, it was Changi Village.

Summerlin: Right,

Marcello: Okay, do you recall the name of the ship upon which you placed?

Summerlin: I can't remember if it was Moji Maru or something like that,

Marcello: Well, I remember one group went aboard the Dai Nichi Maru, and then later on they picked up the Dai Moji Maru when they left Singapore. Describe what conditions were like aboard that ship.

Summerlin: We were crowded into an area that wasn't very tall, and you had to more or less sit down to get into it. There were facilities, that I can recall, for getting to the bathroom and whatnot because we were just packed in. You were allowed to get on the top deck, I think, one time during the day. It seemed like they even used the saltwater hoses for bath purposes and whatnot.

Marcello: Describe what conditions were like down in the hold of that ship?

Summerlin: The odor was terrific after a while. It was real crowded and dark. You more or less had to sit up to sleep; you couldn't lay down.

Marcello: Is it not true that they had kind of divided this hold into tiers? In other words, they built platforms in the hold,

Summerlin: That's true. That is the reason why you practically had to sit down to get in them.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that the odor was terrific. Can you expand on that?

Summerlin: That was from seasickness and diarrhea. Latrine facilities, we just didn't have.

Marcello: Where were the latrine facilities located?

Summerlin: I don't even remember it being one there down below.

Marcello: Well, I am sure that there wasn't one down below, but

do you recall the one out on deck?

Summerlin: Not really,

Marcello: I know a lot of men refer to this outhouse-like structure that set almost over the side of the ship.

Summerlin: It was right at the edge of the ship, I do recall it being there,

Marcello: How were you fed aboard that ship?

Summerlin: I don't remember whether we were fed in the hold or whether we went on the top deck, It seems like we went on the top deck, but I am not for sure.

Marcello: How about drinking water? What did you do for water?

Summerlin: Well, we didn't do a whole lot about water, It was just issued, I think, every so often because we didn't have anything to carry it in, I don't think, at that time, Some of us still might have had our canteens, We probably did at that stage.

Marcello: You mentioned that some of you still had your canteens, I can't imagine anybody giving up their canteens voluntarily,

Summerlin: Not voluntarily, I don't think so, either, I think that that was one thing we kept or tried to keep, let's put it that way, and something to eat out of,

Marcello: How long were you on this trip? How long did this trip take?

Summerlin: It seems to me that we were on it about a week or four



or five days,

Marcello: Fortunately, it was no longer than that.

Summerlin: That's right,

Marcello: You end up at Changi, which is a British compound there at Singapore or close to Singapore. Once again, describe Changi from a physical standpoint. What did it look like?

Summerlin: It seemed like it had some kind of masonry construction, but it had large rooms in it. I don't recall if we slept on the floor, but I do remember it was hard to sleep at night because of the bedbugs and stuff--mosquitoes and bedbugs,

Marcello: Describe the situation in regard to the bedbugs,

Summerlin: Well, you could lie down, and the first thing you know, something was biting you; and everywhere you would lay, well, that's where they would bite--right at the area that you laid on the floor. It was terrific. The bedbugs were...it was infested with them.

Marcello: Did you have bunks in your barracks there?

Summerlin: I don't recall if we did or didn't.

Marcello: How did you get rid of the bedbugs?

Summerlin: We didn't, that I remember. We were moved out (chuckle). I don't recall getting rid of them because they were in the buildings,

Marcello: How long did you stay at Changi altogether?

Summerlin: It doesn't seem that we were there all that long. We might have been there—it is hard to remember—but four or five days, but I don't recall.

Marcello: So it was certainly less than a month that you were there?

Summerlin: Oh, yes.

Marcello: I was basically trying to pinpoint which particular group you were with. I know that one group that arrived there in October and didn't leave until January, but then there was another group that didn't stay there more than two weeks at the most.

Summerlin: We weren't there that long. I would say that we were there about two weeks.

Marcello: What did you do during this period that you were at Changi?

Summerlin: I don't recall doing a whole lot, myself, but I do recall seeing the Scottish...what do you call them... the Highlanders. I recall seeing those there and seeing them for the first time. There were British soldiers there, too.

Marcello: Describe the relationship between the Americans and the British that developed here in Changi.

Summerlin: Not very good.

Marcello: Go into more detail.

Summerlin: Well, they just didn't seem to have a whole lot to do

for us, and we wouldn't have a whole lot to do for them--their attitude. They just had an attitude that they were for themselves and the heck with you. So we more or less formed that attitude with them after awhile.

Marcello: I understand that they tried to make it pretty clear that they were running this camp internally.

Summerlin: They did, and also they also wanted you to respect their officers militarily, of which we had already abandoned, and we didn't.

Marcello: And what resulted from this difference?

Summerlin: Well, we had some squabbling among our officers about it.

Marcello: When you say that there was some squabbling among your officers, what do you mean?

Summerlin: They thought that we should recognize their military rank and salute them.

Marcello: What advice did your officers give?

Summerlin: Well, they said that you could if you wanted to, and if you didn't, you didn't have to. The best that I can remember, I believe that that is the way it was. Of course, the best I remember, we all ignored it.

Marcello: I think that most of the people here made a distinction between the attitude of the Americans toward the British and the attitude of the Americans toward the Scots.

Evidently they respected the Scots but not the British.

Summerlin: That's right. They seemed to be more friendly, too--the Scottish did. Of course, the Australians were well-respected. They were good people.

Marcello: What kind of food were you getting here in Changi?

Summerlin: About the same stuff--rice--or if you were lucky, you'd get a fish or what-have-you.

Marcello: I gather that most of you weren't sorry to leave Changi.

Summerlin: We were glad to leave. That was one place that you couldn't rest. You couldn't sleep at night because of the conditions there. You just have to experience sleeping with bedbugs to understand it.

Marcello: Well, describe what it is like.

Summerlin: You just scratch and itch from the bites. It is a lot worse than mosquito bites. Of course, they had plenty of mosquitoes, too.

Marcello: Well, like we mentioned, you were not at Changi for too long, and you boarded another ship, and I suspect that this time you are on your way to Moulmein, Burma.

Summerlin: Do you want me to explain what that trip was like?

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about this next leg of the trip, and I think possible you may have been aboard the Dai Nichi Maru.

Summerlin: I think that is the one that I was on.

Marcello: Okay, a group, I know, was on the Dai Nichi Maru when it left on January 11, 1943. I don't recall...I don't know if you recall that date or not.

Summerlin: I don't recall that date.

Marcello: Describe again what the conditions were like aboard Dai Moji Maru.

Summerlin: It was the same as the other ship, I mean, crowded conditions, and, of course, the odor and so forth went with it. The Japanese were put in the hold in the back of the ship on this particular ship.

Marcello: They were on the same ship as you.

Summerlin: Right. Of course, the ship was not marked as a Red Cross ship or anything. We weren't on the ship, it seemed like, but three or four days or something like that. About a day out of Moulmein, Burma, well, Americans came over from India and bombed it.

Marcello: You were part of a convoy at this time. There was the Dai Moji Maru, and there was another ship that had Japanese and Dutch personnel on board, and then I believe there was a small escort or something.

Summerlin: It was a gunboat. A small Japanese gunboat.

Marcello: Describe the attack. Go into as much detail as you can remember.

Summerlin: Well, I was on the top deck, and I laid down on my back,

and as I was looking up, these planes came over, They dropped all these bombs, They just strew them out, like, a hundred of them or more. Well, they hit exactly on both sides of the ship, and when it was over, the ship stopped shaking, and I looked up, and the whole...what do you call the top part of the ship up there where you run the ship and all?

Marcello: The wheelhouse or that area.

Summerlin: Well, anyway, whatever you call it, it was missing, and the Japs that was on the gun up there were all missing--they were blown off. The bombs that fell in the back hold...one or two of the bombs hit in the Japanese hold, and there was a bunch of those that were killed. That was something else.

Marcello: How many planes were in this raid?

Summerlin: I don't recall, but it seemed like it was three in this particular one.

Marcello: Two-engine planes or four-engine?

Summerlin: Four engines.

Marcello: What happened to the other ship?

Summerlin: I think that they sunk the other ship. I know we were picking up survivors.

Marcello: How long did this whole attack last? How long did it actually last? I am sure that it seemed like an eternity.

Summerlin: It seemed like a long time, but I am sure that it didn't last over fifteen minutes.

Marcello: While the attack was going on, you mentioned that you were above deck,,,

Summerlin: I might bring up another little item while we were on this ship, though. We had talked about possibly taking the ship over if anything happened to the gunboat. When they bombed us like they did and the way that it turned out, they didn't get the little gunboat, so there was nothing that we could do, so we didn't take it over. But we had anticipated and talked about it among ourselves.

Marcello: How about the prisoners down in the hold? Were they allowed out during this raid? Do you recall?

Summerlin: I don't believe so. I don't recall if they were. They were kept down because of what might take place.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were up on deck when this took place. How or why were you on deck?

Summerlin: I think that I was on deck because they would let so many go at a time to go to the restroom.

Marcello: I guess that you were glad to be up on deck as opposed to being down in the hold of that ship.

Summerlin: I sure was, but I didn't like to watch those bombs come down (chuckle).

Marcello: What was the reaction of the Japanese in the aftermath

of the attack?

Summerlin: They were very excited, and they were really hollering then. Of course, they got another gun up and told everybody to stay put.

Marcello: Were you hustled back down into the hold again?

Summerlin: We were taken back down into the hold.

Marcello: And you say that this ship did stay around to pick up the survivors?

Summerlin: Right.

Marcello: How long did this process take?

Summerlin: I don't think that they stayed too long because I think that they knew what might happen later, so they picked up what they could and went on in. We were listing then, about a third, by the time we got to Moulmein.

Marcello: I guess your ship must have been really crowded after you took aboard Japanese and Dutch personnel.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: Did you have any other scares once you, let's say, hit the river going up to Moulmein?

Summerlin: Well, we had some...I don't recall right there...we had some more scares. I don't recall that part of it, but I recall a little of what we got into once we got off of it.

Marcello: Okay, you get off the ship there at Moulmein, and what happens at that point?



Summerlin: We walked to some kind of camp, a barricade deal, that we were put in,

Marcello: Was this at night that this occurred?

Summerlin: It seemed like it was, It was late because most of the afternoon we were getting into the port after that attack,

Marcello: Describe in more detail this compound where you are being held now,

Summerlin: When we got there, we entered the compound, and, of course, there were no facilities at all at this place. The latrines were just trenches dug. It was overcrowded; a lot of dysentery was taking place and whatnot; diseases, It was something to think about then because the places we were going were getting worse and worse. We knew that we were at the head of the jungle because we had been told that we were going to work on the railroad,

Marcello: I know that some people were put in a civilian jail here at Moulmein. Were you in that group?

Summerlin: I was not in that group.

Marcello: What did you do while you were here in this compound?

Summerlin: I don't recall doing anything because we were not there that long,

Marcello: Were you housed in buildings, or were you outside?

Summerlin: It seemed like we might have had some kind of bamboo

shed in there or something and a roof over some parts, but mostly it was open, as I recall. It seemed to me to be more or less a temporary arrangement deal; I don't recall it being otherwise.

Marcello: How long were you there altogether?

Summerlin: We weren't there too long; I don't recall being there too long.

Marcello: Was it less than a week?

Summerlin: I would think so.

Marcello: And where would you go from there?

Summerlin: We went to...they named those camps "kilo camps."

Marcello: But did you not go to Thanbyuzayat first of all, which was the base camp?

Summerlin: I believe so--Thanbyuzayat or whatever you call it. But I don't recall that too much at that time.

Marcello: Now you mentioned awhile ago that when you got to Moulmein, you would be working on a railroad. Where had you received this information?

Summerlin: I don't know. It just wandered down through the ranks, as far as I remember.

Marcello: Did you have any reaction to working on a railroad or anything of that nature?

Summerlin: Well, we did when we found that we'd be working on a railroad in the jungle. We knew that we were really going to have some hard times surviving it.

Marcello: Now I know that when a lot of people got to Thanbyuzayat, which was sometime around January 27, 1943, they had their first encounter with Colonel Nagatomo, who gave a welcoming speech, if I may call it that. Do you recall Colonel Nagatomo and the speech?

Summerlin: Well, it comes back to me, I recall it very well. It is similar to the ones you see on the news shows. We were all brought out, and we stood...we were just called out like we usually were, and I guess we had a count and whatnot, and then he proceeded with his little lecture.

Marcello: Was he speaking in English?

Summerlin: He did speak in English.

Marcello: Do you recall what he said, what he told you?

Summerlin: (Chuckle) I can't really recall, but I know that he was lord and master, and he wanted to let us know that, but I really don't recall what all he did say. I am sure if I heard it, it would come back to me, but I don't recall it all.

Marcello: Did he make any threats or anything of that nature?

Summerlin: He did say that if anybody tried to escape or anything, they would be shot. He told us what we were going to do. We were going to be working on the railroad for the Imperial Japanese Army. He stressed that Imperial

Japanese Army plenty of times.

Marcello: From Thanbyuzayat people went to various camps to begin working on this railroad. I know that one group started out at the 18 Kilo Camp; another group started out at the 26 Kilo Camp. Do you recall which one you started at?

Summerlin: Well, I was trying to remember whether it was at the first camp or at this base camp where I first got malaria, and I ran a real high temperature. But I think that it was at the base camp. I know that if it had not been for Alvin Morgan--he was first lieutenant at that time--from Marshall, if it had not been for him, I probably might not have survived it.

Marcello: Okay, describe this particular incident.

Summerlin: It is malaria that works on your brain or something. I guess it's from the high temperature. I was out for approximately three or four days, and when I finally came to,,.he took care of me, and when I came to, I didn't know where I was. It took me a day or so for it to come back to me. That was my first narrow escape--right there.

Marcello: What sort of treatment did they have for this malaria? Do you recall?

Summerlin: They didn't have anything, as far as I can recall, except a yellow tablet. Atabrine or something like

that was all we had. But I was lucky, I guess, to get over it.

Marcello: If you had the malaria there at Thanbyuzayat, did you have to rejoin your group later on then? Had they already moved out?

Summerlin: I don't think so. I believe that the group was still there. It was about three or four days that I was unconscious. Like I say, I can't recall if it was there or the first camp.

Marcello: Do you recall how you got from Thanbyuzayat to the first kilo camp that you were at?

Summerlin: We walked.

Marcello: Describe that walk from Thanbuzayat to the first kilo camp.

Summerlin: We were walking barefooted, and it was pretty rough walking. They seemed like always, once they get you started, they wanted you to go ahead and get there in a hurry.

Marcello: Now you said that you didn't recall which kilo camp you were assigned to?

Summerlin: Not there, but I know that we were at 80 Kilo for a long time.

Marcello: I recall some of the men mentioning that on this march from Thanbyuzayat to the kilo camp, the road was dry and dusty and powdery. Do you recall that at all?

Summerlin: At that time, yes, Of course, it wasn't to the monsoon season yet, I don't believe.

Marcello: Well, like I say, the two camps most of these people seemed to go to were either the 18 Kilo Camp or the 26 Kilo Camp.

Summerlin: I think the 18 Kilo Camp is the one that I went to, I know the 26 Kilo doesn't,.

Marcello: The Fitzsimmons group went to the 26 Kilo Camp, and you mentioned that you were pretty sure that you were not a part of the Fitzsimmons group.

Summerlin: Right.

Marcello: Okay, describe what this 18 Kilo Camp looked like from a physical standpoint.

Summerlin: That particular camp, I believe, was pretty well built for what it was. It consisted of bamboo huts with those large bamboo split and laid down about two feet off the ground to make the bed, and that is what we slept on.

Marcello: How large would one of these huts be?

Summerlin: Oh, gosh, some of them would be a hundred feet long.

Marcello: You mentioned that they had these raised platforms constructed of split bamboo, Would this platform be on each side of hut?

Summerlin: There would be an aisle through the center and one on each side.

Marcello: Would these huts be built right on the ground or up off the ground?

Summerlin: The huts were built right on the ground.

Marcello: So in other words, the hallway down the middle would be a dirt floor?

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: How much room would you have on one of these platforms? How much room would each individual have?

Summerlin: Well, you would be shoulder-to-shoulder. You would have very little room. Of course, we did have a little more room than we did on the ships (chuckle).

Marcello: And in this little space, you would also have to house all of your gear and things of that nature?

Summerlin: That's true. You would put it at the head of your bed most of the time--what little you had.

Marcello: What other buildings would there be in one of these kilo camps?

Summerlin: They would have a kitchen, and they'd have these big wa-jongs, big rice cookers.

Marcello: Where would the Japanese be housed?

Summerlin: They were housed at one side. I can't recall if it was inside or outside the fence.

Marcello: Would they be in a structure similar to what you had?

Summerlin: Similar to what we had.

Marcello: What would the cook shack look like?

Summerlin: It would be the same type with a bamboo top on it, It would be on the ground, too, and they would have these big wa-jongs setting pretty close to the ground, just enough to build a fire under them, They had these drums to boil water to drink because we had to drink boiled water or we would have never made it,

Marcello: Where would the latrine facilities usually be located, and what would they look like?

Summerlin: Well, it would be located out from one end of the barracks quite a ways--just a ditch dug, slit latrine. And they used bamboo sometimes, At one place they used bamboo as a seat-like instead of just a straddle trench, They would use a bamboo deal--just a pole,

Marcello: I gather that those latrines crawled with maggots.

Summerlin: Always, They sure did, Flies, all kinds of insects.

Marcello: You will have to estimate this, of course, but about how many personnel would be in one of these kilo camps?

Summerlin: I don't recall, but there would be several hundred in a camp, I can't remember, but there were quite a few, But number-wise, I don't exactly recall,

Marcello: Approximately how many guard personnel might there be in this camp?

Summerlin: Well, we didn't have to have all that many guards out



in the jungle because there wasn't anywhere to go, and they usually had one or two patrolling in the camp, and then they'd have guards at the gates.

Marcello: So again, the ratio of prisoners to guards is rather large. There were not very many guards in any of these camps.

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: And these camps did not have a fence around them or anything of that nature.

Summerlin: No.

Marcello: Like you said, you were not going anywhere.

Summerlin: You weren't going anywhere, so they wouldn't...but I think possibly they had maybe fifty or a hundred men on a work detail to one guard.

Marcello: What nationalities would there be in one of these camps?

Summerlin: Dutch, Australians, Javanese or Malaysians or whatever you call them, and Americans.

Marcello: You don't encounter too many British here, do you? The British are working on the southern end.

Summerlin: They are on the other end of the railroad.

Marcello: What sort of relationship developed among the various nationalities in these kilo camps?

Summerlin: Good relations.

Marcello: I guess for the record, we should say that these kilo camps get their name because of the distance they were located from the base camp, which was Thanbyuzayat.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: The 18 Kilo Camp, in other words, meant that it was 18 kilometers from Thanbyuzayat.

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: Now did you have to build this camp, or was it already built for you? I'm referring to the 18 Kilo Camp.

Summerlin: The 18 Kilo, it seemed like, was built, but the next one wasn't built, and that I was in.

Marcello: It is now around this time that you have a change in guards, isn't it?

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: Is it in the jungle where you pick up Korean guards?

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: Compare or contrast the Korean guards with the Japanese guards that you had had previously.

Summerlin: The Japanese guards were much better to us than the Korean guards were. The Korean guards felt like they were so much above us, or tried to point to the fact that they were. As far as being mean or rough on us, they were much meaner and rougher than the Japanese guards were.

Marcello: In what way?

Summerlin: It seemed like they were easily irritated or liked to show off. In other words, for no reason at all they would hit you or punch you with a gun or anything. They seemed to want to be superior to you.

Marcello: How did they compare in size with the Japanese?

Summerlin: The Koreans were much larger than the Japanese were. There were some of them as tall as we were. They really did like to show off their superiority to the white race.

Marcello: Do you think it was because they had been tromped on for so long by the Japanese, and now the Koreans finally had someone they could tromp on?

Summerlin: I feel sure that that had something to do with it.

Marcello: Because was it not true that the Japanese treated the Koreans with a certain amount of disdain?

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: Would the Korean guards be housed separately from the Japanese?

Summerlin: I believe that they were, but I wouldn't say for sure that they were.

Marcello: Well, I guess probably in this camp you had the administrators, who were Japanese, the guards, who were Korean, and then the engineer personnel, who were Japanese; so you really don't have too many

soldiers as such in this camp.

Summerlin: That's right, They were mostly Koreans. But like I said, they were under the supervision of the Japanese. They were more or less prisoners to the Japanese, too. They were just doing the job that they were told to do.

Marcello: Did you have nicknames for any of these guards?

Summerlin: We did but I am trying to recall now, since you mentioned it. We sure did, but I can't recall the names.

Marcello: Do you recall one that was called the "Brown Bomber?"

Summerlin: That name is familiar (chuckle).

Marcello: "Liver Lips?"

Summerlin: Don't recall that one.

Marcello: "Hollywood?"

Summerlin: Yes, I remember that one. I think that he is the one probably that could speak pretty good English. I don't recall for sure, but it seemed like he could.

Marcello: Let's describe a typical workday on this railroad from the time you got up until you get in in the evening. Now I am referring to that period before the "Speedo" Campaign and the monsoon business. Let's describe a typical workday here at the 18 Kilo Camp, where we are still in the dry season and where the terrain is relatively level and not too overgrown and so on. Describe

a typical workday.

Summerlin: Well, we had two different types of work details now, I was on one detail, and we got up early in the morning before daylight, we ate our rice ration before daylight, and then we were grouped together and taken out and then walked sometimes eight or ten miles to work,

Marcello: This was called a kumf, was it not, this group?

Summerlin: That's right. We were working on a bridge. This wasn't too large a bridge at this particular place. But what we had for driving the piling was a big rod or pipe attached to the top of it and then a big weight pulled by a rope up to the top of that thing, and we would pull that rope and drop that weight, and it would guide down that pipe and drive those pilings in. We did all of that by hand, and we did that all day long until we went back in that night. Of course, like I said, we had to boil water out on the work details, and you were so thirsty all of the time that you would drink it hot, and that didn't satisfy you at all.

Marcello: Would there be people assigned specifically to the task of boiling water?

Summerlin: I think that maybe they did. I think that they had ones to take care of that and bring it to you while you were working. Of course, it would be done right

close to where you were working.

Marcello: I assume that you would drop this pile driver in unison.

Summerlin: Right. We would get to where we would sing or whatever and pull it and then drop it.

Marcello: When you say that you would sing, would you be singing in Japanese numbers? Counting in Japanese or what?

Summerlin: Sometimes they would. They kind of mixed it up after a while.

Marcello: Would you like to elaborate on this?

Summerlin: Offhand, I can't recall...I can't recall the one, two, and three and four, but I was trying to think of the other word that they used. Maybe I can recall it before this is over with.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were on this bridge building when you first got to the 18 Kilo Camp?

Summerlin: It seems like that was the first part. It wasn't a real large bridge. It was kind of a small bridge.

Marcello: Now if you weren't on the bridge building detail, what other kind of work might you be doing when you were working on this railroad?

Summerlin: You had two pieces of bamboo where you made a tow sack sling attached to these two pieces of bamboo, and you were assigned two meters of dirt a day.

Marcello: Were you assigned that much in the beginning?

Summerlin: As far as I remember, we were. I don't recall it otherwise. But anyway, you were supposed to shovel this dirt on top of this tow sack, and then two men would pick up the bamboo on their shoulders and tote it up on the railroad.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were assigned two meters of dirt per day. Do you mean that each person had two meters of dirt a day to move?

Summerlin: You worked two people together, and that would be four meters to dig and put on the railroad that day.

Marcello: So in other words, the same people who dug and shoveled would also be carrying the tow sack? In other words, there wouldn't be a person digging and a person shoveling and two people carrying.

Summerlin: Not to start with, the best that I can remember. I don't recall it.

Marcello: When you first would get started, would it take you all day to move your assigned amount of dirt?

Summerlin: It would. In fact, in part of the terrain where you were working, it would take...it was always usually night when you got back in. It doesn't sound like a lot, but two meters of dirt is a whole lot of dirt to dig and then carry out.

Marcello: What you are saying in fact is, when you are working

on this railroad, for the most part you were building bridges, or you were making cuts or fills.

Summerlin: That's right, I don't remember the time that we started, but then we started to break rocks and make ballast to put on the roadbed.

Marcello: Of all the jobs on the railroad, which one did you consider the worst? Which one did you not necessarily want to do? Not that you had much of a choice, but...

Summerlin: I guess breaking the rock was one of the worst.

Marcello: Why was that?

Summerlin: Because you didn't have any protection on your legs, and those things would flake off and hit your legs and start a sore, and that is where a lot of the tropical ulcers were started.

Marcello: Okay, we will talk about those a little later on, I think,

Summerlin: Right,

Marcello: A while ago, one of the reasons that I questioned you when you mentioned the two meters of dirt is because my records indicate that they started off originally with about 1,2 meters, and then they gradually increased it,

Summerlin: They possible could have, Like I say, I don't remember exactly.



Marcello: I think what happened in the beginning was that at 1,2 meters, and with the men being in fairly good physical condition, they were able to finish sometimes at noon, and then they were allowed to go back into camp again. Of course, when the Japanese saw this happening, they increased the quotas gradually until they made sure that you were out there all day long. Where would you take your noon meal?

Summerlin: It would be right beside the railroad where we were working, and that is where you were fed.

Marcello: In other words, the meal would be brought out from the kilo camp.

Summerlin: The best that I can remember, yes. I don't remember it being cooked at the site. In fact, I know it was brought out from the base camp.

Marcello: About how long would you have to eat the noon meal? How much time would they give you?

Summerlin: It seems to me about thirty minutes.

Marcello: When we say that you had to move a specific number of cubic meters of dirt per man, how was this marked off? In other words, how would you know when the required amount of dirt had been removed.

Summerlin: We had the guy that went with us that translated for the group. The best I can remember, we marked it off. Of course, they would check it, too, to make sure. It

seems like that is the way that we did it. But I don't specifically recall exactly how we did it.

Marcello: When we talk about making cuts and fills, how big might one of these cuts or fills be?

Summerlin: Oh, gosh, some of the fills, I know, were eighteen feet high, I would say. I worked more on fills than I did on any cuts.

Marcello: How many men might you have on one of these projects?

Summerlin: There'd be several hundred working, and, like I said, there'd be Malaysians, Australians, Americans all mixed up.

Marcello: In the meantime, what were the guards doing?

Summerlin: They would finally get back and sit down in the shade a lot of times. Then they would come and stand around, and if you weren't working well enough, they would come along and punch you one and holler at you, "Speedo!" or whatever.

Marcello: What were the engineers doing?

Summerlin: They were checking the fills and stuff like that, I guess kind of like any engineer would do.

Marcello: Did they seem to be more civilized, if we may use that word, than the Koreans?

Summerlin: They seemed to be much more educated, I would say.

Marcello: What were your officers doing?

Summerlin: Well, the officer would just be standing around, you

know, the one with our group, and if they wanted to translate anything, the Japs would tell him, and he would tell us. So more or less he was the "in-between."

Marcello: Did you ever see an officer intervene to prevent a prisoner from getting a beating?

Summerlin: I saw a time when he tried to, and then I saw other times when he could have done more, I thought.

Marcello: Which officer, or officers, stands out in your mind as looking out for the welfare of the men?

Summerlin: Like I said, the one that was with me a lot was the one that was from my hometown, Alvin Morgan. I can't say that he was brave enough to try and do too much. I will put it that way.

Marcello: The one that I hear a lot of people talking about is Lieutenant Roy Stensland, Do you remember him?

Summerlin: What is the name? Is that the way that it is pronounced or what?

Marcello: Stensland.

Summerlin: No. We had a Lieutenant...was it Lumpkin? I can't remember all those names now.

Marcello: Captain Lumpkin was a doctor.

Summerlin: That can't be him, He was a lieutenant, I still can't think of his name.

Marcello: What would happen when you had completed the allotted number of cubic meters?

Summerlin: Well, when you had finished it...you had to wait until everybody else was finished, and then we picked up and walked all the way back to camp.

Marcello: What would happen when you would get back to camp?

Summerlin: We would go into camp...and there were some areas, if we were close to water, where we would get a bath before we went back into camp. When we would get back into camp, we would have our second meal.

Marcello: Would it be your second or third meal? You had breakfast, a meal on the job...

Summerlin: Yes, we would have a little bit on the job while we were working, and then we would have our night meal when we got back. It was the same old thing-- rice and watery stew.

Marcello: What would you do after the meal?

Summerlin: We would lay down, that's for sure, and take it easy. Then we would talk. Of course, we did a lot of talking.

Marcello: Did the conversation change any from what it had been back in Bicycle Camp, let's say?

Summerlin: As far as getting out, it looked like it had changed.

Marcello: In what sense?

Summerlin: Time was going on, and evidently we couldn't get any evidence that anything was happening. Of course, at times we did receive some news, but I can't recall

exactly how we got that news up in the jungle. But we did in some way get some news up there. Well, I'd say that as far as believing that we were going to get out anytime soon, it had done faded away. Our thoughts were to try and stay as healthy as we could and fight it out, that we would get free some day. But it looked very slim as time went on.

Marcello: We talked about the job that you found least desirable. What were some of the best jobs to have?

Summerlin: I guess some of the best jobs, of course, were really on the sick list--digging to bury people, digging graves. I don't recall in the jungle if we had--we might have, but I don't recall it in the jungle itself--a cattle detail. But I know that I was on one on farther down the line. But I would assume that the kitchen, the cookhouse, would be the best place to be.

Marcello: Did you notice that they were a little fatter than the other men?

Summerlin: They were and I can't say that I blame them. I would have done the same thing. Nobody complained about it if they ate a little more, really.

Marcello: How did one get assigned to, let's say, the cook shack?

Summerlin: By being unable to work, I guess. Evidently, there had

to be something wrong with him to keep him in camp; otherwise, every able-bodied man went out on details.

Marcello: Is it true that just because one had been a cook in the Army before capture didn't mean that one would be a cook once you were a prisoner-of-war?

Summerlin: I don't think that it did, but I think that more or less it turned out that way, though.

Marcello: Do you perhaps recall how long you were at the 18 Kilo Camp?

Summerlin: Offhand I can't...probably a month, six weeks. I don't recall exactly. Maybe two months. I don't recall. You probably have better dates because I just don't have those dates and times.

Marcello: How was your clothing holding out?

Summerlin: My clothing had practically played out by then. I think that maybe it was the next camp that I had to make my shorts--my undershorts that I wore--off the bottom of a mosquito net.

Marcello: What kind of wages were you being paid to work on this railroad?

Summerlin: We were paid in Japanese money, but it was very, very little. I don't recall if it was five cents a day or what it was, but it was a very small amount. It was their paper money that they had printed.

Marcello: Where could you spend it?

Summerlin: Well, that was a good question, too. It seemed like they brought a few things into the camp, or we would maybe buy from the natives. We did both, I think, but we dealt mostly with the natives. But the natives really and truly didn't like taking the money because it wasn't all that good. Like I said before, they wanted gold or something that they could get something for.

Marcello: How much interaction was there between the prisoners and the natives in terms of trading and so on?

Summerlin: Well, you were pretty lucky. You could get away with it if the guard wasn't right around, or he may holler at you or holler at him at certain times. Then there would be other times--according who the guard was and how he felt--that he might bump you with that gun butt.

Marcello: What did the natives especially seem to want that the prisoners had?

Summerlin: Like I said, something worth of value--bracelets, watch, rings, American money, if you had it.

Marcello: Normally, would you trade for food?

Summerlin: I did when I could.

Marcello: How much of an opportunity was there to steal from the Japanese?

Summerlin: Not a whole lot in the jungle because during the building of the railroad, mostly they were just about as hard up as we were because they were limited on their food, too.

Marcello: Now is it not true that there was a regular road that kind of paralleled the railroad? Not that it followed every course and turn that the railroad took, but there was a road beside the railroad.

Summerlin: That's true.

Marcello: And what was this used for?

Summerlin: Well, they would bring in rice on it in trucks.

Marcello: Would they use the railroad as construction progressed. In other words, suppose the railroad had been built up to the 26 Kilo Camp, would they actually have locomotives and so on on the railroad up to the 26 Kilo Camp?

Summerlin: Well, I think that they did after they got it built far enough, but I, myself, was always ahead of it up to a certain point.

Marcello: Do you recall where you moved from the 18 Kilo Camp?

Summerlin: I think that I moved to the 80 Kilo Camp. I believe that is what it was.

Marcello: Do you recall if you were at the 80 Kilo Camp when the monsoons started?

Summerlin: I believe that is where it was.



Marcello: Now I know that it was in May of 1943 that the Japanese started the so-called "Speedo" campaign. Evidently, this was initiated because they were behind their schedule in terms of constructing the railroad, and so they were going to get more work out of the prisoners. It just so happened that the "Speedo" campaign coincided with the coming of the monsoons, and you mentioned that you were at the 80 Kilo Camp. Now from the physical standpoint, were there any differences between it and the 18 Kilo Camp?

Summerlin: When we got to the 80 Kilo Camp, we had to build our grass huts and build our sleeping platforms.

Marcello: By this time had you had enough experience that you could build these huts?

Summerlin: You had a general idea of it.

Marcello: How long did it take you?

Summerlin: It seemed like we were working on our huts for a month at least because we would do that when we come in after work,

Marcello: In the meantime, where were you sleeping?

Summerlin: That's a good question. The best that I can remember, we were sleeping out in the open.

Marcello: Okay, first of all, describe what the monsoons were like?

Summerlin: Well, it just rains every day, and it gets pretty chilly during the monsoon season. I think we seen it probably around fifty degrees. In fact, we built fires at each end of the hut. The hut that I was in was over a little creek or something that ran through there, or maybe it was just a drainage ditch or something, but they had these long animals that looked like a lizard, only they were about two or three feet long, that was in that area. I don't remember what they were called. But that is where we worked on the ballast--breaking the rocks a lot.

Marcello: Talk a little bit more about the monsoons. How often would it rain? How hard would it rain?

Summerlin: Well, it would rain every day. I would say that it would rain mostly in the mornings until part of the afternoon. It is kind of hard to remember exactly, but I know that we had to break that rock in that rain. Just working in the rain all the time, it really got miserable.

Marcello: What were the conditions like in the inside of the huts that you built?

Summerlin: Well, it was muddy as far as the ground floor.

Marcello: Well, did the roof keep out the rain?

Summerlin: Not all of it, but it would keep out a big percent of it. But it still would leak some, a little bit.

We would always roll our blankets up when we would leave in the morning if you still had your blankets, and most of us did.

Marcello: How did work change as a result of this "Speedo" campaign?

Summerlin: Like you said, as far as I can remember, it increased the amount of work that they wanted you to do, and we spent longer hours at it. But that is about the time that so many of them were getting sick and getting tropical ulcers. That's when they said, "Feed the working and let the poor do without." Of course, it didn't work exactly that way, but that is the way that they would say it. That is when so many tropical ulcers started, during that monsoon season.

Marcello: Let's talk a little more about these working conditions during this period. You would have your roll call in the mornings. How would it be determined who was able and who was unable to go to work that day?

Summerlin: They had a doctor. He was usually the one that said whether they could or couldn't, but he didn't have the final say.

Marcello: Do you want to explain that further?

Summerlin: Well, if you felt that you were unable to work, you would make sick call, and you would go to where they

had it set up. They had the doctor, and he would check you out, and then, of course, a lot of times, due to some cases that were real bad, he would send you out to work and let the other one stay in. But it seems like the Japs would come by and check it out afterwards, and if they felt that you ought to work, they would run you out and make you go to work.

Marcello: Would one of the guards be making this final decision?

Summerlin: No, I believe that the Japanese did that, but I will not say for sure. It might have been one of the officers, a Korean officer.

Marcello: Are you saying, in effect, that the Japanese had to have a certain quota to go on a work detail?

Summerlin: That's true. They thought they should.

Marcello: And they would fill it with the sick if that were the case?

Summerlin: I have worked with a 103-degree fever lots of times because I had malaria every thirty days. I could tell you just about the day of the month when I would have my attack of marlaria.

Marcello: I guess that if they couldn't see anything wrong with you, then you would probably have to go on a work detail?

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, when the monsoons and the "Speedo"

campaign hit, then that's when the condition of the prisoners begins to deteriorate.

Summerlin: You could wake up in the morning to go on a work detail or get up that morning for that day, and the person laying next to you might be dead because they were in such a weak and run-down condition that without a whole lot of effort they would just pass away,

Marcello: What seemed to be the biggest killer?

Summerlin: I would say tropical ulcers, Malnutrition.

Marcello: How about dysentery?

Summerlin: Well, dysentery would weaken the condition, and malnutrition would just take over, and that is when your blood was so bad, and then the tropical ulcers formed. It is just a form of cancer, is the only way that I could describe it.

Marcello: Did you have dysentery?

Summerlin: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Describe what this dysentery is like,

Summerlin: Well, you would just cramp, and your bowels run off-- just liquidified--and you would just cramp all of the time,

Marcello: How often would you be going to the latrine in a course of a day?

Summerlin: Oh, gosh, a number of times. It was no problem to

go fifteen times or more. Of course, it is just the cramping; you know, the disease caused it,

Marcello: Now another one of these big killers that you mentioned were tropical ulcers. Did you ever have tropical ulcers?

Summerlin: I had one on my leg.

Marcello: Describe how you got it and what happened and how you tried to cure it.

Summerlin: Well, I guess the first thing was on this work detail during the monsoon season. I probably got a lick or a scratch or something from breaking those rocks, and it formed a red spot. Then it was festered, and then the redness would keep increasing, and the center would just rotten out, is the only way that I can explain it. We had a Dutch doctor with us,..I can't even recall his name now.

Marcello: Was it Bloemasma?

Summerlin: That's him. He would take a spoon and clean all that rotten stuff out right down to the red flash. We tried to keep it clean like that because we didn't have anything to put on it.

But there was one day there that we went over to where they kept the supplies,..I have forgotten now,..we were carrying stuff for them or doing something, and we found something that had some...tablets...

antibiotics,,what do you call it?

Marcello: Sulfa,

Summerlin: Sulfa drugs, We found a few tablets, and we stole them; and when we got back, we distributed what little we had, I kept one, and I used just a little bit of the powder after I would clean it out and put it on, I guess that is what saved my leg.

Marcello: How large had your tropical ulcer gotten?

Summerlin: Oh, about the size of a hen egg, in the calf of my leg,

Marcello: I understand that when the rotten flesh was spooned out of there, the pain was just excruciating.

Summerlin: Well, they had to hold you to do it, but it didn't take him long, He would do it in a hurry.

Marcello: Did you have this done to your leg?

Summerlin: I had it done,

Marcello: Did people have to hold you down while the operation took place?

Summerlin: Well, they held me, But I didn't have it done as many times as a lot of the others because mine was not that large,

Marcello: Then how would you treat it after that dead flesh had been removed?

Summerlin: Well, like I said, when I got that sulfa drug, I just took it and dusted a little of the powder off into the

open flesh,

Marcello: Did you apply hot compresses or anything like that?

Summerlin: Well, we were told to, if you had the time and could do it,

Marcello: Now when you had the tropical ulcer, did you have to go out on the work detail?

Summerlin: Yes, I had to go out. Mine wasn't bad enough. In fact, I got mine, really, just before we got out of the jungle. Of course, that is a little bit farther down the line,

Marcello: I have also heard it said that in some cases they would use the maggots to clean out this dead flesh. Have you ever heard of that process?

Summerlin: I have heard of it. I didn't actually watch it, but I heard that they did it,

Marcello: What treatment was there for dysentery?

Summerlin: They burnt rice and used the charred rice,

Marcello: Would that usually do the job?

Summerlin: It would help. It seemed to help. The charcoal part of it or whatever it was seemed to help. A lot of the boys,,.they removed their arms and legs in trying to save them, but when they would do that, another one would just form, and there just wasn't any hope for them when it was that bad.

Marcello: I understand that amputees did not stand much of a



chance,

Summerlin: They sure didn't, In fact, I don't know of many that came back after being amputated,

Marcello: What was it like working under these conditions, that is, being sick, being run-down, and having to work during the monsoons?

Summerlin: Well, it was rough, It was just hard to do because in the mornings when you got up, you would already feel tired and wore out, We were all so run-down and thin, It just seemed like a lost case, that's all,

Marcello: What was the longest stretch that you had to work on the railroad during this period?

Summerlin: The longest stretch?

Marcello: Yes.

Summerlin: I guess the 80 Kilo was my longest place, and I don't recall how long we stayed there,

Marcello: What I am referring to is, suppose that you went out on a job one morning, what was the longest number of hours that you would put in in one stretch before you got back to camp?

Summerlin: I guess about the longest was about fourteen hours, It might have been a little bit more,

Marcello: Now during this period, what happened to your rations?

Summerlin: Well, the trucks couldn't get through, so we were

rationed shorter, The rations were cut down shorter because they couldn't get the rations in.

Marcello: And theoretically, what happened to the rations for those who were in the hospital hut?

Summerlin: Well, they said to let them die, so I really don't know exactly how much rations they did get. I never was inside except that one time when I had malaria, That was before.

Marcello: I understand that most people didn't want to go into the hospital hut.

Summerlin: Well, most of them never came out.

Marcello: I guess that it was just as much the atmosphere as much as anything else.

Summerlin: That's right. But I still had hopes; my hopes were real high.

Marcello: Do you recall the death of Dr. Lumpkin in August of 1943?

Summerlin: Yes, I don't recall all of the details, but I remember.

Marcello: Describe what your thoughts or feelings were when Dr. Lumpkin died.

Summerlin: Well, I thought to myself that if an officer that didn't have to labor like we did was dying, I didn't see how we were going to make it ourselves; I mean, that is just one kind of a reaction that I had.

Marcello: And I guess, too, even though he didn't have any medicine or equipment to work with, he was still a doctor.

Summerlin: That's right. When you think of a doctor dying, and he wasn't having to totally labor like we were-- of course, he had to put in the hours but not the labor--it made me think hard about it.

Marcello: How did the attitudes or the conduct of the guards change during this "Speedo" campaign?

Summerlin: Well, I guess you would say they were a little more hostile in a way, but they seemed to be like they were getting...you know, it was catching up with them because, of course, they weren't getting the food either. They were more irritable, I guess, and I could understand why. As time went on, we got more bold. If they would come up to you and slap you, we would just look at them and laugh at them. You wouldn't believe that they would leave you alone if you would do that rather than if you resented it. We were getting more bold that way.

Marcello: Prisoners must have been a pitiful-looking sight trudging from the camp to the railroad and back again.

Summerlin: It was bound to be a sight.

Marcello: By this time what do you have in terms of clothing?

Summerlin: Nothing but that shorts that I made out of that part of that mosquito net. That was the last thing I remember.

Marcello: I understand that a lot of prisoners were wearing G-strings at this point.

Summerlin: That's right. We used all of that material off the bottom of the mosquito net that we had, but I don't remember exactly how long the mosquito nets lasted.

Marcello: Were you ever up at the 100 Kilo Camp?

Summerlin: It seemed like we went up for a short spell before we got on the railroad. I'm trying to remember now when we took the railroad, when we moved out.

Marcello: I guess that the reason I am asking this is that I know that at one time they had made the 80 Kilo Camp into a hospital camp, and I use that term hospital loosely. Were you there at that time?

Summerlin: I was...

Marcello: Or you were working out of that camp or something?

Summerlin: I was at the hospital camp, I am sure of that. I stayed there. I was there a long time.

Marcello: But you were not actually a hospital case as such?

Summerlin: Well, I guess you would say that I wasn't.

Marcello: In other words, you were still going out on the railroad and working on the details.

Summerlin: Right. The best that I can remember, we left the

80 Kilo Camp, and I can't remember whether we went to the 100 Kilo or not.

Marcello: During the worst period, approximately how many men were dying per day?

Summerlin: Well, I would say that it would not be uncommon to bury three or four a day sometimes.

Marcello: Describe how the burial procedure worked.

Summerlin: Well, I don't really remember what they wrapped them in or if they wrapped them in anything. All I know is that they just dug a hole and buried them. Like I said, I never was exactly on the burial detail, myself. Now if they had three people to bury, and if they buried them all in one place, I presume that they did. If they had one, they would just dig one hole. I am sure that there was other guys on that detail that knew about it.

Marcello: Were these graves marked in any way?

Summerlin: Oh, they marked them with a cross, a home-made wooden cross, that wouldn't last long.

Marcello: Do you recall instances of men literally giving up and wanting to die?

Summerlin: I have--the ones that were in pain, severe pain.

Marcello: Explain how you could tell when a man lost the will to live.

Summerlin: Well, he wouldn't eat. He didn't have any desire to

do anything. He just didn't have anything left, it didn't seem like--no will to live at all. Most of them were in bad shape,

Marcello: What could you do to snap a person out of this state of mind?

Summerlin: Well, about all that we could do was to talk to them and tell them that it wasn't going to be long, to try and hang in there a while longer, because we thought that the end was coming pretty close. We'd build it up that way and talk about home and say, "Man, you want to go home! We are going home!" And we did things like that.

Marcello: By this time, I am sure that the buddy system was in operation, and what I am referring to is a group of three or four individuals that would look out for one another.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: Describe your particular group. Who was in it?

Summerlin: Well, like I said, a big boy by the name of Bailey and the Summers boys and there was "Gheedus," a big, tall boy who had a sense of humor, and the Kuykendall boy that was from home.

Marcello: And how would you guys look out for one another?

Summerlin: Well, if one was sick or much worse off than the others, and you were able to obtain something

outside, you would share it with him to help him in any way that they could,

Marcello: Did you stay with this group all the way through?

Summerlin: Practically all the way through. I'm trying to think of the lieutenant's name. He was from the original outfit, from the National Guard outfit, Hampton!

Marcello: Wade Hampton,

Summerlin: I can't remember now where he died, but he died at one of those camps,

Marcello: Now he wasn't a part of your particular group and so on,

Summerlin: Oh, no, I just happened to recall his name. I have been trying to remember,

Marcello: How important was that buddy system to survival?

Summerlin: At that particular time, it meant a whole lot, especially if you could get hold of some kind of food, especially if we got hold of some little brown sugar, or what they called brown sugar. It was some kind of sugar, but they told us not to eat it. But we did and then we boiled it, too, and that would help give them a little energy if you get hold of that. But there was not a whole lot to get a hold of out in the jungle.

Marcello: Did you have any way to supplement your diet, that is, in terms of eating jungle plants or stray cats

or dogs or anything like that?

Summerlin: I presume, the best that I can remember, it must have been some of the Malaysians that was with us that showed different ones certain things in the jungle that was edible. If it was, we would pick it and take it in at every opportunity that we had,

Marcello: I have heard it said that there was always little fires going all over the camp,

Summerlin: Oh, yes, there was always someone brewing something. There sure was. They didn't keep them from doing that,

Marcello: Where would you get your matches or your fire and things like that?

Summerlin: I assume that we had to get that from the cookhouse. They usually had a fire over there all of the time,

They had one vegetable or one weed or grass in the jungle that we called the turnip green. It was kind of like a poke salad. They showed us that, and it was edible. We would gather a lot of that.

Marcello: How did the Japanese and the Koreans seem to be doing in this monsoon period and "Speedo" period?

Summerlin: Well, like I said, they were looking pretty ragged themselves because they didn't have very good



facilities either, and they didn't have the food either. Of course, I am sure that they had more of what we had, but I think they were eating about the same thing that we were. They couldn't get no meat in or anything like that, and they had just what rice and what other stuff that they had. It got pretty slim at times.

**Marcello:** Of course, you mentioned awhile ago that you were out on that job for fourteen hours, and I suspect that those guards would have had to be out there that long, too.

**Summerlin:** That's right. They would have to be there, too. I know that there was a time there when we went out way before daylight and did not get back in until way after night. Then if some of them would fail to do their part, well, you would have to wait until they finished,

**Marcello:** Would you have to repeat a lot of the work? I would assume that if you were making cuts and fills, the monsoons would undo it--a lot of the work that you had perhaps previously done.

**Summerlin:** Well, I am sure that it did, and they probably had somebody back behind us that might have been doing that. I don't recall going back.

Like I said, I cannot recall the camp--you may

have it down--where we were stationed right close to the railroad. That was a little farther down the line, though, and those bob-tailed monkeys would come off of that mountain late in the afternoon into those trees, feeding. I don't remember exactly where that was now offhand, but I remember a train running over a python, and the Japanese had brought it down to cook it for them, not for us but for them. But that hillside or that rock mountain there would just come alive with those bob-tailed monkeys late in the afternoon.

Marcello: Now did this occur near the end of the work on the railroad?

Summerlin: Near the end of the work, yes.

Marcello: Did you ever try and get any of those monkeys for food?

Summerlin: No, they tried some of that back at Singapore, and we were told not to eat them. They did kill a few of them, but they were told not to eat them on account of they were diseased. But there were a lot of times that the Dutch had dogs hanging up at the cook shack in the jungle.

Marcello: Did you ever run across very many snakes and so on on these work parties?

Summerlin: I think that I saw one large snake other than the one

that was killed by the train.

Marcello: Under these conditions, what role does religion play?

Summerlin: A whole lot. In other words, you would be going to bed saying a few prayers, I'll guarantee you, every night. At least I did.

Marcello: What would you pray for?

Summerlin: I would just repeat the Lord's Prayer or something like that every night--hopefully that we would survive the ordeal. But we still had in the back of our minds--the ones that were still alive--that we were going to make it.

Someone might have mentioned it, but I can't recall whether I remember it or not, but it seemed like they had some elephants somewhere along the line. The Japs had them, but the natives used them or made them work.

Marcello: And this is the only supplement that you had to the work,

Summerlin: Besides man labor. That's right.

Marcello: Did you ever think that you could build that railroad, given the conditions?

Summerlin: I didn't think that we would ever make it because we had too many bridges to build. Some of them were three spans high, or four--I don't recall--and it took some time to work on those. They were sitting them

on, you might say, solid rock around those places. There was a lot of dynamiting going on, too, but I never was around it.

Marcello: What do you do under these conditions as a means of substituting for a toothbrush and things like that?

Summerlin: Well, you know, you can take a limb off a tree, and there are certain trees, ..I don't know what they were called, but here it would be a hickory. You can take a limb that has a little knot on it and chew that knot up and make your toothbrush. We did that quite a bit,

Marcello: What did you do for soap?

Summerlin: I used a lot of clay for soap for my hands, you know, if it was around. I don't remember having too much soap or anything like that in the jungle.

Marcello: What do you do about shaving and haircuts and things of that nature?

Summerlin: Some of the boys had razors and scissors that they managed to keep, and occasionally, once in a great while, we would get a shave from one of them, or they would cut our hair off. We had guys that could do it pretty good,

Marcello: Did you find that it was best to keep your hair closely cropped?

Summerlin: We sure did. I did, myself, on account of conditions that you could not be able to get your bath and things like that. Of course, it still helped to keep the mosquitoes and sand flies and stuff off of you, too.

Marcello: How bad were lice?

Summerlin: Lice? We had lots of that. Those huts were infested with it.

Marcello: Were there any means to getting rid of the lice?

Summerlin: Not that I recall.

Marcello: Did you ever try boiling your blankets or putting them out in the sun?

Summerlin: We tried that--sunshine--but you didn't have a lot of time to do that. Ocassionally--I don't recall how often--we did get down to where we got one day off, and if the weather was fit, we would take care of things like that. A lot of it kind of comes back--what we did--but I would never think of it if you didn't remind me.

Marcello: Were you a smoker at that time?

Summerlin: I sure was. We bought this native...I believe it was called "wog." I believe that is what it was called.

Marcello: "Wog" tobacco,

Summerlin: And it was strong. We smoked that during the time that we could get it, and we usually got hold of it.

Marcello: How would you process that "wog" tobacco?

- Summerlin:** Well, a lot of it that we had was already shredded, and we would roll it in banana leaves or the Bible. We had little Bibles with us, and we would use the pages out of the Bible and roll it in. But most of it that I got hold of was already shredded.
- Marcello:** I have heard some people say that they actually washed that tobacco to get some of the nicotine out of it.
- Summerlin:** Well, I think that they did or tried to because it was like smoking a strong, strong cigar. But after you got used to it, it was the only thing that would satisfy you. When we got back and got a new cigarette, it didn't even taste like a cigarette.
- Marcello:** I also understand that some of the prisoners became very adept at splitting the paper, I guess, for use as cigarette paper.
- Summerlin:** They probably were. If anything could be done, some of them could do it.
- Marcello:** Under these conditions, and, again, we have to consider how desperate conditions are, did you observe prisoners trying to curry special favors from the Japanese?
- Summerlin:** Oh, yes. Like I said earlier, this might have been the case about along this time that this Japanese... he might have been a Korean, but I was thinking he was a Japanese. But it might have been a Korean.

Anyway, he could speak real good English, and he was buddying up with him and trying to get stuff out of him. But one day he done something wrong that he didn't like, and he beat him. From then they decided it wasn't too good to buddy up to them,

Marcello: What kind of an attitude did you and your buddies have toward a fellow prisoners who tried to curry favor from the Japanese?

Summerlin: Really and truly, the way that I felt about it, if he could do it and get anything out of him, he was lucky; but they told us to beware of that kind of stuff, that they would try to get you to do it, anyway, just for their purposes. But some of them didn't think too much of them for doing things like that,

Marcello: At one point--and I know that this happened at the 105 Kilo Camp--there was a cholera outbreak. What do you recall about that outbreak of cholera?

Summerlin: Well, let's see, I don't know if I am getting it confused,,no, that's right. All that I can remember about what they talked about was that they died like flies there, and they just piled them into holes and just buried them.

Marcello: But you actually didn't witness that?

Summerlin: No, I didn't witness that. But I am sure that it

could happen very easily under the circumstances those were.

Marcello: Okay, now the railroad was more or less finished in October of 1943, and I think that they started moving prisoners off the railroad between October of 1943 and January of 1944. Now before we get off the railroad, you mentioned that there was some stretch here when you were actually working on a cattle-herding detail?

Summerlin: Well, that was at Kanchanaburi.

Marcello: Okay, then that would have occurred after you got off the railroad. Describe the process by which you left the jungle.

Summerlin: When we left the jungle, they pulled the train in, the best that I can remember, and we loaded on this train.

Marcello: What camp were you at at that time?

Summerlin: This is that camp where all those monkeys were, and I can't figure out now just what that number was.

Marcello: So it would be up above the 100 Kilo Camp?

Summerlin: Yes.

Marcello: So it could have been a 105 or 115 Kilo or something like that.

Summerlin: Yes. We weren't there all that long, but they did move us up there, and then from there we came on in.



I think we were in boxcar-type containers at that time. They moved us up, and I don't remember what time of day or whether it was that particular day, it was one of the days right along there we had a scare from planes strafing. We had to get off the train and run for the brush and...well, that is about what it amounted to. We were kind of crowded on that train. We rode out on the railroad that we had just built.

Marcello: Describe what it was like riding on that railroad that you had just built.

Summerlin: Well, it wasn't a very smooth ride. The rails weren't exactly straight. They were kind of wish-washy riding out. They didn't go too fast. They moved it along pretty slow.

Marcello: What kinds of thrills did you have when you went across some of those bridges?

Summerlin: I didn't know if we were going to make it or not, the way that they were built. They were shabby-looking things, but evidently it worked pretty good but...I don't remember which time it was, but the ashes from the engine was coming back and flying into our faces and whatnot. It was an old-timey train, I will put it that way--way back in the days.

Marcello: Why don't you go into a little more detail and

describe that incident on this trip when you were strafed?

Summerlin: Well, I can't remember whether the plane made a run or whether we knew about it in time and we jumped off, but it seemed like the train was still moving when we jumped off of it. They strafed it. The best that I can remember, they didn't do any damage to amount to anything.

Marcello: How did you know that you needed to jump off that train? Did the Japanese sound the alarm, so to speak?

Summerlin: Oh, the Japanese sounded the alarm, I think. But like I said, the best that I can remember, we were in boxcars, not open cars.

Marcello: Okay, where is your final destination on this train trip?

Summerlin: I think Kanchanaburi was our destination--across the bridge, across the river--and it was a large camp.

Marcello: Describe what that camp looked like from a physical standpoint. What did it look like?

Summerlin: Well, after being in that monsoon season, it looked good after it got kind of dried out a little. The barracks was similar, but it seemed like they were longer than the others. They were huge barracks,

made out of the same stuff--bamboo.

This is the place that the Japs gave us a day a week off, and that is when the guys started putting on stage shows,

Marcello: What kind of work were you doing here?

Summerlin: I was on the cattle party. I was herding the cattle. That is when I started dealing with the natives.

Marcello: First of all, describe what the cattle-herding detail was like?

Summerlin: Well, they had cattle for the camp, and they had these old buffaloes or the type of cattle that they had over there. We would go out and take them and graze them,

At that particular time, the Jap would get in the shade of a tree, and we would deal with the natives and do what we wanted to. In fact, one of the boys went out and did a little "fooling around" while he was there (chuckle). But we would, like I say, swap gold for different things. We stayed there for quite a while, and when a guy would have a birthday in camp, we would fill up canteens with that native whiskey over there and bring it back in. But they got on to that, and they caught a guy bringing it into camp, and that is when they punished them there at the gate--in front of us.

Marcello: Describe that,

Summerlin: They made him kneel down and put a round piece of bamboo behind his legs and then made him squat down on it, and that would cut the circulation off of his legs. Of course, how long that they would make him stay there, I don't know exactly, but they would let him up for so long of a time and start circulation, and then they'd make him sit back down again. Well, that kind of broke up the bringing in of whiskey for birthdays,

Marcello: How did you manage to get on this cattle-herding detail?

Summerlin: I don't remember. I was just picked. They just called me out. I might have been a little fragile, I guess, or something, a little too thin for anything else.

At that time the Jap guards were real lenient with us about letting us do things. Well, if we would get hold of some of that whiskey, we would get some for him, and I had heard that one or two of them had gotten in trouble for that, too. In fact, we heard them over there hollering out. They were getting beat just like the prisoners did.

Marcello: How many of you were on this cattle-herding detail?

Summerlin: Oh, I imagine about a half of dozen of us. Of course, we would mostly get bananas, any kind of fruit, and

stuff like that,

Marcello: And where were you getting your stuff to trade?

Summerlin: I would get it from the boys in camp and take it out and swap it. Then I would bring it back, and they would give a little percentage of it. You had to survive, and that was one way; and they couldn't get out, and I could,

Marcello: What were the rations like back in camp?

Summerlin: Well, they were similar to what we had always had. They had picked up some from that slow process that we had during that monsoon season. But it was still rice and occasionally fish and watery soup.

Marcello: Didn't you have a chance here to get some other things like bananas and mangoes and things like that to supplement your diet?

Summerlin: Right, when we were on the working parties.

Marcello: I also hear men speak fondly of duck eggs in this camp.

Summerlin: Yes, there were quite a few of those gotten on the outside.

Marcello: What kind of a canteen was set up here? Do you recall a canteen?

Summerlin: They set up something that had, you know, a limited amount and a few things in it that you could buy it with that Japanese money, but like I said, it wouldn't

buy much and wouldn't go far. But it was much better than the jungle,

Marcello: Now as I recall, there were some air raids at this camp,

Summerlin: I can't remember just exactly how many, but the first time that we were at the camp and the planes came over, this antiaircraft gun that was at the river bridge would fire on the planes. Well, that went on for three or four days, maybe a week--I don't remember--and we knew that eventually they were going to try to eliminate that gun. At Bangkok, I believe, they were doing most of their bombing, but they did bomb this bridge out. Then I think when they came back in, oh, three or four times, they decided that they were going to take out that antiaircraft gun, and they just sprayed shells and bombs all the way from the gun over into the camp. I think that there were about forty-some Australians killed,

Marcello: Let's back up a minute. Obviously, one of the reasons that they were bombing this camp was because of the bridge that was over there. Describe what that bridge looked like,

Summerlin: Well, this was a modern metal-constructed bridge with concrete tiers under it. It looked like it was probably a quarter of a mile long, or less maybe.

Marcello: Did it hook up with the railroad that you had just built?

Summerlin: Yes, it hooked up to the railroad. They bombed it several times, and we would work on it at night most of the time repairing it. They kept bombing it out, and eventually they built some little ol' docks along the river down there, and they used barges then. They'd run a spur off down there and then use barges. I think that they bombed it a few times, too, but I don't recall exactly.

Marcello: Describe what you would do when one of these air raids would occur.

Summerlin: Well, really, I don't recall us having anyplace to go, except for us to get on the ground. Hopefully, it wouldn't hit you.

Marcello: They had not allowed you to build any slit trenches?

Summerlin: If they did, I don't recall it. They might have, but I don't remember. It would take a lot of slit trenches for that big camp.

Marcello: What effect did these air raids have upon the morale of the prisoners?

Summerlin: Of course, it bothered us to have them, but, nevertheless, we knew that they were getting closer. We knew something was going on, where otherwise we didn't.

Marcello: What was the attitude of the Japanese in the after-

math of these air raids?

Summerlin: Well, it seemed like it angered them more and what-not in a way, but they still didn't seem to take it out on the prisoners, that I could tell, not in the camp, anyway.

Marcello: Could you show any emotions of happiness, let us say, when these air raids were taking place?

Summerlin: Well, we talked about it: "If they keep shooting at those planes, we hope those planes take care of it." And they did, even though...I don't remember if it was at that particular time--I believe it was--that they accidentally...I don't think that they were bombing the camp. They just overshot their target at the bridge or that gun. Everybody seemed to be perking up at this time of the game. It was looking much better.

Marcello: What kind of planes were they using in these raids?

Summerlin: It looked what you'd call a B-29, four-engine.

Marcello: What was the Japanese reaction to these B-29's?

Summerlin: They thought that they were something because they were so large--back in those days.

Marcello: Of course, it was the biggest thing that you had every seen, too.

Summerlin: That's right.

Marcello: I know that there was a lot of entertainment put on



in Kanchanaburi, What do you know about the entertainment there?

Summerlin: Well, they let us build a stage out in the middle... it seemed like it was in the middle of the compound. Then we would have off one day a week, and they would let us put on shows. In fact, the Japanese came to them. I don't recall who was in charge of producing the shows and whatnot, but they put on some pretty good entertainment. A lot of the boys dressed up like women and whatnot.

Marcello: How often would these shows be put on?

Summerlin: Well, it couldn't have been but once a week because that was the only day that we had off.

Marcello: I understand that the British were very good at putting on these stage shows.

Summerlin: Well, they liked to do it. It seemed like they enjoyed doing it.

Marcello: Would the Japanese attend?

Summerlin: Oh, yes, they attended them. They would laugh, too.

Marcello: I understand that a lot of times that the Japanese were actually on the receiving end of jokes...

Summerlin: They were.

Marcello: ...and that they really didn't know it.

Summerlin: That's true. They made a lot of jokes out of them, but like I said, I can't really recall them, but they

made a lot of jokes out of them.

Marcello: What else would you normally do on your day off?

Summerlin: Well, if you needed a haircut, you'd try and get a haircut or get a shave, or you'd just generally rest up because you wouldn't have a lot to do or anything to take care of.

Marcello: Of course, in your particular case, the idea of resting up probably would not have been that big of a deal because you had a pretty good thing going with that cattle herding.

Summerlin: That's right. Well, they would play cards, and they shot some dice at night--just lots--in that camp. In fact, I played a little blackjack in that camp, myself. I never had played before.

Marcello: Were you still being paid in Japanese occupational script?

Summerlin: Now that I don't remember. That was getting down to close.,,I don't remember if we were or not, but I believe that we were, though, there.

Marcello: I assume that by this time your tropical ulcer had healed.

Summerlin: It didn't heal until after I got to the States, and the doctors didn't heal it. I got the nurse to do like the Dutch doctor told me in the jungle over there, and that is what they did--against their will and the

doctor's will, but that is what I did.

Marcello: What were you doing before the tropical ulcer in the meantime?

Summerlin: Well, like I said, all they would do was to boil it out with peroxide, you know, after I got back and whatnot. Over there I was using that tablet that I got, and I kept it as long as I could. But it wasn't healed. It was just enough to kind of make it lay dormant or whatever you might call it.

Marcello: What was the process used back in the States to finally get rid of that tropical ulcer?

Summerlin: They used sulphur and peroxide and keep all...they didn't use any kind of a paste or a salve on it. That's what the doctors wanted to put on it, but that was the wrong thing to put on it. Just keep it clean and leave it kind of open and put that sulfa drug on it, and it dried it up. But they would change it before the doctor came to put what he had on it. Every morning when the doctors came...and he thought that he was healing it, but you couldn't tell any different then. They were very unfamiliar with all the tropical diseases and stuff. They didn't know anything about it in the States.

Marcello: We haven't talked at this stage about any kind of mail that you had either sent or received. Let us talk

first of all about mail that you were able to send out while you were a prisoner-of-war.

Summerlin: As I recall, we sent out one postcard--I did. Of course, it was marked with a very few words, and you could just put an "X" on what you wanted to say. You didn't do any writing on it. They had "I am well," "I am working," or something like that, and you could just cross one of them. That is all that I recall of the mail that I sent.

Marcello: In looking ahead, how many of those cards got home to your folks?

Summerlin: I think that they got...no, that is the one that I received. But the one that was sent out, they received. That's all that I remember. I don't remember sending out but one card, myself.

Marcello: And when did they receive it?

Summerlin: I don't remember the date, but...I am sure about that time that everyone was allowed to send one, but I don't recall the dates.

Marcello: How long was it before they knew that you were alive?

Summerlin: A year-and-a-half.

Marcello: And did you mention awhile ago that you did receive some mail from home?

Summerlin: I received a telegram. I think that...no, that is the

one that they received from me. I know that it was because it was sent from Kanburi or whatever you call it, I am kind of mixed up on that.

Marcello: I doubt that you sent a telegram.

Summerlin: It was a yellow card, I've got the original thing-- yellow paper.

Marcello: Did you or did you not receive any mail while you were a prisoner?

Summerlin: It seems like I received something--one time, as far as I can remember,

Marcello: I do know that at this time they were pulling people out of Kanchanaburi to send to Japan. What thoughts did you have about going to Japan?

Summerlin: I didn't want to go to Japan because I was afraid that I would have been sunk before I got over there. The war was still going on over there. I didn't want to get over there, I'll guarantee you. I don't remember how many really were shipped to Japan, but there were still a lot left in that camp.

Marcello: Approximately how long were you at Camp Kanchanaburi altogether?

Summerlin: We must have been there several weeks, three or four weeks, I would say, but it might have been longer.

Marcello: And where did you go from there?

Summerlin: We went to Thailand,

Marcello: Do you recall where you went in Thailand?

Summerlin: First, when we got to Thailand, they put us on the docks there, in the warehouse, and mosquitoes...

Marcello: Was it Thailand or Saigon?

Summerlin: No, it was Bangkok.

Marcello: It was at Bangkok, Thailand. In other words, you went from Kanchanaburi to Bangkok.

Summerlin: And we were put on that dock there in the warehouse until the next day. Then we were taken to a camp up in Thailand where we were working on these gun emplacements, underground tunnels, and all that kind of stuff. We didn't get to work on it long.

Marcello: And was it up here that you were liberated?

Summerlin: Right.

Marcello: There are all sorts of places to which prisoners were sent to at this time. Let me throw out a couple of names and see if it rings a bell. Rat Buri?

Summerlin: Now that sounds familiar.

Marcello: Phet Buri?

Summerlin: I remember the camp well, but I don't recall exactly the name of it.

Marcello: Do you recall whether or not there was an air strip at this camp?

Summerlin: I don't believe. I don't remember seeing any air strips.

Marcello: Describe the work that you were doing at this camp.

Summerlin: And at this camp, we were separated from the officers. The officers there were separated from the men, and the officers were building their camp, wherever it was over there. Of course, this camp was similar to the others, but the work detail was working on these guns emplacements and these underground tunnels to the different places. That's somewhere up there... the mountains start up above it someplace, up there between China and somewhere. And the Japs were on this side, and the Americans were on the other side, or the allies were, and they were digging in. That's what we were taken up there for.

Marcello: What was the temperature like?

Summerlin: Well, it was fairly warm, just ol' summertime temperature. Of course, some of the places, as far as I can remember, were pretty cool at night, but in the daytime it warmed up pretty well--just tropical climate.

Marcello: Describe what kind of work you were doing here--you personally.

Summerlin: Well, I don't remember a whole lot of work going on there, other than going out on a detail maybe once to these places,

And it wasn't long until we were going out

again one morning, and we got about--I don't remember--two to three hundred yards from the gate, maybe a little farther, and they stopped us and turned us around and took us back. We didn't know what for, but the natives were standing alongside the road saying that the war was over, and when we got back to camp, there wasn't any guards there. We might have been a quarter-of-a-mile away from camp or something like that, and we didn't know what had happened until we got back, and, sure enough, that's when our officers got in touch with the Thai government. And we got our first decent meal.

Marcello: Okay, you find out that the war is over when you return to camp. What kind of celebration took place, if, in fact, there was one?

Summerlin: Well, we were so happy that it was over with that we didn't know what to do, really. And when we got back, the officers got us together and told us about what they were doing and getting in touch with the Thai government and trying to get us some food, and which they did in not too long. Of course, when we got it, we ate all that we could eat of it, and it made us sick. We couldn't stand that rich...couldn't stand meat or anything rich, and we had more diarrhea.



Marcello: How long was it from the time you learned that the war was over until you were taken out of camp, in effect, liberated?

Summerlin: I don't think that it was much over three or possibly four days at the most. One day the Japs came in there in trucks. Instead of putting sixty or seventy-five in a truck, they put twenty-five or thirty so that we could stand up or whatever, and they took us to the nearest airport. As far as I could tell, there were planes already waiting to take some back to India then. That was a happy day when we got on that plane.

Marcello: What happens when you get to India? And I think that you were going to Calcutta, were you not?

Summerlin: Right. Well, we stopped at one place in going to Calcutta at a Red Cross camp and got our first American sandwich, I think that it was.

Marcello: Do you recall what you ate?

Summerlin: I don't recall. It was probably a ham sandwich or something like that. Then we flew on to Calcutta, and it seemed like we stayed in the hospital there-- I don't know--a week or two, a week or so.

Marcello: You mentioned a sandwich, and I think that this brings up something that we take for granted. That was the first bread that you had probably had in three-and-a-half

years, wasn't it?

Summerlin: It was. That's right. I don't remember what we had to drink with it, but I do remember that we had a sandwich,

Marcello: If it was something cold, that would have been the first cold drink that you had had in three-and-a-half years,

Summerlin: That's true. But I don't remember if we did or didn't,

Marcello: You got to India, and I think that you were put in the 142nd General Hospital, were you not?

Summerlin: That's right. And I mean they fed us like kings.

Marcello: Describe the process that took place here in Calcutta. For example, what sort of medical treatment or tests did you undergo.

Summerlin: Well, they screened each one of us--the doctor did--to find out what we really needed in a hurry and whatnot, and then we were placed in the hospital. But I don't really recall all of the details of it. The main thing that I remember is that they had a list of stuff that we could order to eat--whatever we wanted--and I remember ordering a bunch of stuff, and it made us sick again.

Marcello: Do you recall what you ordered?

Summerlin: I ordered meat, I know that--some type of meat--

and I ordered some sweet stuff, but I don't recall now what it was. It was more than I could eat. They told us that we could have all the eggs and things like that that we wanted. It was something.

Marcello: Were you ever given any sort of psychological examinations here?

Summerlin: I don't recall when, but they did give some of them.

Marcello: What were they wanting to know?

Summerlin: I guess if you were "all there" (chuckle). I think that they wanted to find out if it had affected you mentally, was what they were really after. What do you call it? Anxiety or whatever it is, the technical word for it? How bad it had affected you?

Marcello: In any of your processing what steps were taken to obtain depositions concerning war crimes that you had witnessed.

Summerlin: When we got to the hospital, they wanted to take a group back to pick out certain ones that we thought had committed crimes and so forth, so I volunteered, and Alvin Morgan volunteered. But before it was over with, they decided it would be best for us not to go back in there because there really wasn't any Allies close by and it could have caused some trouble.

Marcello: Why did you volunteer?

Summerlin: Well, I felt like that I would just like to pick out a few of them at that time.

Marcello: For what reasons?

Summerlin: Well, just the treatment that we went through on that durned railroad, starving us to death all those years.

Marcello: Had you personally been beaten severely at any point while you were a prisoner-of-war?

Summerlin: Nothing, just small incidents.

Marcello: The sort of thing that probably everybody received?

Summerlin: Everyday occurrences but no severe beatings.

Marcello: This would have been your first encounter with WAC's, was it not?

Summerlin: That's right. It was the first time that we had ever seen them in the service.

Marcello: Did they allow you guys free run of Calcutta?

Summerlin: Oh, yes, they gave us free run, and we got picked up, too (chuckle).

Marcello: Do you want to describe this?

Summerlin: We went down in the area where it was...what do they call it when they restrict you?

Marcello: Off limits?

Summerlin: Off limits. And we were picked up, and we showed them our identification cards, and when we got back up to the place where they take you, they just

turned us loose and told us to be careful and not to go back. They were real nice to us over there.

Marcello: Did you find it particularly hard to follow orders?

Summerlin: Well, yes, in a way, but we had been away from the military-type action for so long that we didn't feel like it was justified at that time.

Marcello: And I guess, also, you had taken orders for so long from a group of people that you didn't necessarily want to take orders from that you weren't about to begin to take more orders.

Summerlin: That's right--no way. Only what we just had to. We were given a priority card for transportation, and we were more or less on our own after we got out of the hospital at Calcutta. They gave us this card and told us what planes we were supposed to catch, and if we missed it, then just catch the next one, and you had priority to get on it. Of course, they were military planes.

Marcello: It doesn't take long to put weight back on, does it?

Summerlin: It sure doesn't. It doesn't take long. Of course, I don't remember what I weighed, but it was roughly between eighty and ninety pounds when I got out.

Marcello: And what was your top weight?

Summerlin: My top weight was roughly 150 pounds--nothing like

I am now (chuckle). Everything I eat now goes to fat,

Marcello: Now when you got back to the States, did you once again go through a series of medical treatments?

Summerlin: We stopped in New York at the hospital there, and I don't recall the name of the hospital. We checked in there, and from there they sent us to different places. They sent me to North Carolina to a hospital. There were several guys there that were in my outfit, and I think that they sent me there for tropical disease, though, that tropical ulcer. I don't know how long I stayed there, but I then got a leave of absence to go home from there. Of course, that was a happy day.

Marcello: Describe the transition or adjustment that you had to go through in changing from a prisoner-of-war to a civilian once again, or from a prisoner-of-war to a free man, you might say.

Summerlin: Well, mine came back slowly because I was in the hospital for a year after I got back, and they were treating me for stomach problems and all kinds of parasites. I guess gradually I kind of got back into society from being in the hospital; I didn't jump right back into it. So mine was

gradually and slowly, so I didn't have any problems. We had problems, I guess, but we didn't really realize it exactly what they all were.

Marcello: I know that a lot of the former prisoners have mentioned that they had problems coping with all the attention and being among crowds of people.

Summerlin: Questions and whatnot. But I was one that just never liked to talk about it much. I mentioned a little of it, but I didn't talk too long, and they would finally catch on to it, and then they wouldn't question me anymore.

Marcello: A lot of them also said that they had trouble staying in any one place.

Summerlin: Well, you are nervous over a period of time. I can understand that, too.

Marcello: In other words, they could be at one place for so long, and then they would have to go somewhere else.

Summerlin: I pretty well stayed put, myself, though, after I got home.

Marcello: Of course, like you say, you had that year.

Summerlin: Yes, I went from North Carolina, from the hospital there...that was an old army-style-type hospital with long corridors and wooden corridors. Then I went to El Paso to the hospital there, and then from

there they sent me back to San Antonio, and I stayed in the hospital the remainder of the time in San Antonio. They were treating me for stomach conditions, and they are still treating me for those parasites that they couldn't get rid of.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you still have the stomach problems. Does this go all the way back to that period where you had the dysentery and so on?

Summerlin: After we got out and started eating, I couldn't eat without it bothering me, and I just continued to have it. In fact, I have been to a lot of specialists on it. They look in my stomach and say that it is just as irritated and red, like before an ulcer. I don't know what has caused it. It doesn't seem like there is a lot that they can do for it.

Marcello: In general, have you been satisfied with the treatment that you have received since your return, that is, in terms of medical treatment?

Summerlin: I sure have. Of course, I have taken care of most of that myself. If I felt I needed a good doctor, I went to him.

Marcello: As you look back on those days that you were a prisoner-of-war, Mr. Summerlin, what do you see as



being the key to your survival? Why is it that you are here and others didn't make it?

Summerlin:

About the only thing that I can really say is that I am just one of the more lucky ones, and I had determination like a few of the others that came back with me. Like we always said, even at night when we came in, "The only way that they are going to get rid of us is to shoot us." We just stuck to that attitude and said our little prayers, and that was it,

Marcello:

Well, Mr. Summerlin, I think that that is a pretty good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for having come here to talk with me. You said a lot of very interesting and important things, and I am sure that historians will find your comments most valuable someday.

Summerlin:

Well, I hope that I mentioned some that will be helpful to you, and I really appreciate the interview.