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Interview with
Marshall E. Fields
February 13, 1972

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
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Oral History Collection
Marshall Fields

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Dr. Marcello This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. Marshall Fields for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on February 13, 1972, in Dallas, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Fields in order to get his reminiscences and impressions and experiences while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Mr. Fields was a member of the Marine Corps and was captured on Wake Island very early in the war. Mr. Fields, to begin this interview, would you very briefly give us a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, would you tell me where you were born, when you were born, your education--things of that nature. You don't have to be real specific on these points.

Mr. Fields: Well, I was born in Arkansas in 1919, the third of April.

Dr. Marcello: When did you enter the Marine Corps?

Mr. Fields: In 1939.

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

Fields: I liked the Marines. I thought I'd like the Marines, and at that time it was an honor to get in the Marine Corps. They wasn't taking everybody, so I tried and I made it.

Marcello: Did you have the desire to travel? Was this perhaps one of the reasons you went in?

Fields: I wanted to travel and to get an education.

Marcello: How about so far as a job was concerned? Now in 1939 we were almost out of the depression, but were you having trouble finding work, or wasn't that any problem?

Fields: Well, I was in high school, and I wasn't in a position to work and go to school.

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

Fields: San Diego, yes.

Marcello: When did you arrive at Wake Island? Do you recall?

Fields: Not exactly. No, it was sometime around Thanksgiving.

Marcello: Thanksgiving of 1941?

Fields: '41, yes.

Marcello: Thanksgiving of 1941. Can you remember what you were doing and what your reactions were when you heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

Fields: Well, I heard about it about four o'clock in the morning, and I was on guard duty and didn't believe that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

Marcello: What were your reactions? Just one of disbelief?

Fields: That's true.

Marcello: Did you think that we would be able to wipe up the Japanese pretty fast? In other words, did you have a lot of confidence that we'd have no trouble with the Japanese?

Fields: Well, I didn't know. I wasn't sure about that. I wasn't thinking about the length of the war, and I couldn't believe that we were in it at the time war was declared.

Marcello: Now when you got to Wake Island, was it quite evident at that time that most of the officers did believe that war with Japan was eventually going to come?

Fields: Well, really I didn't think a whole lot about it, about war. I mean, we knew that we were in a defense outfit, and we were just preparing the defense of it. But as far as the war, that never entered our minds.

Marcello: What sort of defensive preparations were you undertaking on Wake Island in the eventuality of

war? Do you recall?

Fields: Well, we were in antiaircraft, and we had the 5-inch guns with us, and we were making gun emplacements and fixing it up, you know, for a defense.

Marcello: How soon after Pearl Harbor did you have your first contact with the Japanese? In any sense of the word, either through bombing . . .

Fields: I think they hit Pearl Harbor in A.M., didn't they, about eight o'clock?

Marcello: Right. In the morning.

Fields: Well, they hit us in the day about noon . . .

Marcello: Of the same day?

Fields: Yes.

Marcello: Can you describe . . .

Fields: Which you know is a day's difference. They hit us at noon, and they hit them about midnight or something.

Marcello: Could you describe what this first encounter was like?

Fields: Well, it was unbelievable! I mean, the only thing that we could see was planes, and they started to commence firing, so we started shooting. You know, we couldn't tell really what it was all about. But that's the day they hurt us. They wiped us

mostly out that day.

Marcello: What sort of damage did the Japanese planes do?

Fields: Oh, they knocked our Camp Two down, which was the civilian camp, and they burned our camp, and we spent the rest of the time on the gun positions.

Marcello: What sort of weapons did you have at this time? In other words, did you have the most modern of weapons with which to fight the Japanese?

Fields: Well, we had the 3-inch antiaircraft and the 5-inch broadsides and the rifles.

Marcello: Were you very effective in defending the place against Japanese planes?

Fields: Yes, we were. I mean, we did things that people couldn't believe back home. We brought down a few, sunk a few ships, and I thought we did a good job.

Marcello: I'm sure the shooting down of an airplane or the sinking of a ship did quite a bit for the morale of the troops on Wake.

Fields: Yes, it did. We had good morale anyway.

Marcello: Before the Japanese landed, were these air attacks a rather daily occurrence?

Fields: Every day at five minutes to twelve they'd hit us.

Marcello: At that precise time you could expect an attack of some sort?

Fields: At the same altitude and out of the same direction.

Marcello: How long would these attacks last approximately?

Fields: Well, it'd seem hours, but it was only minutes, I'd say.

Marcello: About how long did these air attacks keep up?
How many days before the Japanese actually landed?

Fields: Well, every day. They'd hit us every day.

Marcello: In terms of number, how many days were involved here? Could you estimate?

Fields: About twenty-three, wouldn't it?

Marcello: It was about twenty-three days before they actually landed.

Fields: Yeah, December 28th was when we fell.

Marcello: What was it like to be under constant attack from the air for twenty-three consecutive days? What did it do to a man?

Fields: It tears him up finally. I mean, you don't think much about it. You don't really give a great thought about getting killed or dying or something like that. That doesn't worry you a whole lot. I mean, you're there for a job, and you know when the time comes that you're going to do that job, so you don't think in the future. You just think of the present, I think.

Marcello: After awhile, does the whole thing more or less become routine?

Fields: That's true, I think.

Marcello: Well, describe the events then on the day that the Japanese landed on the island as best you can.

Fields: Well, all I know is they said, "Well, they're landing. They're here!" and we tried to stop them, and we stopped some, but the rest of them come on over us. We were outnumbered, outmanned, short on ammunition and manpower. They'd come to get us, and they got us. But at the time, the morning that they landed, we could count, I believe it was sixty-three ships that'd come out to get us. So they came ashore.

Marcello: I assume by this time the Japanese had complete mastery of the air. I mean, there were no American planes nor any resistance in this regard.

Fields: No, that's true.

Marcello: Well, describe the events leading up to your capture then. So they landed with an overwhelming force obviously. Then what happened?

Fields: Well, they come in, and we surrendered. It was an unconditional surrender. The only time during the war that I didn't think that I'd be back was when they stripped us of our clothing and stood us by the side of a road and tied our hands behind us and mounted a machine gun on a truck. Well, we

just thought that was it.

Marcello: Let's just go back a minute. What were your thoughts when you got the word that you were to surrender?

Fields: We couldn't believe it. I mean, it just didn't seem right, you know, that we had surrendered. But when you stopped and could just see them coming and coming, why you know that you can't hold out forever.

Marcello: Had the rumor ever been floating around that the Japanese didn't take any prisoners?

Fields: That's what I was talking about, yeah. That's when it kind of chilled you.

Marcello: Well, what happened then? Okay, you got the word to surrender. Did you just stay where you were until the Japanese came to you, or what exactly did you do?

Fields: Yeah, we stayed on our gun positions, and they came by and marched us out to the road, you know.

Marcello: In this initial encounter, did they rough you around any or rough you up?

Fields: Not at that time, no. They didn't. I don't know why, but they didn't at that time. They just marched us up to their camp and put us in the barracks that was up there.

Marcello: Again to go back, you said that after you surrendered they lined you up, and they stripped you of your clothing, and they bound your hands. I assume that they looted every one of the prisoners. In other words, did they take anything of value--rings, watches?

Fields: Well, they took everything we had. We didn't have anything when we left the island.

Marcello: And then as you say, right after they did this, they more or less lined you up and set up a machine gun, and you thought this was the end.

Fields: I thought that was the end, that's right.

Marcello: What happened from that point then?

Fields: Well, they took us up to that camp, to another camp up there, and had us around their barracks there. I don't remember how long. Things were fine then, and then they put us on a ship, and that's when they started for Shanghai on the Nita Maru.

Marcello: How long were you on Wake Island before they moved you off to Shanghai? Was it just a matter of days?

Fields: Yeah, I think it was either two or three days that we were on Wake.

Marcello: Did anything happen during that two or three day period that you think ought to be a part of the

record? In other words, here again, did they rough you up in any way?

Fields: Not at that time, no.

Marcello: But you were still virtually naked, is that correct?

Fields: No, they gave us some clothes to wear after . . . I don't know what order came through or what changed their minds or anything else, but they did let us dress then and took us up to that camp.

Marcello: I assume that you were wearing summer clothing, is this correct?

Fields: That's right. Shorts and a skivvy shirt.

Marcello: Well, what was the trip **like** from Wake Island to Shanghai?

Fields: Nerve-wracking.

Marcello: In what way?

Fields: Well, we were on a ship, overcrowded and no food. Well, we had just a little food--barley, boiled barley. And we were all in a hold with no rest-rooms, and it got pretty filthy in there. I believe it took us twelve days, I think, to get to Shanghai.

Marcello: Was the mortality rate very high on this trip from Wake to Shanghai? Did you lose very many people?

Fields: No, I don't think so. I really don't know, I mean, but I don't think we did. I mean, it just doesn't seem like it. When we arrived in Shanghai, I think we were pretty well all there. We did lose a Sergeant Wright trying to board the ship. I think that . . . it wasn't Wright either, but it was another one that fell overboard. I don't know whether they saved him or not. I really don't; but it wasn't Wright. I don't remember his name.

Marcello: Did they ever allow you to go up on deck at all during this trip from Wake Island to Shanghai?

Fields: No, no. They kept us in the hold.

Marcello: The whole time?

Fields: All the time.

Marcello: I assume you had no idea where you were going.

Fields: I didn't have any idea at all.

Marcello: What sort of thoughts were running through your mind?

Fields: Well, that's what my thoughts were. I wondered where we were going. I didn't have any idea where we were going or whether we had started or not because they were always having standbys or warnings of being raided and all that stuff.

Marcello: I'm positive that during this twelve-day trip there

were all sorts of rumors floating around down in the hold of that ship as to where you were going.

Fields: I imagine it went through our minds because we couldn't talk. They wouldn't let us talk.

Marcello: Oh, is that right?

Fields: We had to stay on our knees the whole time or sit down. There wasn't room to lay down, so we'd just sit, and we got on our knees.

Marcello: Well, what happened when you got to Shanghai?

Fields: Well, they unloaded us and took us to Woosung. That's where we were held then for around three years, I'd say, in Woosung, China, just outside of Shanghai.

Marcello: This is somewhere on the outskirts of Shanghai, isn't that correct?

Fields: Yeah, it was maybe five or six miles out of Shanghai.

Marcello: Well, how did you get from the docks to Woosung?

Fields: Walked.

Marcello: You walked.

Fields: We walked.

Marcello: Did they walk you right through the town?

Fields: No, you see, we docked in Woosung. That was the dock.

Marcello: I see. It's a port city, I see. Did they ever try to humiliate you in any way before the local population?

Fields: No, no they didn't. The only place that we were was across from the rice paddies and stuff like that.

Marcello: I see.

Fields: We were building . . . I'd say it was a rifle range. I really don't know.

Marcello: What was the prison camp itself like? Can you describe it from a physical standpoint so far as the type of buildings--the layout of the camp, in other words.

Fields: We were staying in horse stables, and I just don't know how good to describe this thing. It was just barns was all it was. We were sleeping on straw mats, no mattresses, a little cover, and it was cold.

Marcello: What time of the year was this by this time? January or February?

Fields: January. Yeah, it was in January, sometime in January.

Marcello: January of 1942 then. The only clothing that you had was this summer clothing that you had received

back on Wake Island. And what did it consist of?

Fields: Shorts and a skivvy shirt was what we made the winter in that year.

Marcello: I'll bet you were a pretty sorry outfit by the time you got to Woosung.

Fields: Well, we were in pretty bad shape.

Marcello: Did you lose very many people? I'm speaking now in the first couple of months during this first winter at Woosung.

Fields: No, we made it just fine. I mean, there wasn't a great loss in the men, I don't think, for the time that we spent there, considering, you know, at all.

Marcello: What was morale like among the men? Did you think you were going to get out of this thing? Did you think that the war would be over in a couple of months, or had you already braced yourselves for a rather long stay?

Fields: Some of them that was in North China thought it would last six weeks, but we found out different. We were prepared to spend at least a year or two or longer. And our morale, I think, in a camp as cramped and with the mixture that we had--civilians, Guamanians, and all--it was real high, I think. And it stayed high because we'd always have somebody

that would keep us up, I mean, keep our morale high all the time.

Marcello: Were the North China Marines at this camp when you got there?

Fields: No, we were there, and then they brought them in.

Marcello: Apparently there was quite a contrast between the North China Marines and the Wake Island Marines. They'd come in with their heavy topcoats and their fur hats and all this sort of thing, and apparently they were also able to bring some food in. I understand there were some tensions between the Wake Island Marines and the North China Marines. Is that a good word to use--tension?

Fields: I guess that'd be as good a word as any. (Snickers)

Marcello: Well, describe why this tension arose.

Fields: That's one of the things. You know, they had all this heavy clothing to come in, but we finally traded them out of most of them because they thought it was going to be a short war, and we could see winters ahead. And we made out alright, but I'd say at the beginning, yes, there was a tension.

Marcello: I understand they weren't willing to share food with you at first, what food they brought in.

Fields: I'm not going to say whether they would or they wouldn't. I'm not going to say that.

Marcello: Okay, describe what a typical day was like at Woosung from the time you'd get up in the morning until the time you went to bed. What was it like?

Fields: Work! After the first winter, well, we started building what I'd say was a rifle range. They called it a recreation center, but we would move dirt with these little carts on rails, and we'd have to work real hard with very little food.

Marcello: What time did the day start? What time did your workday start?

Fields: I'd say 8 o'clock.

Marcello: And what time did you usually finish?

Fields: Whenever we'd made our forty-four loads.

Marcello: In other words, that was your quota, forty-four loads. Suppose you made your quota, Did they ever try and increase it?

Fields: Oh, yeah. They didn't start out with forty-four. They jumped from thirty, and then they went on up. They could see how much we could do, and they wanted everything that we could do.

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

Fields: No, no.

Marcello: I remember at times I've heard some prisoners say they'd try to load the carts with rocks and all this sort of thing so they could reach the quota more quickly.

Fields: Well, we'd run a light load if that's what you were talking about. But that wasn't sabotage. That was taking care of ourselves.

Marcello: What was a light load?

Fields: Well, they'd want the cart full, and if we'd catch the guards or the interpreter not looking, well, we'd throw two or three shovelful on there and take off up the hill with it.

Marcello: What sort of food were the Japanese giving you? I assume this was pretty hard work.

Fields: That was real hard work. It was real hard work-- long hours.

Marcello: What sort of food were they giving you?

Fields: Rice. We'd work all day on a small portion of rice and maybe sometimes some bread.

Marcello: Did you ever get any vegetables of any sort, perhaps in a soup.

Fields: We would in camp. And I'd like to say this because it'll be on record. If it hadn't been for the International Red Cross, I feel that we would

have starved to death.

Marcello: How many Red Cross packages did you get? Did you get very many Red Cross packages?

Fields: No, we got eight. I believe over the period of time that we received eight Red Cross parcels.

Marcello: This was over a period of three years.

Fields: Three years, yes.

Marcello: And it's your own opinion that it was these Red Cross parcels which saved you.

Fields: No, no. You see, each one didn't receive a parcel. We'd have to split them. No, the thing I'm thinking about and talking about is that I understand that all the vegetables and the meats and the beans and all that was brought into camp was brought through the International Red Cross.

Marcello: I see.

Fields: Now I could be mistaken there, but that is what saved us.

Marcello: I see. You're talking about this food rather than the parcels themselves that they were sending over.

Fields: Yeah. You see, we had just eight of these. We called them Red Cross boxes, but that wasn't eight boxes per person. We would split them up. They'd bring a few in; we'd split up the boxes, you know, among all of us.

Marcello: About how many people would there be to one Red Cross box?

Fields: Two, three, or four. It all depended on the number of boxes, and that's another good thing that I could say about the men and our cooks and most our officers--that they were honest on dividing it.

Marcello: Are there any individual Japanese who stand out in your mind here at Woosung, either for the cruelties that they were responsible for or for the compassion that they perhaps showed to the prisoners? In other words, I'm sure you probably had nicknames for some of the Japanese guards.

Fields: The guards I didn't know very well, but there was one foreman in Shanghai that I'd like to see today. I think he was a wonderful person.

Marcello: In what way?

Fields: He would take care of us. He'd give us a few cigarettes, and he would divide some of his food with us, and he was just a good guy. He was well educated, and I understand that at the time the war broke out he was an engineer on a train from, I believe, Osaka to someplace. I don't remember. But he was a fine fellow.

Marcello: Now this was a Japanese soldier?

Fields: A Japanese soldier, yes.

Marcello: How about the interpreter? I understand he was a pretty bad customer.

Fields: I could choke him now.

Marcello: For what? Why?

Fields: For his mistreatment and . . . well, just the way he treated us.

Marcello: What was his name?

Fields: Ishihara.

Marcello: What were some of the things he did?

Fields: Oh, he would beat us and slander us. Oh, he was just cruel. He was everything but a human.

Marcello: Why do you think he in particular was so cruel toward Americans?

Fields: Well, I think he felt an inferiority complex is what I think his trouble was.

Marcello: Is he one of those people that perhaps you made a mental note of and perhaps wanted to exact some sort of revenge upon after the war was over?

Fields: I would have if I could have seen him.

Marcello: Are there any other Japanese that stand out in your mind?

Fields: I think that our first colonel that was in charge of the camp was a pretty good fellow. That was

Colonel Yuse, I believe.

Marcello: I would assume that conditions in the camp kind of varied in many cases, depending upon who was the commandant.

Fields: Yeah, the change of the guards. I think that they used our camp more or less for a rest camp for their soldiers, and you could tell that the soldiers had been in battle when they first came into our camp. They were rather mean and cruel, you know, but after a time they'd settle down, and then we'd get some new ones.

Marcello: Now were these battle-hardened, front line troops, or were these old men and soldiers who had been shot up so badly that they couldn't fight any longer?

Fields: No, they were front line soldiers, I would say.

Marcello: Something else that I think we ought to talk about with regard to the layout of the camp. I gather that this camp at Woosung had an electrified fence around it. Isn't that correct?

Fields: (Snickers) Very much so. I believe it was 4,000 volts if I'm not mistaken.

Marcello: In fences this camp had two fences around it, did it not? Or was there just this one electrified fence?

Fields: No, there was one electrified fence on the inside of the brick wall.

Marcello: In other words, there was an electrified fence and then there was a brick wall, too. Is that correct?

Fields: Yes.

Marcello: I see. It was actually two fences.

Fields: Two fences.

Marcello: During your three years there, did you ever talk very much about escaping?

Fields: No, no, we couldn't see any escape. I mean, I didn't know anything about the country, didn't know what it was all about anyway. We were so confined.

Marcello: Were there ever any escape attempts by anybody?

Fields: Oh, yes. Yeah, the ones that knew the country, or some of them There was a commander, I think, and some more that attempted an escape in Shanghai, and I think they got caught.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever warn you what would happen if you did try to escape and were caught?

Fields: Oh, they were always warning us. They'd say we'd be shot.

Marcello: Did you think they meant it?

Fields: They meant it! They meant it!

Marcello: What were some of the other types of physical punishment or abuses that the Japanese commonly dealt out to the prisoners?

Fields: Well, they'd stand a prisoner at attention, and in one instance there they stood a boy at attention for, I think, twenty-four hours or better. And he was numb, of course, when they released him and let him go.

Marcello: What else did they do? I assume there was all sorts of slapping, punching . . .

Fields: . . . bayonetings and beatings.

Marcello: Were you yourself ever on the receiving end of these sort of things?

Fields: I was on the receiving end of a bayonet.

Marcello: In what way? Can you describe this incident?

Fields: Well, they had an air raid. I believe it was on Easter, and we under an air raid, actual air raid. And the guards would get excited, and they'd come through, and they were stabbing and beating the first one that got in front of them. So I happened to be one that they bayoneted.

Marcello: Was this a serious wound?

Fields: No, it was a flesh wound in the leg.

Marcello: Superficial wound?

Fields: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, it wasn't enough that you could be hospitalized or anything like that?

Fields: Well, I was hospitalized, yeah. But it wasn't real serious.

Marcello: How long were you in the hospital?

Fields: About a week.

Marcello: What sort of medical facilities did the Japanese provide at this camp? Were they good, bad, or fair?

Fields: Oh, they were fair. I'd say average. Pretty good, I'd think.

Marcello: Did the hospital have American doctors, or were these Japanese doctors?

Fields: Well, they had a Korean doctor, and they used our doctors, too. I believe our doctor was a Dr. Kahn.

Marcello: I remember Venable talking about him. He apparently was a pretty good fellow.

Fields: He was a fine fellow. In fact, if he was to tell me to stand on my head because it'd be good for me, I'd do it.

Marcello: He did a lot for the morale of the troops plus the physical well being, I gather.

Fields: He certainly did.

Marcello: I assume that prison camp brought out the best and the worst in individuals. In other words, is it safe to say that you really got to know what a person was like after being with him in a prison camp?

Fields: You do, yeah.

Marcello: Did it surprise you the way some of the people perhaps did behave?

Fields: Well, no, not really, because I knew the men that I was with, and I knew they were all good fellows before, and I could say that I was just fortunate to be in an outfit like that where you would trust them. I mean, that's the way I feel about it.

Marcello: Was stealing ever a problem?

Fields: Yes, stealing at times. I mean, you take a hungry person and a cold person, and they would steal clothing or a little food. We didn't have a lot, but I mean that wasn't a serious problem. Don't get me wrong there.

Marcello: What would happen if somebody were caught stealing?

Fields: They would be punished.

Marcello: I would assume that the troops maintained some sort of self-discipline among themselves.

Fields: That's true.

Marcello: Were you segregated from your officers?

Fields: Well, they were in the same camp, but they were in different barracks from us.

Marcello: Did they work on the rifle range with you? Now I know that by international law officers were not required to work, but did any of them actually help you on the rifle range? Did any of them pitch in?

Fields: Well, they didn't move the dirt like we did, but they were in charge of us on these work details.

Marcello: Was there ever very much resentment over the fact that the enlisted men were doing the manual labor and the officers weren't?

Fields: No, we didn't think that the officers were supposed to work. That was my feeling, I mean, and I think the majority of the men felt that the officers shouldn't have been working.

Marcello: Did you ever have any opportunities to leave the camp, let's say, and go into any of the towns or anything like this surrounding the camp?

Fields: On liberty?

Marcello: No, not on liberty. Maybe on some sort of project or job outside the camp.

Fields: Well, we worked in a garage in Shanghai. After the mountain was completed, well, we went up there and went to work.

Marcello: How long did it take you to build this rifle range?

Fields: Three years. About three years.

Marcello: It took three years, and it was at that time then that you went into Shanghai?

Fields: Yes.

Marcello: While you were in Woosung, did you ever see very much evidence of any collaboration? In other words, did you ever witness any Americans who perhaps told stories to the Japanese in order to get some sort of special treatment, maybe more food or something? In other words, did any Americans ever tell what went on in the barracks or in the prisoners' quarters in order to get something?

Fields: Well, not that I know of. No, not that I know of.

Marcello: You never experienced anything of this sort?

Fields: No, I never remember anything like that happening.

Marcello: You told me, of course, that food was in very, very short supply. Were there ways of supplementing your diet?

Fields: No.

Marcello: In other words, did the troops ever resort to killing dogs or cats or any other animals that might stray into camp or anything like that?

Fields: I don't think so. We might have had a cat one time that hit the fence, but I don't believe . . . I believe we were laughing about that one time, that there was a cat that hit the fence and we had cat stew.

Marcello: I guess when you're hungry you really don't have too many qualms about what you're eating, whether it is dog or cat or . . .

Fields: That's true. And about the only time we could get filled up was when we would have rats in the stew, and there was some people that couldn't eat it, but we would get filled up then.

Marcello: In other words, rats were fair game also.

Fields: They were fair game--in the stew, accidentally.
(Chuckle)

Marcello: Accidentally in the stew (Chuckle). Well, this brings up a couple of very interesting questions. First of all, at Woosung were the troops subjected to any diseases there? In other words, were there

any serious diseases or epidemics that broke out in the camp? You know, for example, when you talk to the prisoners who were captured in the Philippines, one of the problems they had, of course, was dysentery and malaria. Now, did you ever have any diseases which perhaps reached epidemic proportions in Woosung?

Fields: Not in Woosung, no. Now this happened, I believe, at either Peking or Nanking where we all got the dysentery. I think in Woosung there was malaria, there was mumps and different diseases like that, but I don't think it ever got to the epidemic stage. I had the mumps and the measles there, but I don't think that it got real serious. Now in North China, when we were on the train going through North China, well, that was serious on this dysentery that a bunch of us got.

Marcello: Well, let's just stay on Woosung for a minute. We'll come up to North China later on. I gather that this camp apparently was located in a rather swampy area where the chances of getting malaria were quite prevalent.

Fields: Yeah, that's true. There were mosquitoes because we were in the middle of a bunch of rice paddies,

I'd say, flooded rice paddies.

Marcello: Were bedbugs or lice ever a problem?

Fields: No, but crabs gave us a bad time.

Marcello: Is that right?

Fields: That's right.

Marcello: I assume then that the sanitary facilities in the camp were not the greatest in the world.

Fields: Well, they were awful.

Marcello: Describe them.

Fields: We didn't have showers, and we'd have to bathe out of a bucket. And the restrooms, I mean, our toilets were just outside toilets, and the coolies would come back by and clean them out. Well, for instance, I went from December 8th to April 3rd without a bath or a shave, so that's . . .

Marcello: You must have been a pretty scruffy-looking character by that time.

Fields: A full-length beard. You body was just be fish scales. Now the doctor told us that he had never heard anybody die from filth, but he had heard of them dying from pneumonia; without shower facilities or bath facilities, well, you'd take a great chance on pneumonia. Some took baths earlier, but, I mean, April 3rd, being my birthday, well, I had to wait so long, so I just waited two to three days to my

birthday. Then I gave myself a birthday present.

Marcello: I see.

Fields: So I gave myself a birthday present.

Marcello: Was the water rationed at Woosung?

Fields: It was and it all had to be boiled.

Marcello: In other words, even if you did want to take a bath, you didn't have very much water to do so.

Fields: To do so they'd bathe out of a bucket.

Marcello: So that's what you had--a bucket of water to take a bath in.

Fields: That's what we had.

Marcello: Were there any items that the Japanese did not let allow the prisoners to have or to carry? I'm speaking now perhaps of such things as matches or razors or things like that. Were there any items that the Japanese didn't allow you to have?

Fields: Well, we didn't have any of that. We didn't have any of that stuff. I mean, you see, when they stripped us on Wake, well, they'd taken our watches, rings, wallets, and all the gear we had.

Marcello: In other words, they didn't re-issue you anything when you got to Woosung?

Fields: Oh, no.

Marcello: How about soap or something like that?

Fields: They'd give us a little soap along, but I believe

that comes back to the Red Cross. I think our soap came from the International Red Cross.

Marcello: Did they pay the prisoners so much per day for the work they did?

Fields: Ten sen a day.

Marcello: Was there ever any opportunity to use this money?

Fields: They wouldn't give us a chance to spend it. We'd buy cigarettes or something with it, but ten sen is just about like ten cents. So you didn't have much money. You'd work for ten cents a day, and peanut butter and jam was \$300 a pound. So you can see how long, how many days, you'd have to work for a pound of peanut butter.

Marcello: If you ever were going to buy something, did you have to buy from the Japanese commissary, or perhaps could you buy this from Chinese civilians?

Fields: Well, we didn't buy anything, I mean, they didn't have a commissary for us. We'd usually trade around, trade different things for something. You know what I mean.

Marcello: Who would you trade with?

Fields: Among ourselves.

Marcello: Did you ever trade with any of the Japanese guards?

Fields: No, no. We didn't have anything that they seemed to want.

Marcello: Well, that's true. Did you ever have very much contact with the Chinese civilians?

Fields: No, no.

Marcello: Did you ever see very many incidents where men would actually trade food for cigarettes or things like that?

Fields: Yeah, I've seen them trade food for cigarettes.

Marcello: Did you ever do that yourself?

Fields: No. No, I didn't trade food for cigarettes because, well, they'd give us three cigarettes a day, and that'd be sufficient.

Marcello: I would assume that the thing that was constantly on everybody's mind was food. Is that a safe assumption?

Fields: Well, it was on your mind, and it was in your dreams.

Marcello: I understand that one of the things that the prisoners did when they got together after work or when they weren't working was to dream up all sorts of fantastic recipes. Was this something that was done in the Woosung camp?

Fields: That's true.

Marcello: And I understand that the prisoners would allow their imaginations to play tricks on them, also.

In other words, some prisoners have told me that they imagined that they could smell something cooking from time to time, and maybe it was bacon and eggs or maybe it was something else, but they swore that they could almost smell it cooking sometimes.

Fields: That's true. I mean, yeah, you would do that. You'd dream that. The thing that caused me more trouble than anything else was donuts. I was always dreaming of donuts.

Marcello: Did you have any reason? Do you know why?

Fields: I don't know. I don't have any idea why, but it seemed like all my big food dreams would be donuts, so I guess it was something sweet because we didn't have sugar. I don't really know why you would dream such dreams, but I had trouble with the donuts.

Marcello: Did you ever detect that the Japanese were deliberately putting you on short rations? Or were you getting the same amount of food that the Japanese soldiers were getting?

Fields: Well, we wasn't eating the same food, no.

Marcello: In other words, they had put you on short rations.

Fields: On short rations.

Marcello: There was no question about that.

Fields: I believe it was 1,800 calories a day. I believe that was our ration.

Marcello: How much did you weigh when you entered the service? Do you know offhand?

Fields: Well, when I entered the service I weighed 163, but I got up to 205 before the war.

Marcello: I see. And how much do you estimate your weight dropped while you were at Woosung? Did you lose at least fifty pounds?

Fields: Oh, at least. No, I lost more than that. I guess about 125 or 130 pounds in Woosung.

Marcello: In other words, you went from approximately 205 pounds down to somewhere around 125-130 pounds.

Fields: That's right.

Marcello: Did you ever detect that these conditions affected the bigger men more than they did the little men? Some prisoners have said the bigger the man was, the more he suffered from this lack of food.

Fields: That's true. I believe that's real true because our healthiest and strongest men seemed to be the ones that we lost.

Marcello: How about the older men? Some prisoners have also said that the older men seemed to survive better than the younger men. Now did you ever find this the case at Woosung?

Fields: Well, I'd say the older men held their own, but I don't say that they made it any better than us. Of course, in Woosung I was a young man myself.

Marcello: How old were you at the time you were captured?

Fields: I was twenty.

Marcello: I would assume that you grew up pretty fast.

Fields: I grew up in a hurry!

Marcello: Well, is there anything else that you think we need to have into the record with regard to your stay at Woosung? Now there are a couple of other questions I have. First of all, did you lose very many men here?

Fields: No, I don't say that we lost very many men there.

Marcello: How about your clothing? Obviously, you had this very light clothing from Wake Island. It couldn't have lasted very long. Did the Japanese give you some additional clothing?

Fields: Yeah, they gave us Japanese shoes and their clothing, I mean, Japanese uniforms.

Marcello: Now when you say they gave you Japanese shoes, what kind of shoes were they?

Fields: Hobnailed shoes--heavy, leather. I don't know how to describe them, but I mean here we call them hobnailed shoes.

Marcello: How about winter clothing? Did they give you anything to ward off the winter?

Fields: Well, that's why they gave us those uniforms, which would be pants and a jacket.

Marcello: How about blankets? Did they ever give you anything of that sort?

Fields: Two cotton blankets.

Marcello: Which I assume were not very adequate against the Chinese winter.

Fields: No, you'd freeze. You'd have a bunkie. And I'd like to say this . . .

Marcello: Now what was this?

Fields: You'd have to find you a bunkie. That would give you four blankets instead of two apiece. You'd sleep with somebody.

Marcello: What was a bunkie?

Fields: That was sleeping with somebody.

Marcello: Oh, you were sleeping by somebody. I see. And I assume this was a rather common practice.

Fields: That's true. Yeah, we would double up.

Marcello: Well, we've talked a good bit, I suppose you could say, about some of the bad things or the miserable times that you've had at Woosung. Was there ever any good times of any sort? In other words, is there anything amusing that perhaps stands out in

your mind? Were there any funny incidents?

Fields: Oh, somebody would always have something going. We had a sentry, guard, we was always calling "Crash Dive." He was one of those tough guys, I think a front line soldier. And we didn't know he could speak English. We started making fun of him, and he said, "You don't think I know what you mean!" And he started working a few of us over. Then we had an interpreter--Venable probably told you this--I don't remember his name, but we started calling him "Mortimer Snerd." So he got to asking us who "Mortimer Snerd" was, and we told him "A big Hollywood movie star." Of course, Mortimer Snerd was famous in the movies. I don't know how, but he found out who Mortimer Snerd was, and then after that you'd call him "Mortimer Snerd," and then it would be a sad moment to that particular person.

Marcello: He'd work you over.

Fields: He'd work you over when he found out Mortimer Snerd was a wooden dummy.

Marcello: Why did he get the name "Mortimer Snerd?" Did he look like Mortimer Snerd?

Fields: He just favored him. I'd say he did favor Mortimer Snerd.

Marcello: How about "Crash Dive?" How did he get his name?

Fields: He was so tough and mean, rugged. He was a rugged individual.

Marcello: Did they ever have a sweat box of any sort at Woosung that they used as punishment?

Fields: No, not that I know of.

Marcello: When did you leave Woosung? Do you recall?

Fields: No, I don't.

Marcello: Now you said you were there about three years.

Fields: About three years.

Marcello: So you must have left perhaps in late 1944. Is that a safe estimate?

Fields: It was somewhere along through there, yes.

Marcello: And I assume you boarded a train.

Fields: A train, a long ride.

Marcello: Okay, describe this long train ride as best you can.

Fields: Well, they crammed us in boxcars and started out through North China with us. I think our first stop was Nanking. I believe it was the first stop, and they put us in one of Hoover's warehouses there and kept us for some days--I don't know how many days--and then they took us on to Peking. It was one or the other--whichever's first, I mean, going north.

Marcello: You mentioned Hoover's warehouses. What did you mean by that?

Fields: Oh, it was some warehouses and storehouses that Herbert Hoover built in China a few years back, I don't remember when, but we called them "Hoover Houses."

Marcello: I assume then that you were pretty crowded on these boxcars.

Fields: Very much so. We really were.

Marcello: Were there any Japanese guards in each one of the boxcars?

Fields: Yeah, they had guards with us in each boxcar.

Marcello: What sort of food did the Japanese give you during this trip?

Fields: Well, in my estimation on this train trip was the best food we had. We had rice and a grain-- we called it seaweed--and then we had grasshoppers, those ground grasshoppers.

Marcello: Did you have any qualms about eating ground grasshoppers?

Fields: No. You know, I was talking about that to my buddy the other day. I like to try some of those right now because then I thought they were good . . .

Marcello: I see.

- Fields: . . . and I'd like to know now if they are.
- Marcello: Now were you travelling constantly while you were on this train trip, or would you go so far and stop at a particular town or city and do some work and then continue on? Or were you just about on this train all the time?
- Fields: No, we'd travel to a town and stop, do a little work, and then go on to the next town. I think in Peking . . . I don't remember. I don't know North China and I don't remember now, but in one or the other--Nanking or Peking--is where we got the dysentery, one of those two towns. Now I don't know which is closer to Shanghai.
- Marcello: I was going to ask you about that dysentery. Exactly how did you get it? In other words, do you have any theories as to how you contracted dysentery?
- Fields: No, I don't have any idea how it got started because we were eating practically the same food that we were eating all the time, and I don't know any particular reason that it should break out.
- Marcello: I understand that troops suffered perhaps more from dysentery than from anything else.
- Fields: I'd say that--dysentery and malaria.

Marcello: Well, I understand that the dysentery was the one which could kill rather quickly. Now malaria, of course, I don't think killed a whole lot of people.

Fields: No, I don't believe we lost anyone with malaria, but we did with dysentery. In fact, we like to have lost me.

Marcello: Is that right? Well, explain exactly what your condition was like.

Fields: Well, I got the dysentery, and they carried me into a hospital. And I forget how much I weighed then, but I got down to around 114 pounds, and they cured the thing with charcoal dust. And the doctor came in one time and gave us an alternative that we could eat the dust and live or don't eat it and die. And we ate the charcoal dust.

Marcello: And that's apparently what saved you?

Fields: Yeah, I believe so.

Marcello: What is dysentery like? I gather simply it's one constant trip to the bathroom all the time.

Fields: All the time, continuously, blood and mucous.

Marcello: There is blood and mucous and this sort of thing. Not a very pleasant condition to be in.

Fields: No, you're sick.

Marcello: Well, you mentioned that you went to a hospital.

Was there a hospital in one of these towns?

Fields: No, it was just a place that they set off there for sickbay. We'd call it a clinic, I guess.

Marcello: Was this right on the train?

Fields: No, this was in Peking--Peking or Nanking, whichever one it was.

Marcello: How long were you there altogether?

Fields: Oh, I'd be guessing again now, but I'd say a week or two, something. I don't have any idea.

Marcello: Well, okay, describe then the remainder of this train trip. You went from Shanghai to Nanking to Peking. And then from there I believe you went to Mukden. That would have been the next major stop, isn't that correct?

Fields: I don't know, but . . .

Marcello: Mukden in Manchuria. You continued up through to Manchuria, did you not?

Fields: I don't know whether we went through Manchuria or whether we went straight down to . . . you see, we wound up in Pusan.

Marcello: Right, and I'm positive that you went from Mukden and then went south through Korea and finally ended up at Pusan . . .

Fields: It's possible. I mean, I wouldn't say that because

I'm not really sure.

Marcello: . . . which is a port city in South Korea. I gather that on this train trip there were a couple of prisoners that did escape.

Fields: Yeah, there was . . .

Marcello: Were you on that particular train car, or had you heard about this escape?

Fields: No, I heard about the escape. The one that escaped happened to be from Arkansas. I saw him at the convention here. Brewer was his name. But I think there was three or four of them that escaped that time. That happened in North China somewhere, and after they escaped we found out. . . we had heard rumors that the Japanese just held three miles on either side of the railroad that they were holding . . .

Marcello: In other words, those guys that escaped did make it back into either American lines or Chinese lines or hooked up with the guerrillas in some way, did they not? They made it.

Fields: Yeah, Brewer made it. I saw Brewer at the convention, and I think he went through Australia. I believe he came back through Australia some way or another. Now, I don't know; he didn't talk in detail with me.

Marcello: Do you remember what the Japanese reaction was when they found out that these men did escape? In other words, did they tighten restrictions on these boxcars?

Fields: Yeah, they kept our boxcars locked, and they were more secure after they escaped, I guess.

Marcello: You mentioned that these boxcars were locked. In other words, you were travelling in almost complete darkness. Is that correct?

Fields: That's true. Yeah.

Marcello: About how long did this train trip take altogether, that is, from the time you left Shanghai until the time you got to Pusan? Could you estimate that?

Fields: Well, it seemed like forever. I wouldn't say. I just wouldn't recall.

Marcello: Was it a matter of weeks or was it a matter of months?

Fields: I'd say weeks. I really don't know. I'd rather not even say one way or the other there, but it seemed like an awful long time that we were on that train.

Marcello: Incidentally, by this time did you perchance have any idea as to how the war was turning out? In other words, had you seen any evidence that perhaps the tide had turned, and that the Allies were

winning? Of course, you were at Woosung. I guess you had seen some of the air attacks and so on, and you perhaps had witnessed some of those air battles.

Fields: Yeah, they were hitting Shanghai just about every morning when we left. I believe that was the reason that they got us out of Shanghai. But this was a coincidence, too. One of the North China cities, we run across one of their boys that worked for the North China Marines, and he was telling quite a few of them there exactly how the war was going. And we got this scuttlebutt back from some of the ones that knew this Chinaman that happened to see us up there.

Marcello: I gather also that while you were at Woosung the Japanese did not want you to witness any of these air battles or air raids and so on, did they?

Fields: No, they'd put us inside.

Marcello: What were your feelings when you heard about the bombers and you had seen them?

Fields: Well, you could hear them. I mean, you could hear them moving and bombing and explosions.

Marcello: Did this do wonders for your morale?

Fields: No, it didn't. We thought we were next because

we were . . . our living quarters were right between two airports.

Marcello: Were there ever any close calls?

Fields: No, not that we know of. The only thing that was close was when we got our windows knocked out of the barracks, and that was when they must have hit an ammunition dump out on the coast one morning.

Marcello: Getting back to this train trip, you eventually ended up at Pusan. Now if my facts are correct, you remained at Pusan for a little while at least working on the docks. Is that correct?

Fields: Yeah, unloading salt.

Marcello: Salt.

Fields: Yes, unloading salt off this ship.

Marcello: I would assume that this was pretty hard work given your physical condition and so on. Probably even under normal conditions it would have been hard work, but, well, in your case you were down to just a little bit more than 100 pounds, and I would assume that lifting sacks of salt and so on was pretty tough job.

Fields: Well, we wasn't lifting sacks, we were carrying them on what we called "yo-yo bags." We'd shovel a little bit in each bag and take it up and pour

it out.

Marcello: But it was still pretty tough work?

Fields: It was hard work, yes.

Marcello: About how long did you do that?

Fields: I don't remember that either. I mean, that's what's got me confused--how long we were there. But I remember we unloaded a ship.

Marcello: And as I recall, they were housing you in a warehouse of some sort were they not?

Fields: That was another "Hoover House" (chuckle).

Marcello: Another "Hoover House." I assume that Herbert Hoover wasn't the most popular guy around perhaps.

Fields: I don't know where and why they were built over there really and truly, but the North China Marines seemed to have the history, and they called them Hoover Houses." They were warehouses and so on. Before the war, I think, they were all stored with food and stuff, you know. So we started calling them Hoover Houses."

Marcello: Well, from Pusan you eventually boarded a ship and, of course, ended up in Japan itself. Describe the trip from Pusan to Japan. Was it a rather uneventful trip?

Fields: No, there was something. I was on a ferry. I

believe they ferried us across that Pusan Strait there.

Marcello: What happened on this trip? Were you again crowded down in the hold?

Fields: I don't remember that. I don't remember what they had us do. I think that might have been where we were alerted so much for raids, submarines or planes or something. I don't remember.

Marcello: Well, I gather that this trip took several days, did it not? And that's a pretty short distance from Pusan to Japan.

Fields: That's right. They zigzagged us. I mean, that's the way they was doing us--taking us all over that place out there just to . . .

Marcello: To find out if there were any submarines.

Fields: . . . submarines, I believe, yes.

Marcello: What were your thoughts about being torpedoed by a submarine? Was this something that really worked on you?

Fields: Well, you couldn't see land either side, and you just thought it was a long swim. You just don't like to think about things like that really.

Marcello: I guess you could say that this was one time when you were kind of taking up for the bad guys, hoping that that ship would make it to Japan or

take you to land someplace.

Fields: That's true.

Marcello: Well, where did you land when you got to Japan?

Fields: Right on the tip. I don't remember where it was, but I remember the cherry trees in some little village. I don't know.

Marcello: In other words, this was in the spring of the year, is that correct?

Fields: It must have been early spring. It'd have had to been.

Marcello: Well, describe the trip that you had obviously had to take in getting from the southernmost island, Kyushu, up to Hokkaido.

Fields: That was another train ride.

Marcello: You went by train ride. This time the train ride was a little bit better, was it not? You were at least in passenger cars.

Fields: No, we wasn't. We were still in boxcars.

Marcello: You were still in boxcars?

Fields: In boxcars. And then we got on a passenger train in some town there because we were on a passenger train through Tokyo.

Marcello: Incidentally, were you able to see any of the damage that had been done by the American bombers?

I gather that by this time we were almost . . . this was almost up to 1945, isn't that correct? Were you able to witness any of the damage that the American air attacks had done?

Fields: In Tokyo we didn't. I believe this was Osaka where we saw the fleet that was sunk there, and there was an air raid while we were in the depot there, and I believe it was in Osaka that they pulled an air raid and lowered everything, it seemed like, in that town but the depot, and we were in the depot at that time.

Marcello: I gather that some of those towns were just virtually leveled. There was nothing but smokestacks standing.

Fields: Well, Osaka was the worst one I saw.

Marcello: Did you witness any of the hostilities of the civilians as a result of these air raids?

Fields: In Tokyo, yeah.

Marcello: In what way?

Fields: Oh, punching us with sticks, walking sticks, and rocks. When we changed trains in Tokyo, that was the worst, I believe, in the whole thing. That's where one of our Marines hit one of them over there.

Marcello: Tell me about that. I've heard about that incident before. I think we ought to put that on the record because it is rather funny.

Fields: He was a corporal, and he was fixing to board the train, and he said, "If one of them punches me, I'm going to deck him," and when he started to step aboard the train, one of these Japanese punched him with a walking stick or an umbrella or something, and he did deck him. I mean, he knocked him down.

Marcello: He did this when a guard wasn't looking?

Fields: No, he did it when the guard was there.

Marcello: What'd the guard do to him?

Fields: Really, I don't know. I think he put him on the train, but I don't know what happened to him after that. I mean, I'd hate to say, but I remember that incident where he did knock him down.

Marcello: Was this a rather tense moment?

Fields: Oh, yeah.

Marcello: I mean, you know, having to walk through or walk by all these civilians? I gather that there was a real danger here.

Fields: There was! I mean, that's what I'm talking about.

They wouldn't keep them back. All we had to do was just walk a trail there, and it was dangerous. I mean, that's true.

Marcello: It's kind of like walking a gauntlet, I guess you would say. They were on both sides of you punching you and kicking you and poking you. Did they try to hide from you the damage that was being done by the American bombers? In other words, did they forbid you to open the curtains or pull up the blinds in the train?

Fields: Well, I don't remember that happening, no. But they had unloaded us in Osaka, and you could see the bay there. But the depot was there and you could see their ships that were sunk and the buildings that were destroyed there. But I don't remember any damage in Tokyo.

Marcello: Well, eventually you ended up at Hakodate, which is one of the principal cities on the island of Hokkaido, which is the northernmost of the Japanese Islands. And I gather that from there you were taken to the coal mines?

Fields: I could be mistaken, but I believe it was Sapporo where we were coal mining. I'm not sure on that either.

Marcello: Well, anyhow, describe what life was like here in this latest prison camp.

Fields: Well, it was still just a barracks, and they'd march us to work, and we'd go down in the coal mines and mine our shift. I believe they was running us twenty-four hours a day. We'd work eight-hour shifts and go back to camp.

Marcello: What time did your day start?

Fields: Well, ours would start at eight o'clock. It was a swing shift outfit, you know.

Marcello: Were there three eight-hour shifts?

Fields: Three eight-hour shifts, yes.

Marcello: What was your particular job in the coal mines?

Fields: Filling up those deals. I believe they called that mucking, I think. Mucking, I believe. I think so.

Marcello: Mucking. Yeah, that's what it was called. I assume that this was perhaps a traumatic experience for a country boy from Arkansas to be put down in a coal mine.

Fields: It was spooky! We had one little instrument there where a sheet metal roofing, I'd say, or something would come down the track there making sparks and fire and all this other stuff. But you were a nervous wreck down under there because the mines

weren't braced properly, and we did have cave-ins. I don't believe we lost anybody. But just after we came out of the mines, there was a great cave-in, and they lost lots of Koreans who were working there after we came out of them. But there was a great cave-in there.

Marcello: These Koreans that you mentioned, they lived in one of the neighboring villages or towns, did they not?

Fields: Well, they lived in a camp right next to us.

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Fields: They stayed in a camp right across the fence from where we were living.

Marcello: I assume then that these were forced laborers. Is that correct?

Fields: I would say, yes.

Marcello: Were you being supervised in this coal mine by the military or by Japanese civilians?

Fields: No, it was military. They were in uniform, and I presume that they were. There's another one that I could leave over there. We called him "Mousey."

Marcello: What was he like? Was this one of your supervisors?

Fields: Yeah, he was one of the supervisors. He was the one that came down one day and flailed us all with his little old hammer.

Marcello: He did what?

Fields: Beat us up with one of these little hammers. You know, it's sharp on one end and flat on the other. I don't know what you call that thing, where you check for shale.

Marcello: Well, describe this incident. I'd like to include it as part of the record.

Fields: Well, they'd give us a lunch period, and we didn't have watches. But it seemed that we had worked long enough that it should've been what we called chow time, so we sat down and we started eating. And when he came in then, he just started slamming that hammer and hitting us and beating us up with that hammer and said that it wasn't time to eat at that time.

Marcello: Did you ever have very much contact with civilians here on Hokkaido?

Fields: No, not until after the war.

Marcello: Not until the war was over.

Fields: Not until after we were released, and then we would go to this little village up there and . . . oh, we'd walk through this place or something, you know. But then when we'd go to this little village, the firemen would escort us around.

Marcello: Well, I gather that life on Hokkaido was pretty tough, was it not? In other words, it's very, very cold there.

Fields: Well now, we wasn't. We wasn't there when cold weather . . . I mean, it was pleasant when we were there.

Marcello: You did not experience any of the Japanese winter?

Fields: No, our winters were up in Shanghai.

Marcello: Were you working seven days a week?

Fields: They'd give us a Sunday off. We'd get Sundays off unless they were fixing to punish us for something that we had done wrong. But they were real good about giving us one day a week to wash our clothes and clean up.

Marcello: I would assume that the food was just about the same here as it was in Shanghai.

Fields: The same stuff, yes.

Marcello: Rice and perhaps a little bit of soup or something like that.

Fields: Slum. Rice and slum.

Marcello: What's slum?

Fields: That's nothing in some water (chuckle)

Marcello: Nothing in some water, huh? What was this camp like from a physical standpoint? Did it have a barbed wire fence around it or anything like that?

Fields: Well, it had a board fence. You see, we were on the edge of a . . . it was either a valley or a river below us. It was a river, and we were right on the edge of this cliff. And we just only had a board fence around that with the guards stationed at the gate out there.

Marcello: What were your barracks like?

Fields: They were about the same as they were in Shanghai. We still slept on our wooden frames with our straw mats under us. That's all we ever had. We never did have any good beds. I guess that's what they slept on. I don't know because undoubtedly that was their barracks before we came in, and they must have had the same conditions that we had. I don't know.

Marcello: When I was talking to you over the telephone a short while ago, you mentioned the fact that you were lucky in that the mine where you were working ran out of coal?

Fields: No, we hadn't hit coal yet.

Marcello: Oh, you hadn't hit coal yet?

Fields: No, we hadn't hit the coal. The other shaft had, but we were still in the rock. We hadn't hit the coal. We were still mining shale.

Marcello: Well, how long were you on Hokkaido altogether?

Fields: I don't know. It seemed ages, but I couldn't say.
I really don't know.

Marcello: Well, describe the events then leading up to your liberation. I would assume that the news that you received from the outside was rather sparse here on Hokkaido. For example, I don't think the bombers ever came that far north.

Fields: No, they didn't. We didn't see any there until after the war was over.

Marcello: Well, describe as best you can the day of the surrender.

Fields: Well, that was something. That was something that you'll never forget, and I don't believe any of the other fellows will either. But they all started calming down. I don't think we knew it the day that they did surrender, but things started . . . they declared a holiday the first day. They said there wouldn't be any work this day. And then the next day they said they were going to give us all radios and let us listen to the news and all this other stuff that comes up. And they did set radios behind our barracks out there and got us all out there listening to the radio, and this, by the way, was the time MacArthur, I believe, was in

Tokyo and made that speech. And when we were listening to the radio, the guards and all left us. I mean, we were left there alone without any guards.

Marcello: The guards just kind of disappeared, just faded away?

Fields: That's right. They left us, and . . .

Marcello: Were there any that you wish had remained around?

Fields: Not any of the guards. I mean, they were pretty good fellows. I'd like to get hold of "Mousey," who was the foreman over in the shaft. I mean, that was the only one that I disliked in that bunch.

Marcello: Well, anyhow, you were listening to the radios and the guards just kind of faded away.

Fields: Yeah, and they promised us supplies, and they did start bringing us supplies.

Marcello: When you say "they," you mean the American forces?

Fields: The American forces, yes. They started dropping us supplies.

Marcello: Did all discipline kind of break down?

Fields: No, no.

Marcello: Well, you were supposed to stay in the camp, but I understand there were some prisoners who decided

to see what the countryside was like and did leave.

Fields: Well, they didn't go far. We went to Hakodate one time, but we wasn't restricted, I wouldn't say restricted, to the camp because I believe a British officer, Captain White, was in charge of our camp. And I don't remember any orders of staying in camp. He let us go to the little town and the little village up there.

Marcello: Did you regain very much of your weight back during these air drops?

Fields: Well, yeah, it started there. I mean, they started dropping us vitamins and good food and clothing and stuff like that, and that was the beginning of it. By the way, when I reached home after the war, I weighed 205 pounds.

Marcello: You had regained all the weight that you had lost?

Fields: Yes.

Marcello: Incidentally, were you ever worried that when the surrender did come that perhaps the Japanese would kill all of you? Did they ever warn you or did they ever threaten to kill all of you if the Americans invaded the home islands or anything like that?

Fields: Not that I know of, no. I didn't hear anything like that.

Marcello: Well, okay, what happened next then? You heard the news of the surrender. The Americans then began to drop the food.

Fields: Yeah, we heard General MacArthur's speech. Then he said that if they had anything that they wouldn't give, to take it, and we really didn't have anything to take it with, but after they started dropping supplies and things that we needed, well, we were happy anyway. And one day they said a train would be by to pick up us, so we boarded the train and went to Hakodate.

Marcello: As you look back on your experiences now, what do you think perhaps pulled you through? What was the key to survival?

Fields: What brought me back home? I really couldn't pinpoint that to one thing. I know one thing was will power. I wanted to come home. And another thing, I think I was in love with a girl that was real nice, and I wanted to see her, and if I was gonna' pinpoint anything, I'd put it on her because I just wanted to get back.

Marcello: Were you very bitter against the Japanese at first, that is, at the time of your release?

Fields: No. I guess I may be one of those peculiar people,

but I never was bitter. That's what I say now. Ishihara and "Mousey" and "Crash Dive"--there were a few. I mean, yeah, I'm not going to say that all these Japanese were good fellows. But you take the guards that were in charge of us, now some of them they roughed up pretty good. But as far as hating or disliking the Japanese, I couldn't say that I do now, except the ones that were cruel to everybody. Not just that they would work me over, but, I mean, those guys were doing their duty just like I figured that I was doing mine. I mean, in the same conditions, I always wondered--and it still goes through my mind--that could I have been as good to those people as the majority of them were to me. It wasn't their fault that things were like that. They were carrying their orders out just like we were trying to. But this one Japanese--and I can say that over and over again--that Japanese that was in Shanghai there in charge of this shop, I would like to see him today. I think he was a fine fellow. In fact, I know he was! Anybody that would give you part of his food and his cigarettes when you know that they were rationed

just like we were, then that's something there.
You know what I mean? I just liked that guy.
Now I can't say that for the Chinese because I
just haven't found a good one yet. Now that's
where you were talking about the back-stabbing.