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Place of Interview: Decatur, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Alf Brown Jr
(Signature)

Date: March 26, 1974

Oral History Collection

Alf Brown

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Decatur, Texas Date: March 26, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Alf Brown, Jr., for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on March 26, 1974, in Decatur, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Brown in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Mr. Brown was a member of the "Lost Battalion" and was captured in Java in early March of 1942, and he subsequently spent the duration of the war in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.

To begin this interview, Mr. Brown, why don't you give me a very brief biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education, your present occupation--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Brown: All right. I was born December 15, 1918, in Decatur, Texas, and I've lived here all of my life, except the

time I spent in the Army. I worked in Dallas a short while, but that was right after the war was over. I went through grade school, and I went to my senior year in high school, which was in 1937, and I dropped out then. Then I did go to a junior college out here a little while. I played a little football. Then I quit that. That's the extent of my schooling.

Marcello: Would this be Decatur Baptist College where you went to school?

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Quite a few members of the "Lost Battalion" from the Decatur area spent a little bit of time at that school.

Brown: Yes, they sure did.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join the National Guard?

Brown: Well, as you know, in 1941, sometime in November, they were going to start drafting. They declared an emergency and were going to start drafting, and I knew a lot of the boys in the 2nd Battalion, Headquarters Battery, 131st Field Artillery, which was the National Guard outfit in Decatur. So I knew that they were going to mobilize on or about November 25 of that year and . . . let's see, this was in . . .

Marcello: 1940.

Brown: It was 1940. I'd already been up and signed up for the draft, so I went down about a month before the mobilization and joined the National Guard.

Marcello: I gather that the National Guard around that time was kind of considered almost like some sort of social club or social organization, was it not, because everybody from the town belonged?

Brown: Well, not everybody. We had about . . . actually, we were about, I'd say, about two-thirds full strength when we left here to go to Camp Bowie, but we probably had eighty boys in there.

Marcello: You mentioned that this was a Headquarters Battery. What sort of work did this Headquarters Battery do?

Brown: Well, in an artillery outfit, in a battalion, you have three firing batteries. We had D, E and F. And then you have a service battery that takes care of . . . well, they do your general mechanics work, and then they took care of all your ammunition and stuff like that and then a lot of your telephone stuff like that. Each battery had its own wire outfit and communications outfit. Then you had the Headquarters Battery. This was the headquarters unit. It had no guns or anything. It didn't have any

fieldpieces. I think that our Headquarters Battery had about 115-120 men. I don't remember how big a firing battery was, but it had three 75 millimeter fieldpieces at that time.

Marcello: These are the old French 75's, were they not?

Brown: When we first got to Camp Bowie, they were the French 75, but when we went overseas, we had American 75's, which was a split trail instead of a single trail.

Marcello: What was your specific job in the Headquarters Battery?

Brown: Well, I was an instruments corporal up until we got ready to go overseas, and then I was made a survey sergeant.

Marcello: What exactly did you do?

Brown: Well, we were supposed to . . . when the batteries were set up to fire--they're not like they do now--but when they set up to fire, we had them plotted on the map, and we were at the Headquarters Battery, and we got all that stuff laid out, so then whenever the firing officer started the firing, well, they could look at their map and see which way they wanted to fire and how far they wanted to fire and everything else. That's all. That's what the survey sergeant did.

Marcello: How old were you at the time you joined this National Guard?

Brown: I was . . . let's see, 1940. I was twenty-one years old, I guess.

Marcello: Was this about the general age of the men in the Headquarters Battery?

Brown: Yes, there were a whole lot of us around that age, and then there were some older fellows that were on up to twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven years old that had been in the Guard a long time, and then there were four or five that would go on up in their thirties. They were usually our captain and then our master sergeant and our top sergeant. Then we had a technical sergeant that was twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old. But most of the fellows were . . . when we first went down there, I would say 50 to 60 per cent of them were in that age, anywhere from twenty to twenty-two or twenty-three years old.

Marcello: I would gather that most of them were unmarried.

Brown: Yes, most of them was single.

Marcello: What sort of training took place when you got to Camp Bowie?

Brown: (chuckle) Continuous training. We went down there, and we'd go out on field trips. Then we'd have classes

around the area on, well, say different types of map work, and we'd go up and have classes on firing, you know, dummy practice. And then a lot of the guys . . . we'd go out on the firing range and fire the guns. Then we'd have a mockup . . . what do you call it?

Marcello: Maneuvers?

Brown: Maneuvers. We'd go out on maneuvers. Sometimes they'd last a week or two weeks. After we got to Camp Bowie, we had eight or ten months of these. I mean we were going all the time. We didn't get off a whole lot.

Marcello: When was it that the unit went on maneuvers in Louisiana?

Brown: We went on maneuvers in Louisiana in August of 1941, approximately.

Marcello: In other words, this was after you had gone to Camp Bowie, and then you moved over there temporarily for maneuvers.

Brown: Yes. We went over there for our . . . I think this was supposed to have been . . . I don't know. This maneuver in Louisiana . . . I can't remember for sure, but it seems to me like that was going to be a month or two this time. It was longer than an ordinary National Guard encampment, which is two weeks.

Marcello: You were never really at any one particular place while you were in Louisiana. You moved all over the place.

Brown: I didn't stay in Louisiana but two weeks. I got an infection in my throat, and they sent me back to the base camp. I was on a "picnic" there for about six weeks (laughter). I had an abscess here, and they couldn't figure out what was wrong with me, and they had me in the Camp Bowie Hospital, and they were going . . . they finally decided they'd do a little surgery. So they sent me over to Surgery. The next day I was supposed to have surgery, and that night I woke up and my throat was all swelled up, see. They didn't know what was wrong with me, and I had . . . I woke up and there was no pain. They had kept me on codeine about half the time. Then they were giving me sulfa drugs. They didn't have your penicillin and such at that time. I woke up that night and had a funny taste in my mouth, and that durn thing had . . . that abscess had broken and ruptured to the inside. My fever had gone and everything else, so the doctors kept me around the hospital there for a week or ten days and let me go.

I went on back to my battery area. There were a few people over there, and all I did then was just fool around, and then I got to feeling pretty good, and they put me on division guard, and I didn't have to do . . .

they put me on "chowchasers." They had a bunch of prisoners that had been AWOL. In this detail I was on, we'd go down and get the prisoners three times a day and take them to eat and take them back to the stockade. Then they were on one day and off one day, and I worked about three hours a day when I was on and didn't work any the day I was off (laughter).

Marcello: This was called "chowchasing?"

Brown: Yes. We called them "chowchasers" (chuckle). I never will forget. They had an old sergeant that was . . . he'd been in the Army for years down at Fort Sam Houston. They sent him up there to take over the stockade, and they promoted him from corporal to staff sergeant, and he really thought he was tough. He'd get out there. He'd line those prisoners up, and he'd get a new bunch of guards, and he'd really tell you how mean those old boys were. Half of them sitting out there were grinning. They wasn't any different from anybody else. They just wanted to go home, and the Army didn't want them to go (chuckle). I guess they might have two or three bad ones in the whole bunch, but the rest of them were just ornery. We'd run them up, and they'd feed them just like they did us, and we'd take them back to

the stockade. That's all they did. I think they put a few of them on work details, but the other guards took care of them.

Marcello: At the time that you were mobilized, did you have any idea that there was a danger of war breaking out in the Far East? Most eyes, I think, were turned towards Germany.

Brown: Yes. I didn't think about Japan as such. No, I was thinking towards Europe, but I did really believe there was going to be some fighting. I figured we were going to war within two or three years.

Marcello: At the time of the mobilization, the 131st Field Artillery was part of the 36th Division, Texas National Guard.

Brown: Yes, sir.

Marcello: Sometime during that period there at Camp Bowie, was it not true that the army divisions underwent some sort of organizational change from the square divisions to the triangular divisions?

Brown: To the triangular, yes. A square division was a division of about 30,000 men. Well, they were going to cut them into triangular divisions and split them up. Actually, they were going through this period when they pulled us out. I think that actually we were

part of the thing that was going to make . . . what they did to us was part of the proposition. They were going to make the 36th a triangular division, which would probably eventually have cut it to 10,000 or 15,000 men--a smaller unit, more mobile and everything. In other words, I think they were looking at the Germans, is what they were doing. Instead of having a big bunch of men under one command, they were going to have smaller divisions. So they pulled us out to go to the Philippines. Evidently, we were part of a thing that was cutting it down to a triangular division. They took our battalion out.

Marcello: Why did they call these square divisions, and then why did they call the others triangular divisions?

Brown: Well, this I don't know for sure. We had four regiments of infantry there, and I imagine this four is where you get your square. So I think they were either going to cut it down to one or two regiments, and they just decided to call it a triangular. We had three . . . we had a brigade of field artillery, which consisted of two regiments of what we . . . I would say, light artillery, the 75's. Then we had one regiment of the 155 millimeter howitzers. The 131st and the

132nd were the 75's. The 133rd was the howitzers--the big guns. Evidently, they were going to cut it down to one regiment of your lighter artillery, and I don't know what they did with the 155's--whether they took them or what. Then there was also a regiment of engineers there, and you had a medical unit, and I don't know what else, but generally that was the main part of it. It was supposed to have been around 30,000 men, which was a lot of men in one division.

Marcello: Late in 1941 you received orders that you were to go to the Philippines . . . well, you didn't know you were going to the Philippines. You were a part of Operation PLUM, and you really didn't know what your destination was.

Brown: No. Well, that was our destination. They called it Operation PLUM, but PLUM was the code . . . there was . . . PLUM was the post office code name for the Philippines.

Marcello: Did most of you seem to think at that time that you were going to the Philippines?

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: You left from San Francisco, and you were aboard the USS Republic at this time, and, of course, your first

stop on your journey towards the Philippines was at Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: As an old Texas boy, how did you make out on that trip from San Francisco to Honolulu? Did you get seasick?

Brown: The first night out . . . of course, when you go out . . . have you ever been out of San Francisco on those land swells?

Marcello: No.

Brown: Now right out of San Francisco, you get some . . . it's not rough water, but you get these swells, and they are terrific. They're just like hills out there in that ocean. And that big old boat was between 600 and 700 foot long. It was a 25,000 ton ship. I don't know what the others told you. This was the way I understood it--the size of it. Well, the first day out, I was getting pretty tight in the chest from this rolling of this ship, and that night about dark, they gave us tickets to go eat. I was just nearly sick, and I thought, "If I don't eat, I'll die." So I went down in the galley, and those guys were down there, and they was upchucking, throwing up all over the place. Everybody tried to eat, and everybody was sick. I went

down there, and they had sauerkraut and wieners. Have you heard that before?

Marcello: No (chuckle).

Brown: They had sauerkraut and wieners. Wieners that big (gesture) and about that long (gesture). And that old boy had a tray . . . I don't know what else I had, but they were big wieners, is what they were. They weren't sausages. I went up there, and they had bread and probably some other stuff, but I can remember those sauerkraut and wieners. And that old boy, I mean, he filled my tray up with them, and I looked at those things. So I went over there, and I think as well as I can remember, they had tables that you stood up to and ate. I looked at that damned stuff, and I didn't realize how I was going to get it down, but I sat there and ate every bit of it.

Then I went up on the deck, and it was coming a fine rain that night, and it was fairly cool. So I went up as high as I could get on that deck . . . and they had a movie that night. I never will forget it. It was Robert Taylor and Vivian Leigh in Waterloo Bridge. I went up there, and the wind was coming right in my face, and I watched that movie, and I never did lose

that, and I was never sick another day. I was determined I wasn't going to get sick, and I ate that stuff and I held it, but it was hell around there (laughter) for a week.

Some of those old boys stayed in bed all the way to Honolulu. Some of them young sailors was out there before we got on the ship, and they was telling us what all old salts they were. They never had been on a ship before (chuckle). They was hanging over the rail with the soldiers (laughter). It was a damned comedy. It really was.

Marcello: You got to Honolulu, and I gather you really didn't stay there too long.

Brown: Overnight.

Marcello: You may have gotten liberty, but I don't think you really had too much time off that ship, did you?

Brown: Not too much time or too much money. There was three of us--a guy named O. L. Darden, and I think he's dead now. He's from Lubbock. He knew one of the lieutenants from out there at Lubbock. I believe it was Eldin Smith. He had a twin brother that was a sergeant. His name was "Els," I believe. "Els" and Eldin. He got three or four dollars, and he and Thurmond Rhine and I

went to town that afternoon. We didn't have much to do, and didn't know what to do. We finally ended up and bought us a pint of whiskey, drank that, and went back to the boat (chuckle). We didn't have enough money to get in much trouble, I'll tell you, but that's about all we did. We just walked around and looked around downtown, and then the next morning we pulled out.

Marcello: While you were walking around downtown and looking around, did you hear any conversation about the possibility of war coming to the Hawaiian Islands, or did you see any preparations being taken for war?

Brown: No, I don't remember. No, I don't remember. Some of the boys may have, but I don't remember.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, the next morning then you were back on board the USS Republic, and you took off again.

Brown: That night we were on the Republic.

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: We were back on there that night, back before ten o'clock, I'd say.

Marcello: Then the next morning, of course, you took off and you continued on your way. By this time, you had picked up an escort, had you not? You had at least a cruiser with you. I think the Pensacola was . . .

Brown: We had the Pensacola with us and a little corvette.

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: Has anyone ever told you about that corvette?

Marcello: Yes, they've mentioned it.

Brown: They haven't told you what it was made from or what?

Marcello: No.

Brown: It was a converted yacht, and it had belonged to the Dodges. You know the Dodges of the Chrysler Corporation?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: And they had donated this to the Navy, and they made a corvette out of it. This thing could move, man! It wasn't just an ordinary yacht. That thing had muscle. It could go. It was something else.

Marcello: The Republic, I gather, was not too fast, was it?

Brown: I think that if they opened that thing wide open--and they did several times--they could get twelve to fourteen knots out of it, and it would quiver all over. You know where the Republic came from?

Marcello: World War I, did it not?

Brown: It was a German ship. It was a war prize from the Germans in World War I, is what it was.

Marcello: I've heard several people talk about how antiquated that that Republic was.

Brown: Well, it had lots of room on it. It was a big old ship. I imagine in its day it was a dandy (chuckle).

Marcello: Somewhere out of Hawaii you received word of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, did you not?

Brown: Now this was a week before . . . when we left there . . . we left a week approximately before the Japs hit Pearl Harbor. Now the thing that has always amazed me about this is that when we left Pearl Harbor that morning, we went due west all day long. Did anybody ever tell you this?

Marcello: They may have.

Brown: We went due west all day long. The next morning we woke up, and we were going due south, and we never stopped going south until approximately at the time we crossed the equator. Now I'd say approximately, then the Japs hit Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: Then we got word that they hit Pearl Harbor. That was when we had our initiation for crossing the equator, too. Well, anyway, we'd start out for the Ellis Islands one day. We couldn't . . . all the radios were cut off. We'd start out for the Ellis Islands one day. We'd head for Samoa the next, and then

we'd be going to Fiji. We was just right down there. We was just going in a triangle and didn't know where to go. This went on . . .

Marcello: This was after you had received the word about Pearl Harbor?

Brown: Yes, yes. We couldn't use our radio. Finally, we got a message, and we went into the Fijis. We went to Suva in the Fijis. We went in there and took on a few supplies. We didn't get off the ship at the Fijis. There might have been a few get off to go downtown to get some supplies or something like that. I think some of the officers went downtown there and talked to the authorities there. Then we headed out for Australia. We knew where we were going then.

Marcello: Incidentally, what was your reaction when you heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

Brown: I think everybody was kind of bewildered really. I think that everybody but Dempsey Key. We'd all be sitting around out there on the deck when they were trying to figure out whether to go . . . they didn't know where to go, see. They didn't know where the Japs were. They didn't know anything. They didn't know how far the Japs had spread or anything. We'd all

be sitting out on the deck, and Dempsey Key would come by during the day, and he'd say, "I'll bet anybody ten dollars we catch a torpedo before night." (laughter)

Marcello: He was really cheering up everybody.

Brown: He was doing it just for the fun of it. He's one you'll probably interview someday. He lives in Fort Worth, I think. That was just one of the things that happened.

Marcello: We talked awhile ago about the fact that one of the members of this 131st Field Artillery was Frank Fujita, who, of course, was a Japanese-American.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: What sort of attitude was there toward him after news was heard of the Japanese attack?

Brown: As far as I understand . . . now see, Frank was in that E Battery that stayed down at Surabaja and Malang.

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: From what I understand--now that was at the other end--but whenever they set up this roadblock at Surabaja, I understand that Frank Fujita killed more Japs than anybody else in that. There was no thoughts about Frank Fujita. Nobody thought anything. I've never heard anybody say that they thought anything about him being a Jap.

Marcello: At the time of Pearl Harbor, did you think that it would be a pretty short war?

Brown: A lot of the guys said we'd whip them in two weeks, but I said, "How in the hell with an 8,000-mile supply line can you whip anybody in two weeks?" I said, "No, it's going to be a long, hard one. They're there and we got to go there." That was just the way it was. I told them. I said, "It's going to be a . . ." and they said, "Oh, hell, we can whip them in six months." I said, "No." I said, "Hell, we won't even be started getting it over here in six months because 8,000 miles is just too damned far." And it was! That was our problem. Of course, a lot of those guys didn't know how bad that they had knocked the hell out of our Navy, either.

Marcello: I'm sure nobody on board that ship really knew the extent of the damage on Pearl Harbor.

Brown: Right. But there was a lot of the guys who said, "We'll whip them in six months." I never thought so. I said, "Hell, 8,000 miles is just far to move it." In those days it was.

Marcello: So anyhow, you were finally diverted to Brisbane in Australia.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what your reception was like when you reached Brisbane.

Brown: Well, everybody treated us real well. We went to . . . the first thing they did as far as a reception as well as I remember, we got off the ship, and, of course, the Australian authorities met us--some of the army--and they took us to the Ascot Racecourse. They had tents set up for us out there. Of course, that's tropical down there. They had little portable, hardwood floors set out on the ground, and the tents set on them. So we all got us set up in a tent, and then over there under the stands at the racecourse, they had a canteen set up, and you could go over there if you had any money and buy a beer, but none of us had any money. We hadn't been paid.

So this Thurmond Rhine was with us. He and Darden and I was fooling around. We got down there one day, and they had opened up the canteen. We got down there talking to some Australians. They got us about half shot on that warm beer they sell over there out of those kegs (chuckle). We was fooling around there, and old Thurmond had a large Elgin watch, and he sold it

to an Australian for around fifteen dollars, I believe. He didn't figure that watch was going to do him any good, and he didn't have any money. So we all went to town that night. Of course, fifteen dollars over there was a lot of money. It was a lot of money really.

We went downtown. People down there were real nice to us. We went into . . . there was a pub right down from there. We went down there and got us a drink. Most of those people over there drink beer. We got some Scotch, got us a quart of Scotch. Then we had that, and we stayed in there about thirty or forty minutes, and we just took our quart of Scotch . . . of course, those people over there didn't buy it by the bottle. They'd sit and buy it by the drink, and they . . . when they drank Scotch . . . take a drink of straight Scotch, they'd sit there and sip it because it was so expensive. They say it was so dear, you can't afford to drink it. But we being Americans, we didn't (chuckle) drink it that way.

We went outside, and just as we came outside, here comes an old boy down the road in a car, and he was about half shot. He had in his back seat seven or eight quarts of beer back there, and he says, "Get in, Yank."

So we got in. We were all drinking beer with him. He was just wanting to show some Yanks around. He was glad to see the Yanks because the Japs were threatening the Australians. He took us downtown. He ran a printing shop. One of the boys was afraid he was a spy or something. I didn't figure he was a damned spy, or he wouldn't be fooling around with three yardbirds (laughter). So we drank up all his beer, and he let us go. We went to a dance, and that's about it.

Marcello: You got to Brisbane somewhere around December 21, 1941, so you were there over Christmas. Were you one of the group who was invited out into the Australian homes for Christmas? I know some of the people were invited out into the homes for Christmas.

Brown: We met a family there, but I don't know that I was at a home for Christmas, but anyway their name was . . . Tomlinson. They had two daughters. I can remember their names. Their names was Joan and _____. They were . . . one of them was about probably a little older than I was, and the other one was a little younger. They were a real nice family. I don't remember what the old man did. They had them a home out there. That's all I remember. We went out there

and had . . . they had coffee. They had American coffee for us and stuff like that. I don't think we ever made a meal out there.

Marcello: I gather that during the short time that you were in Brisbane you really did no training of any sort whatsoever, did you?

Brown: No, not that I remember. We didn't do much.

Marcello: Then I think it was somewhere around January 11, 1942--somewhere in that general vicinity--you were shipped out of Brisbane, and this time you were put on board the Bloemfontein.

Brown: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: You were on your way to Java.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what this trip was like between Brisbane and Java. I think you had one stop at Port Darwin.

Brown: We did, yes. Oh, it was beautiful. We went up inside the Great Reef Barrier. It was strictly beautiful up through there. I don't know whether you've ever seen movies on that thing or ever been there or not, but this is just something else. It's a trip that I guess people would pay a lot of money to take to go through that thing. This Bloemfontein was no sluggish ship.

It was a diesel. It wasn't a steamship. It would flat get up and pick them up and lay them down. It'd cruise along about twenty knots. It would get up and go. They didn't fool around going up inside that Great Reef Barrier. We had a noisy . . . what do you call them? Not a guide, but that's what . . .

Marcello: Navigator?

Brown: Navigator. Well, anyway . . . no, he was . . . what do you call them when you go into a port and a man gets on the ship and brings you into port? Well, anyway, this was what he was. He knew this Great Reef Barrier through there. We went right up inside that thing. They figured it would be a heck of a job for the Japs to get subs inside that Barrier. We went in there through there. That thing was pretty up through there. It was just something you should see. It's worth the money, if a guy could, to go through there. That is beautiful up through there.

Marcello: When was it that you had the submarine scare?

Brown: That was the night when we were going through the Bali Straits, between Bali and Java.

Marcello: This must be out of Port Darwin then, right?

Brown: No, we were way north of Port Darwin then.

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: We were way north. This was the night before we pulled into Surabaja. See, you go . . . like this is north (gesture), you come out of Darwin and head generally, I would say, a little bit west of north, and you get up in there and go between Bali and Java. That's your Bali Straits. Then right around the corner there is Surabaja. It was on the last night that we were on the Bloemfontein.

Marcello: Describe this submarine scare as best as you can remember.

Brown: They just told us that the subs had either sunk or attacked a ship within forty miles in front of us. It happened evidently just before dark. That night, as well as I can remember, there wasn't any moon, and it was flat dark that night. So we all laid around on the deck with our life preservers on. They had that ship really rolling up through there. We had with us to Australia, we had the Pensacola, and at Darwin we picked up . . . what was that? The Pensacola was a flush-deck cruiser. I can't remember the name . . . there was a cruiser that escorted us from Darwin. Do you know it?

Marcello: I'm not sure of the name. No, I'm sure not.

Brown: I'll think of it in a little while. It had a square stern and a two-level deck on it. I'll think of it before it's over with.

Marcello: Anyhow, you pulled into Surabaja in Java. Once more you didn't stay there very long. As I recall, most of you were sent out to Malang, to the airfield.

Brown: Yes, directly to Malang, Java. The airfield was Singosari.

Marcello: What did you do there?

Brown: We were ground crew for the 19th Bombardment Group.

Marcello: This was one of the groups that had come from the Philippines.

Brown: Yes, it was the group that came from the Philippines--the only one I know of outside of some fighters. There were a few fighters in around there close to us. I don't know exactly where they were, but they were in around close to us.

Marcello: How did you serve this 19th Bomb Group?

Brown: We just acted as the ground crew. I didn't. I was on guard duty quite a bit, and I never did work directly on the field. I was on guard duty. A lot of the guys were down there, and they were loading them with bombs and fueling them. It was just a regular ground

crew. They left their ground crew, except what they could carry with them, back in the Philippines, see.

Marcello: Then it was around February 5, 1942, almost a month later as a matter of fact, that you experienced your first Japanese air raid.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Can you describe what that was like and what you were doing at the time of the air raid and what you did after it took place?

Brown: Several days prior to the air raid they had been telling us to get ready, that we were going to get one. We could hear that reconnaissance plane come over and, man, he was up there! He was high! Once in awhile you could see him with the naked eye. Of course, some of the officers would get out there with their glasses, and they'd say they could see him, but I don't know whether they could tell anything about him or not, but he flew over there for a while.

Then this day came along that . . . the air raid. We didn't have any antiaircraft gun. There were a few British bofors but nothing that would get up there and get after a bomber at 10,000 or 12,000 feet. So we had these old . . . we had a bunch of this old

ammunition that you could cut it and make it go off above the ground. So they had these guns set up to where they could fire out over the airport. These shells would explode over the airport. They'd cut them to go off. But I don't think they did any damage to a great . . . they didn't do anything.

Marcello: Can you remember exactly what you did when the air raid took place?

Brown: Yes, I ran out there. See, I wasn't in a firing battery. So I ran out into where they had some of the gun emplacements before the planes got there. The air raid alarm went off a little bit before the planes got there. I went out there, and there was one of the guns--it was a F Battery outfit, I think--and I got out there. There wasn't much I could do. I didn't know much about firing a gun. I was trying to help them.

Then the fighters came in first, and they were firing these . . . these fighters were coming in strafing. They were firing these shells out over the airport, letting them explode over the airport. I don't think they ever got to anything. Anyway, then the fighters quit coming in. They caught some bombers on the ground

and burned them up and set one on fire that was loaded with bombs. I guess it had about 5,000 pounds of bombs on it, and they all went off at once. Of course, you know what happened to that plane. There wasn't anybody in it, of course. Some of our boys were down on the airport with the machine guns in emplacements. If anybody got killed I don't know about it.

Then the bombers came over. We heard them--these bombs whistling. They had a slit trench dug there for protection against bombs, and I jumped in that thing, and I made the mistake of being the first one in it. Then the whole gun crew jumped in on my back (laughter). Of course, they bombed all over the airport and hit a few things out there, and they dropped a few bombs there in camp and blew some holes in some of the buildings. That's about all.

Marcello: What were your own emotions or feelings? Were you scared or what?

Brown: Oh, you bet! I was scared to death of those bombs. There's nothing that will scare you more . . . well, yes, there is, too. Strafing will scare you more than bombs. Bombs are probably more dangerous, but the strafing . . . right there in that particular area I

would say the strafing was more dangerous because when a bomb hit there in that tropical country in there . . . it was black dirt. That bomb would go ten foot in the ground before it would go off, and it'd just blow a cone out, and everything would go straight up. It wouldn't go off when it hit the ground. The ground was real soft, and it was just as black as it could be. That stuff would go eight and ten foot in the ground and blow a hole in it.

Marcello: How many of these Japanese air raids did you experience while you were there at Malang?

Brown: Overall I guess about three, maybe four. They weren't all bombing. There was some strafing and stuff like that. One day they came in there and tried to bomb, but our fighters ran them off that day. They had to dump their bombs. They had one or two of the planes smoking and burning. They were trying to get into the airport that day, but those P-40's ran them out of there that day. They never did get in. They tried to make runs several times, but they never did . . . if they dropped bombs that day--and I was pretty close to the airport that day--I didn't know it.

Marcello: Did you ever get used to these air raids? Were you scared every time?

Brown: I don't think you can get used to an air raid. Personally I don't. They scared me.

Marcello: What was the general morale of the men like at this time?

Brown: We kept getting all these durn reports that there was going to be 40,000 Yanks land and all this, just a bunch of bull that's always put out. Nobody seemed to know where they came from, and even the officers were in on it, too. They was trying . . . they was putting out the same stuff that the men were. I don't think they knew any more than we did.

I never will forget when we were there at Singosari. There was a big British general who came through there. Then also H. V. Kaltenborn came through there while we were there. Did anybody ever tell you that?

Marcello: No, they sure didn't.

Brown: Do you know who I'm talking about?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: H. V. Kaltenborn came through there when we were there. Of course, I didn't talk to him, but I saw him. There was a big British general that came through there. He

was the commandant of all their Far Eastern forces. I imagine he was headquartered in India. He could have been headquartered in Singapore. He might have been, but I imagine he shortly went to India (chuckle).

Marcello: During this period that you were at the airfield there, did you have very much contact with the Dutch on Java?

Brown: Oh, yes! We'd go downtown at night. It was a heck of a good place down there. They had all of the Heineken beer you wanted. They had these cabarets there--these sidewalk cafes. You could dance and drink beer, and you could buy one of those Dutch quarts for twenty-five cents American money of Heineken beer. All their beer there was Dutch beer. Of course, you could buy all kinds of liquor there, but we drank mostly beer there. And you could eat good there. They had good food at these cafes. They had two cafes there on the square. Malang, I think, must have been a city of around 80,000 people at the time. I don't know.

Marcello: But the airport was actually on the outskirts of town at Singosari.

Brown: Well, it was about, I would say, from downtown Malang it was six or seven miles out.

Marcello: Actually, the airport was at Singosari.

Brown: Yes, it was Singosari Airport, evidently named from a village or something out there. From what I've been told about that area we were in, it was probably the thickest populated area in the world at that time.

Marcello: It was and I think it still is.

Brown: You could get out at night on one of those asphalt roads and just walk out there and look down that road, and as far as you could see you could see cigarettes burning. They smoked those old perfume-stinking cigarettes and all kinds of cigarettes. You've heard of them "wackin' white cheroots." They were smoking them, too. You know what I'm talking about, don't you?

Marcello: What were these called?

Brown: Have you ever read Kipling's On the Road to Mandalay?

Marcello: Oh, yes, yes.

Brown: Have you heard about the "wackin' white cheroots" they smoked?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: Well, they smoked those, too (chuckle). They had them all the way down to Java and all up through there. They are made with a kind of white-like leaf. It's tobacco rolled inside. Some of them are pretty good, too, really.

Marcello: What were your impressions of the fighting qualities of the Dutch? Did it seem as though they were really anxious to defend the island?

Brown: Well, I'm not going to judge them. They were . . . a lot of our boys . . . the thing is their army was made up mostly of natives. Now the Dutch soldiers, a lot of our boys had a lot to say about them. But if you just think about it, the Dutch officers didn't have a helluva lot to work with in my estimation, and I'd say they were . . . I wouldn't say anything against them. I don't see any reason to. Now those native soldiers, they're just like what we had to put up with in Vietnam. The one that give you the most rice, that's the baby I'm after, and that native soldier . . . there were a lot of them half-castes and a lot of them native. They had 50,000 or 60,000, I'm told. Hell, the odds were even high against them. I've been told that the Japs must have landed 150,000 to 200,000 men on Java.

Marcello: How long were you at the airport before you actually left?

Brown: I don't remember. Let's see, we were taken prisoner or we were imprisoned on March 8, I think.

Marcello: That's when the surrender came?

Brown: Well, evidently. I would say we left there anywhere from eight days to two weeks before that.

Marcello: You probably left the airport after the Japanese had landed. Is that correct?

Brown: No, we left before the lst of March and headed up the island, I believe, but I don't think the Japs had landed. I think . . . the information we had when we got to . . . now let me see, we went to Buitenzorg. I was trying to think . . . let's see, it was out of Buitenzorg that they had the first contact, wasn't it? But now the capitol, I was trying to think of the capitol of Java at that time.

Marcello: Batavia?

Brown: No, that was . . .

Marcello: Bandung?

Brown: What?

Marcello: Bandung?

Brown: Bandung was the native capitol. Batavia was the Dutch capitol. I think we went through Bandung into Buitenzorg, which was actually between Bandung and Batavia, and then they set up our artillery out on this river. Then they told us the Japs had landed and that the . . . the Dutch came and told us they were landing. They needed

some artillery support. And the way I understand it, when we were going in there, the Dutch . . . well, I don't understand it. I saw it. When we were going in there, well, the Dutch soldiers were walking out on the sides of the road, and it seems to me that they had a brigade of Australian infantry there. We were supporting them. They went down there and took the Dutch's place and the Dutch left. Well, a lot of our boys didn't like that, but I'd a helluva lot rather been supporting those Aussies than those Dutch because I imagine they got a little better fighting out of the Aussies than they would those Javanese natives.

Marcello: Is it not true that generally speaking all of these units seemed to be running all over the island to give the impression to the Japanese . . .

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: . . . that there were a lot more people there than there actually were?

Brown: They were just scattered. It was turmoil, actually. We weren't doing anything but riding most of the time. I think our artillery fired a few volleys and probably killed a few Japs, but as far as there being an actual battle, they talk about the Battle of Buitenzorg . . .

I know I went into town one night and took a message to our officers. Colonel Tharp and a bunch of the officers were in a hotel there in Buitenzorg, and we were out there in this plantation. They sent us in to give him some word. All these officers was sitting around this table talking. I went in and gave them the word, and then we went back out. That night sometime, we pulled out--all of our battalion. We pulled out and headed back the way we came. They tell me that the Japs were in Buitenzorg two hours after we cleared it. We went on down to this little town--I don't know exactly how big a town it was--Garoet. We were outside of there for a while in a bamboo thicket or whatever you want to call it. There was some Dutch officers who came by in a jeep--an American-made jeep, by the way--and they told us that the island had capitulated (chuckle).

So a bunch of our people went around and talked to some of the officers. Then the colonel came around and said, "If any of you want to go to the south of the island and try to get off the island, you're free to go." But we talked to some of the officers, and they had talked to the Dutch. They said that the Jap Navy had Java completely surrounded.

Marcello: By this time you didn't know, of course, that the Houston had been sunk and that several Dutch and Australian ships had been sunk also.

Brown: No. The Australian ship, Perth, this cruiser Perth, and the Houston were sunk in the Sunda Straits.

Marcello: I think the De Ruyter had been sunk before that, too, a Dutch ship.

Brown: The De Ruyter?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: Yes, it had. But, anyway, a bunch of our guys took off and went down there. I didn't go. So we went up to the racecourse and stayed there for several days before we ever saw a Jap.

Marcello: Now the surrender word came down later, March 8 or March 9. What was your reaction when you found out that you were going to surrender? You really hadn't fired very many shots and really had no real contact with the Japanese. What was your reaction?

Brown: Well, I didn't figure that we were in any condition to fight. You know what I mean? We had one brigade of Australians. We had some English with a unit of artillery firing these bofors. Do you know what a bofors was?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: I didn't depend on the Dutch army too much. Not that I had anything against them or the actual Dutch people, but you couldn't depend on them. I couldn't see . . . hell, there wasn't no use of 3,500 people trying to fight the whole . . . 200,000 Japs. They would have annihilated us.

Marcello: Had you ever heard the . . .

Brown: A lot of the guys . . . you got a lot of guys that will blow up and raise hell, but when it comes down to the time, well, they ain't going to do nothing else. Hell, you can talk all you want to, but we didn't have much choice.

Marcello: Did you ever hear a rumor that the Japanese did not take prisoners?

Brown: Oh, well, we had heard a lot of damned rumors. I'll tell you one. We went to Garoet, see. We stayed there a few days. Then the Japs sent us word to go in the mountains there close to Garoet to a tea plantation. Well, there was a Lieutenant Hampton that died in the jungles of Burma, a real good friend of mine. He was from Decatur here--Wade Hampton. You probably heard his name before. I didn't get paid there in Java when

we got paid. So he came to me and he said, "Brown, we're going to need some whiskey." We was there at that racecourse. He says, "I'll give you some money. See what you can buy." I bought two barracks bags full of Haig Original Scotch. You could buy it . . . those natives were raiding those warehouses, and they was coming out there trying to sell us stuff because we had all those guilders. I bought two barracks bags full . . . I don't know how much. I had a load of that damned stuff. There was three or four of us, and they helped me get it up to that plantation. Every night we'd take one of those big old imperial quarts of stuff, and you talk about good whiskey! That was good whiskey, Haig Original. I've never seen it since. I've never seen it in this country. We'd take it and just drink it with water. We'd get about half-shot.

We was up there a few days. We heard that they were going to send us to Batavia.

Marcello: Did you do anything at this tea plantation except just sit and wait?

Brown: Just sit on our butts. That's all we did--get out and walk around, looked around the country. It was up in the mountains. It was pretty up there. We were in

this kind of a warehouse where they had the dryers for drying the tea leaves and all that stuff.

They got this word that we were going to Batavia. The Japs sent word they wanted us to go to Batavia. We got a bunch of us about half-shot that night on that liquor, went out through there. Three or four of us who had that liquor were in behind some tea dryers back there, and nobody was around us.

We went out there and these old boys was sitting around. I'm telling you, they was scared to death. I walked through there. I said, "Well, you guys know what they're going to do to us when they get to Batavia?" They said, "No." I said, "They're going to cut us (chuckle)." This old boy, one of those sergeants, said, "Oh, get the hell out of here!" It like to scared him to death. So I left. In a little while the first sergeant come around and put me on guard because I had gone through there and scared them guys (chuckle).

But that's . . . then they sent us down to a roadside for a few days and put us on a train and took us to Batavia. I went with the advance group to Batavia long before the battalion went up there.

Marcello: It was at Batavia, of course, where you went into Bicycle Camp, isn't that correct?

Brown: Yes, but I didn't go to Bicycle Camp. I went to the Koan School first. Have you ever heard of it?

Marcello: No, I sure haven't. Let's just back up here a minute. Did the idea ever cross your mind of heading for the hills?

Brown: No. What in the hell could you do? There's no more treacherous native than the Javanese native. I had known this. Everybody had heard about it. They're nutty! Well, you know how they are over there now, the Javanese. I just didn't think about it. I didn't know where to go. When you get in a country like that . . . say, you were in France or something like that, you might have a chance, but over in that country, no. I never did try. Some of the guys even wandered back in and went down south to try to get off the coast. None of them got away. One or two of them even wandered in after the boys had moved clear back to the Bicycle Camp.

One I especially remember. His name was Whitaker. He came in real late. He was from Wichita Falls. He'd been all over the country and living with some natives,

and the Japs got him. I don't think they bothered him. They just brought him in and just put him in the Bicycle Camp, back with his old outfit.

Marcello: As you've just mentioned then, there were actually a couple weeks here where you really hadn't even seen the Japanese troops.

Brown: That's right. Yes, I saw a bunch of them passing in a truck one day when we were at the racecourse down at Garoet, but they never did stop. They was just talking and laughing. They didn't pay any attention to us. They just kept going.

Marcello: You mentioned that from the tea plantation you went to this school as part of an advanced party.

Brown: We went out of the mountains, down on beside of the road down in there close to Garoet somewhere. Then the Japs wanted an advance group to go in before they took the whole battalion in. So there was a Major Rogers and a Major . . . Major Rogers . . . and it seems to me like . . . you've heard of him before. I was trying to think who the other officers were. There was Lieutenant Boren that died in Burma. There were several officers, anyway. Then there were several mostly enlisted men. In the whole group, there must

have been ten or twelve of us Americans. It seems to me that there was one of the Summers boys, and then there was a guy out of the Service Battery named Donnie Williams. It seems to me that . . . Gordon, Grayton Gordon. There were several of us that went down there to that school.

Marcello: What was the name of this school?

Brown: This is the Chinese school in downtown Batavia. It was called the Koan School.

Marcello: What did you do when you got to this school?

Brown: They put us in there. They put us into . . . they had a . . . the school was built like a patio deal. You had a front yard. There was a fence across here (gesture), and then there was an open yard here (gesture), and then there was a building here (gesture). You could go up through on either side, and probably the main offices were here (gesture). When you walk into here (gesture), it was more like a patio in there. What they had was a basketball court--a concrete basketball court. Then all around this patio was classrooms, big classrooms. They must have been, oh, twenty-five foot square. They put all the Americans in one of the patios, and there were a few Australians that went down with us. Then they had the place loaded with Englishmen when we got there.

Marcello: In other words, there were quite a few people at this school?

Brown: Oh, yes. I imagine there was . . . I don't know how many, probably 400 or 500 people in there.

Marcello: As part of this advance guard, what did you do? Anything at all?

Brown: Nothing, nothing. We'd go out and work on the airport, walk out to the airport and back, and work on the airport where the Japs had bombed it. We was filling up craters.

Marcello: In other words, at this school you now had your first real contact with the Japanese.

Brown: Yes, we were prisoners.

Marcello: What were your impressions of these people?

Brown: The Japs?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: Well, really, they didn't bother us too much. They'd take us out and we'd work. They didn't start any of their rough stuff at that time. Actually, the Americans were kind of unique to those Jap soldiers. Those Jap soldiers would come in there and talk with us as much as they could with their Pidgin English. Of course, they might have been sent in there on purpose, but

they'd come in there and talk to us and look at us. We were so much bigger than they were. But the Jap soldiers that came in there, they weren't belligerent or anything. There was one that used to come in there and talk to us all the time. His name was . . . he was a comical little devil . . . his name was _____. He was from Osaka, but, of course, I never knew what happened to him. He probably got killed in the near future. They came in there.

The first rough stuff I ever heard off of them was when they got ready to send us to the Bicycle Camp. Then all the rest of the boys had been brought up. They took them down on the docks somewhere.

Marcello: I think it was on Batavia, was it not?

Brown: Yes, that was at Batavia at the docks. They worked them down there for a while at a camp there. Then they took them . . . they actually got to the Bicycle Camp before we did. They caught some hell. Now that bunch, they had a lot rougher than we did.

Marcello: What did these Japanese troops look like? In other words, did you kind of feel ashamed of yourself in having surrendered to them or anything of that nature from their outward appearance?

Brown: No. No, they were . . . well, they were straggly-looking. According to what we had been used to seeing and the type uniforms . . . their equipment wasn't near as good as ours, but it was effective. Of course, you probably know it, but hell, the Japs are some of the best fighters in the world. There're no two ways about it. You get them in a damned jungle, and they are damned good.

Marcello: Now these were frontline troops, combat troops, that you were in contact with.

Brown: Yes. They weren't bad at all. I mean, whenever they were told to do something, by God, they did it. When their superior gave them an order, they carried it out.

Marcello: What kind of food and so on did you get here at this school?

Brown: Oh, just rice and a few vegetables. Of course, they let us . . . we had money. They'd let us buy stuff, you know, a little stuff. Then you could go back to the restroom, and there was a window back there that didn't have any _____ on it. It was just barred up. These natives would run up to the back, and they would sell liquor and stuff through the window bars back there and stuff like that (chuckle). Hell, the Japanese

. . . there was rackets going on in those prison camps with the Japanese all the time. In fact, the Japs was probably in on a lot of it--the soldiers. The rackets really went on after we got up into Burma and up in there--Burma and Siam. There's where the rackets went on.

Marcello: How long were you at this girls' school altogether?

Brown: I don't know whether it was a girls' school or what. It was just the Koan Chinese School. Well, I guess we were in there a month or longer before we went up to the Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: Did you have to work especially hard at this school?

Brown: Well, they'd take us out there on the durned . . . no, we didn't work at all at the school. They'd take us out to that airport and make us clean up where they had bombed it, but actually they didn't work us too hard out there. We'd have to walk out and walk in. I don't know exactly where it was, but it must have been three or four miles from the school there. It took us about an hour to walk it.

Marcello: How long a day did you usually put in here at this airport?

Brown: Nothing out of the ordinary. We'd go after sunup and get in before sundown. I think they did it more just to occupy us than to do anything because, hell, we didn't do a whole lot when we got there.

Marcello: Did you have very much contact with the British or the Australians here at this school?

Brown: Oh, yes. We were just free to go. We just had our own rooms . . . we weren't locked in our rooms. Hell, we played basketball, mostly with the Australians. The British weren't too good at it. The Americans and the Australians were playing each other in basketball all the time. Hell, the Japs would come watch us play. Of course, the Japs like sports real good.

Marcello: Okay, so you were there about a month, and then, of course, like you mentioned, you went up into Bicycle Camp, and by the time you got there, the rest of the outfit was already in the Bicycle Camp, isn't that correct?

Brown: Yes. And when I got to the Bicycle Camp, those old boys had been catching hell down there on those docks working. They hadn't been fed worth a damn. First one thing and another, it was, well, their attitude was a helluva lot different from ours because they had

done been initiated into what we were going to be initiated into.

Marcello: In other words, you were in pretty good shape by the time you got to Bicycle Camp.

Brown: Most of them were in pretty good shape, but the attitude was different. They had come to the point that we were going to come to. They had come to the point that they knew damned well they were going to have to take care of "number one" or it was going . . . nobody else was.

Marcello: What sort of gear did you have by the time you went into Bicycle Camp?

Brown: Well, I guess I had a khaki suit, a couple of them probably, and some . . . I still had a couple of pair of shoes and blankets, a blanket or two. I didn't have a bedroll. Of course, the Army didn't issue bedrolls back in those days. I probably had a shelter half. I had some stuff just like that. I had a razor.

Marcello: In other words, the Japanese allowed you to keep most of your possessions--your personal possessions.

Brown: Oh, they didn't take them away from us. No, not me, they didn't.

Marcello: Was this a rather uneventful trip from the school into Bicycle Camp?

Brown: Yes. Really, I can't remember now whether they took over there in a truck or we marched over there. That's been a long time ago. More than likely we . . . I just don't remember.

Marcello: Describe what Bicycle Camp looked like from a physical standpoint.

Brown: Well, I imagine when the Dutch had it, it was a pretty nice camp. When you'd go in the front gate, there was a lot of trees and things. It was pretty. It would have been pretty. You'd go in there. You'd go in the gate in the front, and on your left was the guardhouse, and on your right there was a row of deals that I imagine were officers' quarters. Then right down the middle there, after you passed the guardhouse--that was the main drag down through there--on the right and left there were barracks. Well, there were two or three big rooms in each barracks. They were, I mean, big. Then on each side there was . . . it wasn't screened or anything, but it was a porch or a veranda on each side of it. I don't know how many of those huts down through there there were. There must have

been on each side . . . on one side there must have been about twelve of those barracks--six on each side. Eight to twelve of them, as well as I can remember.

Marcello: Approximately how many men did each of these barracks hold? You would have to guess, of course.

Brown: Well, in our barracks . . . I imagine we had a good 300 in our barracks. Yes, in the artillery bunch there must have been a good 300 in there. So there must have been around 2,000 to 3,000 men in that camp.

Marcello: What were the inside of the barracks like, that is, your bunking quarters, your bathing facilities, and things like that?

Brown: No bunks. You slept on the floor. You just . . . everybody had a space, and they slept on the floor.

Marcello: How about your bathing facilities and toilet facilities and things of that nature?

Brown: They had restrooms outside in between the barracks. And when they were . . . for your toilets you'd go inside this cubicle, and it was a trench. There was water running down this trench. You didn't flush a commode as such. You just used the bathroom in there and peed in the water. It'd all just run out. That's the way it worked. But it was sanitary.

Marcello: How about your bathing facilities? What were they like here at Bicycle Camp?

Brown: They had showers. They had showers. It wasn't bad. They had showers in there. I don't remember how good they were, but for a prison camp it was all right.

Marcello: Did this camp have a barbed wire fence around it or anything of that nature?

Brown: I don't know. I didn't get around the perimeter of it too much. They probably had barbed wire set around it. I don't remember. It seems to me like they put some around, across the front gate and all this. I'm sure they put it all the way around. But they had an old tabernacle deal down there where you could have concerts. They let them have concerts. We even had boxing matches there. First the Australians and the Americans fought each other. I don't know. There must have been 2,000 to 3,000 men there. I may be wrong. Of course, the sailors were all there, too, the American sailors. That's where we first ran across the USS Houston boys.

Marcello: Of course, by the time you got there--I guess to some extent--they had been taken care of by the "Lost Battalion" people that had preceded you into the camp.

Brown: Who?

Marcello: In other words, when the "Lost Battalion" people got into Bicycle Camp, the men from the Houston were already there, and they were a pretty sorry lot.

Brown: They had been through hell.

Marcello: They had been in the water for a long time. They had lost a lot of clothing and all this sort of thing.

Brown: Yes, yes.

Marcello: I gather a good many of the "Lost Battalion" boys shared with them.

Brown: Yes. Yes, that had all happened before we got there.

Marcello: I also know that very shortly after the original contingent arrived in Bicycle Camp, the Japanese demanded that they sign a document promising that they wouldn't escape. Were you there at that time?

Brown: Let me tell you about this. That happened after I got there. This is one of the silly things about being a prisoner-of-war. This is definitely silly. This is a silly thing that's happened over in Vietnam. You probably will agree with me on this. The rumor came out that we were going to have to sign a document to the effect that we would not try to escape. So the day came around. We really were going to have to sign

this. So we all got out there and lined up, and a bunch of guys said, "Hell, I ain't going to sign it. I ain't going to sign it, not going to sign it."

At first they came up to some Australians. I don't know whether you've ever been around any Australians or not. They're pretty bullheaded-like. These Jap soldiers come out through there, and they had bamboo poles about that long (gesture). They're pretty solid and about that big around (gesture). Those Australians were wearing those short britches. Have you ever seen them or pictures of them where they pull them up, and they button them up, and they come to about their knees? And then they had on their boots with their socks up to about here (gesture). The Japs told them to go over there and sign that. No, they wasn't going to do that. Those Japs started whopping them across the legs with those things. (chuckle) I said to somebody, "I'll sign that son of a bitch because if I ever get a chance to escape, what good is it anyway!" I said, "You're signing it under duress, so don't worry about it." That was my feeling about it. I wasn't about to take a licking about signing something that you was going to sign under duress.

Marcello: They threatened to cut off your rations, too, did they not?

Brown: Yes, oh, yes.

Marcello: As a matter of fact, I believe they did temporarily.

Brown: I can't remember, but if . . . I know . . . I think that--this is my idea--I think that the armed services of the United States should educate their personnel to the fact that if they are ever taken prisoner, they're supposed to sign anything that the enemy wants them to sign without any hesitation and say anything the enemy wants them to say without any hesitation and not resist them whatsoever. If you captured me, and you knew I was going to do that, what would you do? You wouldn't even bother me, would you? They should be trained to do this. In this way you'd do away with your traitors because the damned enemy wouldn't ever know who to believe in the first place. I don't see any use of a man being tortured over something like that because they tell him to say something that isn't true. What the hell difference does it make if he says it? If everybody in America knows he's going to say what they tell him to and the enemy knows he's going to say what they tell him to, hell, they won't ever bother him.

I think that they should use a psychology like this. I think it's silly as hell for a man to be punished just because he's taken prisoner, and he's got a . . . well, I would call it myself a silly and a false sense of being true to his country. Hell, he's not hurting anybody if he's swearing to a lie he's forced into. What the hell . . . why should he suffer for it?

Marcello: What sort of food did you receive in this camp?

Brown: The biggest part of it was rice, and like I say, they would let you buy a little bit of stuff if you could get hold of a little money. They did bring in some shrimp at times. Of course, they were just in the raw form whenever they brought them in and were just as rough as you could get them. They were little bitty shrimp. We got a hold of . . . I don't know whether the Japs furnished or not, but the Americans got hold of a lot of red pinto beans. Green vegetables. A little bit of this and a little bit of that. The Japs let us buy flour, and they had a bakery there. They'd let our boys go down there. They'd bake us a little loaf of bread every day there for a while. I don't know whether any of the guys ever told you that or not.

Marcello: Were the prisoners doing all the cooking?

Brown: Yes, we did our own cooking.

Marcello: I gather for a while they had a tough time making that rice to where it was actually edible. Is that correct?

Brown: You'd have a tough time with a bunch of Americans being fed like we were in getting them to eat that damned rice, anyway, to begin with (laughter).

Marcello: How much rice did you get quantity-wise for each meal?

Brown: While we were at the Bicycle Camp?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: It was ample. It was plenty. You could have all the rice you wanted because there was so damned many people that wouldn't eat much of it. You could have all you wanted. I never saw the time I didn't get all the rice I wanted. Those that ate it lived; those that didn't died.

Marcello: Generally speaking, here in Bicycle Camp nobody was really losing any weight or things of this nature. There was plenty to eat.

Brown: If they did, it was forced upon them by themselves.

Marcello: In other words, the meals were monotonous, but there was still plenty of what you had.

Brown: Oh, yes. You could live. You could live--no problem. I doubt if I lost much weight in Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: Now I gather that the officers here also had some company funds, and is it not true that from time to time that company money was used to buy food for the entire group?

Brown: I think so, yes. That's where we got our red beans and stuff. Now a lot of guys said that the officers were buying most of this stuff for themselves. You can't prove that with me. But if I'd been over there myself, and I'd got a shot at some of that damned money, and I could have bought me some extra food, I'd have took a shot at it. So I'm not going to downgrade any of them because they're human beings just like the rest of us, and if they did or they didn't, I don't know. But if you get hungry, you'll do any damned thing on earth to eat.

Marcello: What sort of work details did you have to go on here in Bicycle Camp?

Brown: We worked out there in a park. I don't know, just different type details. Sometimes, I guess that we still went to the airport some. I don't know. I can't remember, but I know we did go to the airport. Really, I never did do a helluva lot at the Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: These were voluntary work details, were they not?

Brown: Yes, they were. They didn't have enough work for everybody, really. Of course, I didn't give a damn. I went out a few times, but I didn't give a damn whether I worked or not.

Marcello: I gather that the Japanese didn't work you too hard on these details.

Brown: No. They were getting a little more stricter and rougher, but as far as being bad they weren't. They were doing things to heckle us and harass us, but actual brutal treatment--not a lot of it.

Marcello: In general how would you describe the treatment the Japanese dealt out to the prisoners here in Bicycle Camp?

Brown: They had some trouble with the Japs here. I heard a tale about one guy who did something, and the Japs took him in, and they tied his fingers together with pencils between his fingers and twisted them. Stuff like that. One of our doctors or one of the doctors in the camp--I don't know whether it was an Australian or an American--went to the Jap officer and talked about it, and he said he was against that stuff or so-and-so. I don't know whether he was putting out

a bunch of bull or what, but . . . I don't know whether this is even true or not. I didn't see it.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what form would the physical punishment take that the Japanese did deal out here in this camp? Would it be hitting, slapping, gun butts?

Brown: Yes, but . . . no, I didn't see any gun butts. They'd slap you if you didn't salute them, so, hell, we saluted them.

Marcello: What were some of the other rules that the Japanese laid down for the prisoners? You've already mentioned one of them here--the fact that you had to salute all of the Japanese soldiers.

Brown: Yes, you had to salute all soldiers. Well, hell everytime you passed . . . I don't know. Nothing much. We had to have a man stand out at the end of the hut. We called it a hut. There'd be a guy who'd have to stand out there during the day, and everytime a Japanese soldier would come by, he had to holler, "Ki o tsukete!" there for a while, and everybody inside the hut would have to stand at attention till he went by. Then he'd holler, "Yasumi!" That's "rest." Ki o tsukete is "attention." You'd have to jump to attention.They'd watch you. If you didn't do it, they might come over

there and slap you around a little bit, but they didn't . . .

Marcello: Now at Bicycle Camp were these frontline troops or were these rear echelon people?

Brown: I don't know. They were Japanese, though. They were not Koreans. We didn't run into the Koreans until we got into Burma as well as I can remember.

Marcello: What did you do in your spare time here at Bicycle Camp?

Brown: Oh, mostly just sit around and shoot the bull. There wasn't anything else to do.

Marcello: What was the general topic of conversation when you sat around and shot the bull?

Brown: I imagine we talked about T-bone steaks and then women (chuckle). First, one thing and another like that. What would you talk about?

Marcello: I would assume food as much as anything.

Brown: Yes, food (chuckle). Yes. I guarantee you that when you get hungry enough, you don't think about the women.

Marcello: Well, this is what every single prisoner has told me. In other words, the thing that was constantly on everybody's mind all the time was food.

Brown: It sure was.

Marcello: There was no exceptions.

Brown: It wasn't so bad here as it was later on because we went through some rough times.

Marcello: What sort of recreation were you able to get involved in here at Bicycle Camp?

Brown: We had volleyball, basketball, and then we had some boxing, and then they'd put on these concerts. Those Australians did it. They'd put on singing acts and all kinds of stuff. It wasn't bad, really. I mean, considering we were prisoners-of-war, we had a lot to do.

Marcello: I gather that if you had been able to stay at Bicycle Camp for the duration of the war, being a prisoner wouldn't have been too bad.

Brown: I wouldn't think so. I don't know what a lot of people expect to get out of being a prisoner, but they shouldn't expect much, really, I don't think.

Marcello: What were the medical facilities like here at Bicycle Camp?

Brown: Well, we had our doctors. Of course, we had Dr. Lumpkin. He died up in the jungle, but . . . really, they were just like most physicians. They had very little medicine. If you got a scratch on your hand, they had some of that purple stuff to put on them. Of course,

they didn't have any iodine, but you could get hold of aspirins. For the fever, if you got fever, you could get quinine.

Marcello: When you say fever, you're speaking of malaria, of course.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Was there a whole lot of this in Bicycle Camp?

Brown: No.

Marcello: I didn't think so. It was a relatively healthful camp, was it not?

Brown: Yes, it was. We hadn't been prisoners long. We stayed there approximately from March till October.

Marcello: I think it was October of 1942.

Brown: Yes, March till October. That's six, seven, eight months, you see.

Marcello: Well, anyhow, what happened then in October of 1942 was that the Japanese decided to move you out of Bicycle Camp.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Is this when the "Lost Battalion" got separated? Is this when the E Battery was cut off?

Brown: No, no. When we left Singosari, the Headquarters Battery and F Battery and D Battery went to the west end of the island. E Battery stayed back at Surabaja and Malang. They didn't go with us. This is when we got cut off.

Marcello: I see. In other words, E Battery never was in Bicycle Camp at all.

Brown: No.

Marcello: They went from Surabaja right over to Japan.

Brown: No, no. They went from Surabaja to Singapore. Now I don't know whether they came up the island and left from Batavia or whether they left Surabaja and went up to Singapore. We went to Singapore, and while we were at Singapore, E Battery came through there. Then they went on to Japan from there.

Marcello: I wanted to get that straight mainly because I really haven't interviewed too many of those people who were in E Battery at this time yet.

Brown: This is what happened. Now whether they left from either Surabaja or Batavia, that doesn't make any difference. We left in October and went to Singapore; we stayed there approximately three months. Then they came through there and stayed there anywhere from two weeks to a month while we were at Singapore, and we visited with them. They let them visit with us. The Japs did. They could come up where we were, and we'd go back where they were. They let us do this. We were at the Changi Village. Then they left and went on to Japan before we left Singapore.

Marcello: Now you had been getting used to Bicycle Camp, and life wasn't too bad there. Now all of the sudden you were uprooted, and you had to leave. Was this a rather unsettling experience?

Brown: Well, I don't remember it as such. I can remember that we were probably . . . didn't know what to anticipate here. We didn't know where we were going for sure. We were thinking of Singapore. They took us down, and they put us on this Dai Nichi Maru. Then it took us four or five or six days to get up to Singapore. It wasn't any speed boat itself.

Marcello: What sort of a trip was this? Can you describe what it was like?

Brown: It was a hellish trip!

Marcello: In what way?

Brown: We stayed down below the top deck, and they had these shelves that were about this high (gesture).

Marcello: That's about four feet high maybe?

Brown: Three to four foot high. You'd get down in under there and sleep or up here and sleep (gesture), and it was dirty and dusty and filthy!

Marcello: In other words, they had actually subdivided this deck. Is that correct?

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: It had been a rather deep deck, and they simply had subdivided it.

Brown: Yes, and it was hot as hell down in there! You had to stay down in there at night. They'd let you out on deck during the daytime.

Marcello: Were you packed tightly down in the hold?

Brown: Yes. We just didn't have any room at all down in there. Hell, it was hell. It was hot and you was just right up against the next man on either side of you, and it was dirty as hell, and we were on this ship for those several days. I don't remember exactly how long. You may know more about that than I do. I'd say five days. It might not have been but two or three days. It seemed like a month. We'd get out on deck during the day, but at night they'd make you get down below decks.

Marcello: What was the food like on board this ship?

Brown: It was dirty. The toilets--they just build sheds out over the edge of the boat, and you just crapped in the sea.

Marcello: In other words, this is when you <u>really</u> knew that you were a prisoner-of-war. Isn't that correct?

Brown: You bet! They even gave us some meat in our stew that went with our rice, and the meat was green, but we ate it (chuckle).

Marcello: By that time you were getting pretty hungry.

Brown: Yes. One of the funniest things that happened to me . . . the Japs over on one side of the ship, they had kind of a galley for themselves there, and they had a barrel there, and they had a steam line running into it, and they made tea in this barrel. This little Jap had a mouth full of gold teeth. He'd have this tea going there. Hell, we couldn't get but just a little bit of water, and it had salt in it--just a little bit of water every day. I had a cup that was made out of a number three can that probably had some fruit in it. An Australian had made it. He'd put a good handle on it and everything. It was a big cup. So this Jap left his tea barrel one day, and those prisoners all run over there, and they was dipping in and getting tea, and I was there and they got me boxed out. I was the last one, and I come up with a cup of tea, and here's that damned Jap looking at me right in the face with a damned hook in his hand. I mean, it looked like a hay hook. That's what he had in his hand. And he looked at me,

and I looked at him and kind of grinned, and he laughed, too, and he said, "Go on." I went over there, and I was about to die for something to drink, and that damned stuff was so hot. It was strong tea, and it was so hot it was pitiful. But I sat there and drank that whole damned thing, and I nearly burnt myself. But I learned something that day. You can take a cup of hot, strong tea without anything in it and drink it, and, buddy, you won't get thirsty. Did you know that?

Marcello: No, I sure didn't.

Brown: You'd take it just hot as hell and drink it. It don't make any difference if it's 105 degrees, but you can drink that, and you won't be half as thirsty if you took a glass of twice that much ice water. I found that out that day. That Jap was looking at me. I thought he was going to hook me for sure, but he just grinned and said, "Go on."

Marcello: So anyhow, you finally landed in Singapore. You were sent to Changi Village, which was virtually right next door to Singapore.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: You can't tell where one begins and the other ends.

Brown: Well, really it's down on one end of the island. It's really a village. Then there's a lot of barracks in there around it. It's the area that the British soldier lived in.

Marcello: Describe what Changi Village was like--the prison camp.

Brown: Well, it had real big tropical-type barracks. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: They were three stories high, and they had these big verandas on them. Of course, there was no bunks or anything in them. They had red tile roofs. I imagine when the British had it, it was a real good duty there. It was nice. The roads were all paved, and there were a lot of palm trees. That's just about all there is to it.

Marcello: Now this was a much larger camp than Bicycle Camp, was it not?

Brown: Oh, yes. It was spread out all over the place. We had work parties there. We stayed there three months.

Marcello: How did the toilet and shower and bathing facilities on Changi compare with what they had been in Bicycle Camp?

Brown: They were a little better. They were a little better,

I thought. Now some of the guys might not have, but both camps were all right.

Marcello: Generally speaking, however, I get the impression from most of the prisoners that I have interviewed that Changi wasn't the happiest place in the world. Apparently, the British soldiers that were there were a pretty demoralized bunch. Is this correct?

Brown: No. The British soldiers in my estimation didn't know that they were prisoners. What those British officers were trying to do inside a prison camp was set up a government of their own. Did you see the Bridge Over the River Kwai?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: Did you see how those English officers were there?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: And the control they tried to have over their men and everything? They tried to do this with us, but our officers--soon as we were taken prisoners--they said all saluting would stop, and there would be no distinction from there on, really. Of course, the Japs separated us, but we didn't go to the trouble to salute or anything after we were taken prisoner. But the British officers . . . when we first got there, we'd be walking down the

road, and these British officers would come by, and, boy, they had those insignia on! They'd have the works on, and, boy, they'd be insulted if you didn't salute them! Hell, we wouldn't salute them. They'd come to our officers, and our officers would just say, "Well, that's too damned bad." They'd tell us that we couldn't go down there and get in their damned fruit and stuff. Do you think we'd listen to them? Shoot!

Marcello: (chuckle) Did you have any trouble with them over the king's coconuts?

Brown: No, not exactly. Some of my friends did. I never will forget that (chuckle). This guy I was talking about, Dempsey Key, him and some more guys went out, and they couldn't climb those damned trees. So they took the cookhouse's ax, and they cut the damned coconut tree down and got the coconuts. I don't know how many they got.

Anyway, the British even had MP's in there, and they got after them, and they left the ax down there. So the next day they came up there when we was going to have muster . . . everyday we'd have to have muster and turn our count in to the Japs, and we was all up there, and they made us open ranks. These British officers--one or two of them and some MP's--come through there,

and they looked at everybody trying to see if they could recognize anybody. It seems like that Lieutenant Keithley was out there that day. They started to leave . . . they couldn't recognize anybody. When they started to leave, old Dempsey stuck his head out--I think it was Dempsey--he said, "Lieutenant, did you get our ax back?" And he said, "Get the hell back in line!" (Laughter) Those Englishmen didn't want to recognize us.

Marcello: I gather that relations between the British and the Americans was not exactly too friendly there at Changi.

Brown: Not the British. We were in pretty good . . . the Scotch and the Americans were real good--the Scotchmen there. The _____Highlanders--they were there. Our relations with the _____Highlanders were real good, but they're a different type person from your regular Britisher.

Marcello: What sort of food were you receiving at Changi?

Brown: Not too good, not too good.

Marcello: In what sense?

Brown: Well, we didn't get as much, and then there had been some Red Cross ships brought into Singapore, and the Red Cross stuff that had been received before we got

there, the British decided that . . . they told us it had already been divided, and we didn't have any coming. And 99 per cent of the stuff--I'd say 100 per cent of it--was all American goods, but the British wasn't going to give us any of it. So we got around some places where they had some of this sweet cream and different canned goods, and we'd just steal it.

Marcello: Was this when you got on the work details that you did this?

Brown: Yes. And the damned British would call for work details and want us to do work for them, too. I guess you've heard this before. Of course, then the Japs, when they'd take us out, well, they'd put us on work detail for their stuff, but mostly what we did for them was . . . they was planting a garden down there. Hell, we didn't really do any work there at Changi Village.

Marcello: Did you ever receive any of the food that was grown in this garden?

Brown: No, because we didn't have a chance. If it ever grew, I don't know it.

Marcello: By this time had the prisoners resorted to eating dogs and cats and things of that nature yet?

Brown: No, no, no.

Marcello: How was the quality of rice in this particular camp?

Brown: I guess it was as good as anywhere. I don't remember for sure. I know that once in awhile . . . the Japs didn't especially like mutton, and once they brought two or three carcasses of mutton up there to us. Most of the Americans had never eaten any mutton, and they didn't like it too good. I got all the mutton I wanted. They wouldn't eat it. Of course, hell, our cooks didn't know how to cook it. It really wasn't too good.

Marcello: Now by this time were you able to still purchase things from the native traders or anything of this sort?

Brown: Not in this camp, but they did have a canteen in there. You could go down and buy certain things, but the British ran this canteen. But I don't remember that it was overly high. They wouldn't charge us anymore than they would their soldiers.

Marcello: What sort of treatment did you receive at the hands of the Japanese here? In other words, I'm trying to compare it with the treatment you got at Bicycle Camp.

Brown: We didn't have that much contact with the Japanese here. Just like I was trying to tell you, the damned British tried to have a government inside a government there, if you know what I mean.

Marcello: In other words, the Japanese probably . . .

Brown: We were guarded a lot by Sikhs here. We had a lot of Sikh guards that had been in the British army. The Japs were trying to . . . their idea was . . . their propaganda was "Asia for the Asiatic," so they were letting these Sikhs guard us.

Marcello: They'd probably promised the Sikhs that India would be free.

Brown: Yes. They wasn't going to give them nothing but a bayonet if they didn't do what they told them to. I imagine that the Sikhs really didn't have a helluva lot of choice. They had to get out there. Oh, they carried rifles, but, hell, they probably had ten rifles on them while they was carrying that rifle. I don't know that the Sikhs were good or bad. I don't know that much about the Indians. I do know that they say the Gurkhas was the only good Indian there was.

Marcello: In other words, you did not have very much contact at all with the Japanese here, and as a result, there was really no physical punishment of any note that took place here.

Brown: Not a helluva lot that I know of, no.

Marcello: In general, were the work details voluntary here, also?

Brown: I don't remember whether I was told to go out here or not. I don't think . . . it didn't make much difference. We didn't do much when we went out. We just dug in the ground and planted those old "Garoet roots." We called them that or "Hairy Marys," we called them. They were sort of a starchy-type root. When you'd dig them up, they'd look like they had hair on them. I guess it was little roots growing. We called them "Hairy Marys." They weren't as good as potatoes (laughter).

Marcello: Well, you really weren't at Changi too long because in January of 1943 you were shipped out of Changi once again, put on board ship, and your ultimate destination was Moulmein. You went by railroad up the coast for a little way to George Town, I think.

Brown: Yes. To Penang Island, yes.

Marcello: Penang Island?

Brown: That's at George Town.

Marcello: Then you boarded the ship. Here again, was this an unsettling experience to have to leave Changi, or were you anxious to leave?

Brown: No, it wasn't. Well, we didn't know . . . really, you just didn't know what you were getting into or what we

were going up there for or anything. We knew they were moving us to work us. We knew this.

Marcello: I gather that most of the prisoners were kind of happy to get out of Changi. Most of them didn't seem to like it too much.

Brown: It wasn't too good there. The atmosphere wasn't too good.

Marcello: I think this is the general opinion of most of the prisoners. The British apparently were a real sorry lot here at Changi, like you've mentioned.

Brown: Yes. They was trying to . . . they just didn't know they were prisoners. This was the whole idea. They thought that they still were running that place instead of the Japanese, really. This was what they thought.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened on the trip up the coast to George Town?

Brown: No. We went across the causeway. They had built a causeway--the British did--back off of Singapore Island over to the mainland, over to the peninsula. Then, of course, we went through Kuala Lumpur. They had a big railway station there. Evidently, that's a pretty nice city. Then we went on over to Penang in George Town and got on the ship there. Now what was the name of that ship?

Marcello: I can't recall what the name of that ship was, but it was while you were on this vessel, which was part of a convoy . . . I think there were at least three ships and possibly more.

Brown: There was two ships and a corvette.

Marcello: It was on this trip between George Town and Moulmein that, of course, you experienced the air raid.

Brown: Yes, on January 15, 1943.

Marcello: You remember that date rather vividly, do you not?

Brown: (chuckle) Yes. I sure do.

Marcello: Before we talk about the actual air attack, let's talk a little bit about the ship itself. How did it compare with the ship that took you from Bicycle Camp to Changi?

Brown: I believe it was a little better. It was a little better. It wasn't good, but it was a little better. It wasn't quite as dirty, I don't think. Really, I don't think it was quite as hot. I don't remember about the food too much, but it wasn't too bad.

Marcello: Anyhow, like you mentioned, it was on January 15, 1943, that you came under this air attack. Describe it as best you can.

Brown: We were sitting out on the deck that day, and I guess it was close to mid-day. I don't know the exact time

of the day. It was about mid-day or maybe one o'clock or two. We were sitting out there talking, and somebody . . . we were . . . the corvette was first, and then there was the ship in front of us, and then we were last, and the ship in front of us was loaded with Dutch. Then the Americans and the Australians and the English were back here. That day we were sitting out on the deck. I heard a Jap up on lookout holler, "Hi Koki!" That's the Japanese work for aircraft, airplane. I looked up and there was a B-24 just as straight over the top of us as he could be. Well, I knew it was a B-24 as soon as I saw it. It was about 10,000 foot, I would guess. I knew it wasn't after us. If it was, the bombs would have been blowing us out of the water then. He was making a run on the ship up in front of us.

The Japs started . . . the guards all came out and ran us down below the deck. Before I went down, I was looking up there at that ship in front of us, and right down the port side, the left side of it, there was a stick of bombs that hit. I knew they were after us. Well, when I got down in the hold, I got right below the opening, and I was looking up. In fact,

Captain Cates was laying right over here (gesture), right close to me. I got to looking up, and I looked up, and there was one coming in (gesture) right this way, from the right side of the ship, coming right at mid-ships, this way. I kept watching that damned thing. I was looking straight up and those bombs started. I could hear them whistling. Man, when they hit that water, they straddled us with a stick of bombs! It just rattled the heck out of that ship and everything else!

I can't remember whether they made more than one run or not. I think, see, they made . . . what they were doing was that they'd been out raiding out there in the Bay of Bengal. Not that we knew it at the time, but they had tore the devil out of another Jap convoy up ahead of us. I think these boys were just using the last of their bombs, or they'd have sunk everything we had. Well, anyway, when it was all over, they left then. They sunk the ship in front of us in fifteen minutes. You had about 1,000 Dutch prisoners on it.

Marcello: There was some Japanese soldiers on that ship, too, weren't there?

Brown: Oh, yes. There were Japanese technicians. The funny thing about it was that we stayed around there and

picked up survivors until dark. Those Japs kept looking, and we had Dutch soldiers all over that thing, and the best we could figure there was about thirty Dutchmen lost. But that bomb hit right in the hold with all these technicians, these Jap technicians, and it must have killed 300 or 400 of them because they looked and looked and looked.

I saw a good Jap that day. I saw one come on up the gangplank. They picked him up out of the water, but he wasn't the good one. The one that was hanging over his shoulder was the good one. He had the back of his head blown off (chuckle). That isn't any lie. It wasn't completely off. It was just up there and then hanging on. (chuckle) I told somebody that day, I said, "There's a good Jap right there."

Marcello: What was the reaction of the Japanese toward the prisoners after the attack took place?

Brown: Really . . .

Marcello: Or even during the attack.

Brown: Well, they made us get down below the deck. But when they started to bring the survivors on, I was up on the deck then. I think they let us come back up. Of course, they couldn't put everybody down below deck, see,

because they had all those Dutchmen coming on and the very few Japs. In fact, it killed most of the Japs on that ship. They looked around there till dark. After dark we went on--this corvette and this ship we were on. The Dai Nichi Maru.

Marcello: Now the Dai Nichi Maru was the one that took you from Bicycle Camp over to Changi Village.

Brown: Yes. But now what I was trying to think about was that ship's name. Anyway, that night--way in the night--I woke up. I could hear these Japs yelling. They'd gotten in this area where the big raid had taken place. I don't know how bad it was, but they were yelling at another ship over there, and you could see some of the superstructure still red hot where it had been burning even late that night. I'm sure that those planes had caught us after they had hit that thing because those ships were still there and looking for survivors way in the night. So we went on into . . .

Marcello: Moulmein.

Brown: Moulmein in the bay there, Moulmein, which is a real shallow bay. We went in there the next morning and sat there all day long waiting for that tide to come in. While we were there, everybody was nervous as the

devil that day. There was all those Dutchmen . . . and there was a plane that came across there. It just startled everybody. It was a Jap plane--a two-motored plane. I don't think it was even a bomber, but anyway, it came across there, and there was five Dutchmen who jumped overboard (chuckle). They had to fish them out (chuckle). But that afternoon, whenever the tide got in, they took us into town up a little old river of a thing. We just pulled us up that old . . . it wasn't even a regular ship dock. We got out there. They had a gangplank. We got off and they took us into the Moulmein Prison.

Marcello: You were in a common prison here in Moulmein for that night. Is that correct?

Brown: We were there for more than a night, I think. We were there for two or three days.

Marcello: Is that right?

Brown: Yes. This was the Moulmein Prison. It was actually a . . . well, you could call it a small penitentary.

Marcello: It was for common criminals, was it not?

Brown: Yes, that's what it was for originally.

Marcello: What was it like? Describe it from a physical standpoint.

Brown: It was a red brick outfit. It had a wall all the way around it. As well as I can remember, it was red brick. Inside it had cells, but they didn't lock us in it. They just kept us inside the walls, and we stayed inside the prison part. It wasn't real big, but that's where we found out where some of the parties that had left Singapore ahead of us had gone because they had their names written on the wall. We knew that some of our outfit had come into Burma then. See, we were told that we were going to Rangoon, but when this deal came off, they took into Moulmein because it was closer. Then from there--we stayed there a few days--and then we went down to the base camp of the railroad.

Marcello: Now this was at Thanbyuzayat, isn't that correct?

Brown: Thanbyuzayat. That was Kilo 0.

Marcello: Now you didn't stay there too long.

Brown: No, we just passed through there. We went to 18 Kilo direct.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, it was a base camp, and I think they had a hospital there, and it was kind of like a supply depot, too, I think, which fed all of the camps back up in the jungle.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Did you perchance happen to have any contact with Colonel Nagatomo here?

Brown: No. We went directly to . . . we didn't stay at Thanbyuzayat.

Marcello: You went right to the 18 Kilo Camp?

Brown: Yes, 18 Kilo.

Marcello: In other words, you didn't stay at Thanbyuzayat over night.

Brown: No, no, not that I remember. We went directly to 18 Kilo.

Marcello: Did the Japanese give you any pep talk at this time about the glorious work that you were going to be doing or anything of this nature?

Brown: Oh, they could have. They were always doing some of that stuff. That's the type of talk they gave to their own soldiers.

Marcello: How did you get to the 18 Kilo Camp?

Brown: I can't remember whether . . . I guess they carried us down there in a truck.

Marcello: What did it look like. Describe it from a physical standpoint.

Brown: It was bamboo huts. These were built with bamboo frames. They had what we called an atap roof. Have

you ever heard of them? Did they tell you how they make an atap shingle? Take a strip of bamboo, and then they take these leaves and bend them around, and then they weave them in there with a bamboo thread where they stripped it off. And they'd make these. These make real good roofs if you put them . . . each shingle, see, is about that wide (gesture), and if you put them . . .

Marcello: About how wide are they? About a foot wide?

Brown: They're about that wide (gesture) to that wide (gesture), and they usually built them about that long (gesture).

Marcello: They're about a foot wide and about three feet long.

Brown: About three, yes. They took this bamboo leaf or these different type leaves, but these are thin leaves--bamboo leaves, I believe--and they got them to dry and cure out. But they take them, I guess, while they're fairly green. They take this piece, strip of bamboo that's about so wide (gesture), and they just take the leaf in half and hold it down over this way (gesture). They get over it and then they weave this thread through down here (gesture). It just makes a shingle. Then they start down here at the bottom, and they lay a row of them, and then they come up over with another row and then just keep going right on up.

Marcello: Are those atap roofs fairly waterproof even in the monsoon season?

Brown: Yes, if you put them thick enough. They're a good roof. That's what all the people use over there.

Marcello: The 18 Kilo Camp was already built when you got there, isn't this correct?

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: What were some of the other buildings in this camp besides the barracks?

Brown: Well mostly, as well as I can remember, it was barracks, and, of course, the Japs had their quarters which was always better than ours. The way ours were built, they would have a gable roof and then sides down this way (gesture), and then it'd be open. They'd have a deck inside on each side, and you would walk on a dirt aisle down the middle, and there would be a deck over here (gesture) and a deck over there (gesture), and you have a certain space here (gesture). Then up behind me, if you stood up on the deck, maybe it'd come up about that high (gesture), and then it'd be open on up there to the roof, see. Of course, it wasn't cold.

Marcello: In other words, each deck was probably around three feet high, and it was kind of like a raised aisle on each side of the path.

Brown: Yes, down the middle where you walked on the dirt.

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: Then on each side . . .

Marcello: It was a platform, in other words.

Brown: Yes, and the platform was built out of bamboo. They'd take these round sticks about that long (gesture), and then they'd cut them in half. It was pretty rigid to sleep on. Of course, you got used to it. We had these pile-type mats and stuff that we'd throw on it. Some of us still had blankets. I finally ended up without any. I don't even know what happened to it.

Marcello: But generally speaking, you still had most of your possessions at this time yet.

Brown: Well, yes. We had . . . no, I'd done run out of shoes, I think, or I ran out of them shortly thereafter.

Marcello: I'm sure that nothing lasted too long once you got up into that jungle.

Brown: No, it was rotten up there. When we got there, it was during the dry season, and when it's dry, it's dry. And when it's wet in Burma, it's wet. It just goes from one extreme . . . you walk down those roads, and there'd be dust that deep in them (gesture). But when it gets wet, there's mud that deep (gesture).

Marcello: I suppose that it was at the 18 Kilo Camp when you ran into your Korean guards for the first time.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: What were they like?

Brown: Korean people, I don't know. I've always said when they had the Korean War, they should have put the Chinese on one end and the Americans on the other and let them North and South Koreans fight each other till they killed each other. I said, "They wasn't either one of them worth a dang." Now you talk about a sorry people, they're sorry!

Marcello: In what way?

Brown: They don't even like each other. This is true. They don't even like . . . they don't like anybody. They don't even like each other. They fight among themselves, hardheaded. They're not like a Jap. You can hit a Jap on the head and knock him out, but don't try that with a Korean. He's different. He is definitely different from a Jap.

Marcello: I gather these were very, very cruel people so far as their attitudes towards the prisoners were concerned.

Brown: Yes. I've seen them . . . oh, they don't even like each other. I've seen them take a dog and punch him

with a bayonet just to watch him howl. They would sit out and punch on trees with a bayonet--just anything, just playing around. Really, the Japanese didn't even consider them as a soldier, I don't think.

Marcello: What were some of the types of harassment that you saw these Korean guards perform upon the American prisoners? What forms would this harassment usually take?

Brown: Oh, they just push you and want you to work. I never had a Jap or Korean ever slap me. I had one slap at me one time. I just threw my head back, and he missed me, and he went on.

Marcello: What were some of the more unusual forms of punishment that you saw here while you were working in these various kilo camps?

Brown: The worst one I saw . . . I don't know what they had him for. They had an Australian. We'd come in from work one afternoon late there on . . . we were at 80 Kilo, I believe. The Japs kind of had their guard-house up on a hill--their quarters where they stayed. It wasn't the main gate guardhouse. But they had their quarters where they stayed--the Koreans. They had this Australian up there. He had done something. There was a ring of them around him. I've never seen a

man take much worse of a beating. They'd run up and hit him with their fists and knock him down. Some of them would have six and eight-foot one-by-fours in their hand. He'd be standing there, and there'd be one of them coming up front to get his attention, and this other one would hit him across the back and kidneys with this board edgewise. They liked to beat that man to death. We had one of our boys that they took up there and did that way--an American. This was an Australian. I saw them do it.

Marcello: Who was the American that they took up there?

Brown: Zip Zummo. Have you ever heard about him?

Marcello: Yes, I sure have. Would you describe what happened to him?

Brown: I didn't see it, but I saw him after it was over with.

Marcello: What did he look like?

Brown: His face was all swelled up. His eyes were black. His lips were cut and swelled up. I didn't see his body, but I'm sure he was black and blue all over. He was always a pretty good talker, but he didn't talk much after that. He was always trying to work something out, some extra food and stuff, out of these Japs. He made a statement to a Jap one day out on a

work party, and Zip really didn't mean it the way the Jap took it, but the Jap reported it. What he did--this Jap had some stuff--and he told that Jap, "Why don't you give me some of that." He said, "If you were the prisoner, and I was a guard, I'd give you some." He said the wrong thing. Even the idea of that Jap ever being a prisoner, to him, was something that you just didn't say or think about. So they took him in that afternoon and worked him over.

Marcello: For a while there, I think some of the prisoners . . .

Brown: Is this the story you've heard?

Marcello: Yes. For a while there, I think, some of the prisoners even suspected that Zummo was collaborating in some way with the Japanese, but this was never true, was it?

Brown: No, it wasn't true. He was trying to get extra food. He just thought he was smart enough that he could work it out of them, and I think he did it for a while, a little bit here and there. He got a little extra food when they was out on working parties, but he just opened his big mouth once too often, and he got worked over.

Marcello: Were you present the time in the barracks when Zummo got into the fight with the prisoner?

Brown: What prisoner?

Marcello: I don't recall what his name was, but Zummo was apparently coming back from somewhere, and when he entered the barracks, this prisoner said, "Ki o tsukete." And Zummo apparently took it the wrong way, thinking that . . .

Brown: Well, he probably meant it that way.

Marcello: . . . this prisoner was accusing him of being some sort of a collaborator, and Zummo apparently turned around and really worked this guy over, apparently broke his nose something bad. I don't know if you were present when this happened.

Brown: I can tell you several people that it wasn't. I don't know who it was, but I can tell you several people that it wasn't because he wouldn't have tackled them. He'd been an amateur boxer, but he wouldn't have tackled them (chuckle).

Marcello: He apparently worked this guy over pretty well.

Brown: No, I wasn't there. I didn't see that.

Marcello: Anyway, what sort of work were you engaged in here at 18 Kilo Camp?

Brown: We were doing the cuts for the railroad. We were digging a cut, and we were supposed . . . at the time,

most of the time, it figured out when we . . . when we started out, I think they said we'd move a half of a cubic kilo of dirt a day. Then they finally got it up to a cubic kilo. Then they got pretty smart, and they told us when we got through with the kilo we could go in. We got through about two o'clock one afternoon, and they let us go in, but the next day they said we had to do a kilo and a half. So then we started . . . we found out we had to slow down, and we did.

Marcello: What sort of tools did you have to make these cuts?

Brown: Well, they weren't bad. They were shovels and grubbing hoes.

Marcello: They weren't bad, but it was nothing mechanized.

Brown: No, but I mean they were good handtools. Really, they were. Of course, that's all the Jap knew.

Marcello: Now generally speaking, here at the 18 Kilo Camp you were working through relatively flat country. It wasn't too bad here.

Brown: Well, yes. We were making a cut at this time, and it was a pretty good cut, too. I mean, we were hauling that dirt . . . what we'd do, we'd dig it. Some of us would dig for a while. We'd swap out. We'd dig for a while, and then the others would shovel, and

then there'd be two of us that would have two bamboo poles with a bag tied between them. We'd fill that thing up with dirt, and it'd pull the handles together. We'd put it on our shoulders, and we'd run about twelve foot up this bank. I mean, you had run up to make any time to keep from . . . if you tried to walk up it, it was too hard. Then we'd dump it and come back down and carry another load.

Marcello: Who usually supervised these work details?

Brown: They were called kumis. We had an officer. One of our officers was in charge of each kumi of enlisted men. I don't remember--ten or twelve men to a kumi, eight or nine. Then there would be Jap soldiers out there.

Marcello: Did the officer more or less try and act as a go-between with the Japanese?

Brown: Yes, he sure did.

Marcello: I understand that from time to time the officers were rather successful in preventing prisoners from being beaten and so on by these Korean guards.

Brown: Yes, they did pretty good.

Marcello: I know that in most of these camps the officers . . .

Brown: We didn't have a whole lot of beatings at that time at the 18 Kilo. There were some beatings that took

place, but . . . I tell you what. When you're in a place like that, the least you can have to do with that man over there, the better off you are. If you don't have to, don't even talk to him. Don't even stay around him.

Marcello: In other words, you tried to avoid those Korean guards as much as possible.

Brown: Yes. You bet! You bet! You bet!

Marcello: Was there very much resentment over the fact that the officers did not have to work?

Brown: I don't . . . I guess there was. I didn't resent it. There wasn't no use me resenting it. It wasn't making any more work for me. I didn't actually resent it that I remember.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how tough was the work here at the 18 Kilo Camp?

Brown: We were still in pretty good physical condition. Once we learned that the more we did the more they'd expect, well, we kind of paced it. It wasn't too bad. The only thing was we were running out of everything. People started getting sick there. I came down with dysentery there.

Marcello: Was this the thing that usually hit most people beginning at the 18 Kilo Camp--dysentery and malaria?

Brown: Yes, dysentery and malaria.

Marcello: What was the food like here at the 18 Kilo Camp?

Brown: It was about like it was . . . it was just old stew and rice. That was all. No meat and maybe a little pork once in awhile.

Marcello: How did your rations compare with those that the Japanese or the Koreans were receiving?

Brown: Theirs was better than ours--much better. That's to be expected, I think, especially with that type of people.

Marcello: I assume that there were no fences or anything of this nature around these camps because there was no place to escape to.

Brown: There's no place to go, really.

Marcello: How long did you remain at the 18 Kilo Camp altogether?

Brown: I would say a couple of months, not too long.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, this was the dry season. You probably had fairly good working conditions on the job so far as weather was concerned, and you were in fairly good physical shape.

Brown: The only thing wrong with it was they started coming

down with this dysentery. That was the worst thing at this time.

Marcello: Was there any particular type of medication that Dr. Lumpkin could give you for dysentery? Obviously, you didn't have very much medicine.

Brown: No. Somebody got a hold of . . . of course, we were eating charcoal--you know about that--making it out of rice. Just before I left there . . . I was sick when they left the 18 Kilo Camp. There was a bunch of us that had been sick. They sent this other bunch on to the 80 Kilo. The bunch we were with, there was a few of us that were sick, and they sent . . . we stayed on there a day or two. Then they said they was going to put the sick people in a truck and take them down to 30 Kilo. You heard of this before?

Marcello: No, I sure haven't.

Brown: When it was a day or two later, they put us on our feet, and we walked that twelve kilos to 30 Kilo (chuckle).

Marcello: Incidentally, while you had dysentery did you still have to go out on the work details?

Brown: No.

Marcello: You must have had dysentery pretty bad because it took a pretty sick person not to have to go on a work detail.

Brown: I did! I know it. I had it bad when it finally hit me. I was going . . . I'd meet myself going and coming back day and night. I like to have passed out one night coming out of the thing. This Jap guard was out there, and I was sitting down like this (gesture). The Jap guard come up and punched me. He looked at me and he said, "_____?" And I said, "No." He didn't bother me. I was out close to the latrine. He didn't bother me at all. Boy, I was dizzy! I nearly passed out.

Marcello: How long were you down at the 30 Kilo Camp altogether? Was it the 30 Kilo Camp?

Brown: Yes. I was down there probably a month. I don't know. Not too long.

Marcello: Was this mainly a rest and recuperation camp?

Brown: No, they were working there, but I didn't do any work there. Then I got up in pretty good shape. What I started to tell you, just before we left the 18 Kilo Camp, somebody come in with a big bag of bismuth. They started giving us a spoon of that and some water. That would really ease your stomach pains. With that stuff you have terrible cramps, just like when you get this flu now--this bug. We had those things all the time

with that. That bismuth really would help you. Then I got in pretty good shape. I never did get over the dysentery from that day until the day I was liberated. About the time I was liberated I got over it completely.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were at the 30 Kilo Camp for about a month then. You had mainly light duty here. What sort of duty did you have?

Brown: I didn't do hardly anything. I mean, I'd been there about a week or two. I just don't remember. I can remember that this was an Australian camp. The old boys had things pretty well under control there. They were a working camp. The natives were bringing in fresh tomatoes and quite a few fresh vegetables and selling it to the prisoners there. The Japs were letting them bring them in. They were bringing fresh onions and things like that.

Marcello: Now would the prisoners usually buy this produce on an individual basis, or did you pool your resources, or how did you go about doing this?

Brown: The prisoners that had money would buy them on the individual basis, and it seemed like these Australians might have been pooling their resources and using it in their cooking in general.

Marcello: The Japanese did pay you a pittance, did they not, to work on this railroad?

Brown: Yes, 20¢, 30¢, 40¢ a day in their script. The natives . . . when they'd take you out, and if them natives had anything to sell, they . . . when you started to hand them that Japanese script, they didn't say anything. They'd take it because if that Japanese soldier saw them turning it down, there was going to be trouble.

Marcello: I gather that until the weather got really bad--and we'll talk about that in a minute--the native traders kind of followed these prisoners through the camps.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: When did the black market activities begin? I do know that there was some rather thriving black market activities in two of the camps.

Brown: Oh, there was! I would say the real black market stuff started probably in the latter part of '43. It <u>really</u> started going with these natives and things. Then it really was rolling over in Siam in '44.

Marcello: How exactly did this black market work in the jungle when you were working on the railroad?

Brown: These natives would get around maybe out on working parties, and they would see this prisoner there. Maybe

he'd have something on that they'd want, and they'd want to know what he'd want for that. They'd kind of get to talking. First one thing led to another, and they'd make a date. They'd say, well, this native would meet them at a certain place at night, and if he had anything to sell that they would buy it. They'd slip through the fence at night, go out and sell that stuff. They'd go around to the prisoners in the camp, and maybe they'd get a shirt and so-and-so from this one. They'd say, "Well, I'll pay you $2.00 for that shirt. I'll pay you $5.00 for this pair of pants." They'd go out and sell it to that native for twice that much or three times that much. Of course, they were the ones going through the fence. They deserved it because when they got caught it was S-O-L. It was tough.

Marcello: What is S-O-L?

Brown: It was hell, shit out of luck (chuckle)! It was bad!

Marcello: You mentioned then that you finally did move up to the 80 Kilo Camp.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: This is where all hell really began to break loose.

Brown: Yes, it was rough up there.

Marcello: By the time you got up to the 80 Kilo Camp . . .

Brown: We walked that, too.

Marcello: . . . the monsoons had started, and the "speedo" campaign was also initiated by the Japanese because you were behind schedule.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Let's pick it up from the time of your walk from the 30 Kilo Camp up to the 80 Kilo Camp.

Brown: Well, we walked up through there, and I didn't have any shoes at that time, so the Japs brought us some shoes to wear up there. They knew we couldn't walk it because those roads up through there had been riff-raffed with crushed rock. They knew our feet couldn't stand it. On the way up there these shoes I had rubbed a blister on my foot there and here (gesture).

Marcello: That is, down around the ankle?

Brown: Yes. So when we got there, my feet were real sore. Of course, they picked up our shoes. Then we started going out there, and the rainy season came along.

Marcello: This was in around May of 1943, as I recall.

Brown: Yes, May of '43. The rainy season came, and it was raining. Man, it rained up there! We were going out just before the rainy season, and we were driving pilings for bridges on the railroad. What they'd have was a big

tripod with a big pulley on it, a steel rod running down from that with a big weight with a hole in it. There'd be two pulleys and a rope on either side of this big weight, and this rod was running up through there. There'd be a bunch of men on the rope out there and a bunch out there (gesture). They'd pull and pull and get that rope up. That rod would be sticking down on top of a piling. You'd pull that weight up and let it drop . . . we were the pile drivers.

This went on. Mostly along there we were either making fills or working on bridges. Then these places on my foot got infected. Well, let's see. We went from the 80 . . .

Marcello: . . . to the 100 Kilo Camp, did you not?

Brown: Yes. Up at the 100 Kilo is where this foot turned into tropical ulcers.

Marcello: What are those tropical ulcers like? You might describe the particular ones that you had.

Brown: Well, what they do is . . . the tropical ulcer is caused by a spore the same as your tubercular or your syphilitic spore--the same type. The only thing about it is it doesn't get in your blood stream. It gets in the tissue. Wherever it gets, the flesh rots

and it stinks. It stinks just like a dead man. This particular spore, if you take a man with a tropical ulcer out of the tropics and put him into a temperate zone, well, that'll go away. It won't thrive. They tell me it won't thrive in a temperate zone. But as long as you're in the tropics, they'll live.

Marcello: About how big were your tropical ulcers at their worst?

Brown: This one here was about that big (gesture). This one over here was about like a half-dollar.

Marcello: One was about like a half dollar, and the other one may have been about three or four inches in diameter?

Brown: It got about that big, yes. When it got to where I couldn't walk, Charlie Pryor and I . . . he had them on his legs. There was another American named Back. Have you ever heard of him?

Marcello: No.

Brown: He's a lawyer in Oklahoma City now. He's a smart son-of-a-gun. He's also . . . he's from Mansfield, Texas, is where he's from. I can't remember what outfit . . . I believe he was either Marine or Navy. I can't remember. I can't even remember what the rest of his name was. They put us three on this truck. They took us from the 100 Kilo down to the 80 Kilo. They took all the sick

people down there. There was about eighteen people on this truck when I went down there--Americans and Australians.

Marcello: Okay, let me get this straight now. You had originally been at the 80 Kilo Camp, and things were pretty tough there. Then you moved up to the 100 Kilo Camp where things <u>really</u> got tough. This was where most of the people started getting the tropical ulcers and the beriberi and the pellagra and the malaria and everything else. They were working you extremely hard here.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Apparently the food was pretty low here also because the roads were washed out. Supplies couldn't get up to you.

Brown: Yes, mostly rice.

Marcello: They took the worst of you and took you back down to the 80 Kilo Camp.

Brown: They called it a hospital camp. They took you down there to die. When we got there there was, I think, three or four graves at the 80 Kilo. The railroad was running this way (gesture), and the 80 Kilo Camp was right beside it. Behind the 80 Kilo Camp there was a creek running fairly parallel to the railroad at this place. Then up the hill from across this creek was where

we had the cemetery. When they took us there . . . I could still walk, but I couldn't work. There was three graves up there on that hill. There was eighteen of us on that truck. We left there in early of '44. This was in July of '43 was when it was, when I went to the 80 Kilo. By the time . . . about the time I got down there, after I'd been down there at the 80 Kilo a month, I got to where I couldn't walk. I had me a pair of bamboo crutches. Anyway, when we left there in July, I believe there was over a hundred graves up on that hill. I helped bury a few of them up there.

Marcello: How did you manage to get rid of your tropical ulcers?

Brown: There was a medic, one of ours, from . . . he was from Memphis, Texas. I can't think of what his name is. He's a real good-looking guy. He came by one day, and it was after the rainy season was over.

Marcello: You were still at the 80 Kilo Camp?

Brown: Yes, 80 Kilo. It was in the fall there. It was . . . well, it was getting down toward December, I guess. No, it was getting . . . it was probably in November. He came by there one day. The thing that we found, if you could get any of it, that would cure these ulcers better than anything was iodoform.

Marcello: Iodoform?

Brown: Do you know what that is?

Marcello: No.

Brown: It's like iodine.

Marcello: I see.

Brown: It's a golden-type crystal that used to be used years and years ago a lot by undertakers in this country. But you could take that crystal and grind it up into a powder and sprinkle it all over that thing, and it'd kill that germ. It wouldn't hurt you either.

Marcello: Where did you get hold of the iodoform?

Brown: I don't know where they got it. One day this--I was trying to think of this old boy's name--this medic came by there, and I said . . . he was cleaning my ulcer up. I couldn't walk at this time.

Marcello: In the meantime you were cleaning those out with hot bandages and boiling water and that sort of thing.

Brown: Boiling water, yes. No, you'd just take the bandage off and pour boiling water on it. Then you'd wash your bandages and boil them and use them over because you had to. I said, "Have you got any iodoform?" And he said, "No." And he had a little old box there. He was fooling around in there, and there was a little old

piece of paper about that big (gesture) folded up down in there. He said, "That might be some iodoform." So he took that stuff and opened it up. Sure enough, it was. He mashed it up into a powder and just sprinkled--that's all he had, just a little--sprinkled it all over that ulcer. He wrapped it up with that clean bandage, and he says, "Don't take that off until you have to." So I left that thing on there for a week. When he did it . . . the sides of them would come up like that (gesture) and roll back. The skin, where the good skin was, would just roll back like a crater. It'd just turn brown and green and everything and rot. I left that thing there for a week. Finally, I took it off, and that old bandage was hard as a rock (chuckle). I took that thing off, and it was just as clean and clear as you ever saw it. From that day forward my ulcer healed. I kept it clean from then on. It was in the dry season, and it was easy to do. The skin started building back. It finally healed up into a big old scar there. The thing of it is it ate everything out of here. This skin right here on my ankle (gesture) has grown to the bone. It is to this day. It flared up on me about a year and a half ago.

Marcello: What other particular ailments did you have while you were either at 80 or the 100 Kilo Camp? You had dysentery. You had the tropical ulcers. I'm sure you had malaria.

Brown: I had malaria bad! Real bad! I must have had fifty flare-ups of it when I was in prison camp. I'd really get sick. They took us out of the 80 Kilo, and they put us on a train. They had the railroad running then. They put us on a train, and they hauled us down to the 105 where there were a bunch of Australians in there. Then they brought a bunch of Americans up to the 105. This was somewhere around December 1 of 1944. They brought a bunch of Americans up there from the 105-- a bunch of our friends. Then they started to moving us out to Siam from there, took us to Tamarkan.

Marcello: Before we get to Tamarkan, what sort of food were you receiving at either the 80 or the 100 Kilo Camp, keeping in mind that this was the worst period.

Brown: It was very . . . nothing. Nothing! There were days at a time that twice a day I'd get a little old bowl of, not rice, but watery rice with no salt, nothing-- twice a day there for one period during that bad time. I'm telling you what, if you think it doesn't take some

guts to try to eat something like that that doesn't have any taste, and you're sick as the devil . . . I always ate all of mine, but if you think it doesn't take some guts to put something like that down . . . it wasn't especially dirty. It just wasn't very appetizing. It was nothing. It was as near a nothing as I ever came to not having anything to eat.

Marcello: What were some of the ways that you supplemented your diet? In other words, what exotic foods did you eat to get nutrition?

Brown: There was one that . . . there was one type of . . . it was a lot like spinach. I guess it was a weed or something that grew out there, but if you knew it, you could pick the leaves of that thing and the stems that were tender. You could cook that thing up, and it was just like . . . it tasted like spinach. It didn't look like spinach, but evidently it was good for you.

Marcello: How did you find out about it? From the natives?

Brown: I don't remember. I guess somebody found out about it from the natives. Somebody told me about it, one of the prisoners. The Japs didn't care for us picking it. Most of us had to scoot around on our tails or on our crutches to go get anything.

Marcello: I assume that it was food that was the thing that was constantly on everybody's mind while you were working on the railroad.

Brown: Oh, yes. Everybody was starving to death.

Marcello: Did you sit around when you had spare time and dream up menus or think about food?

Brown: You didn't have to dream of it. If you went to sleep, you'd dream about it (chuckle).

Marcello: Most prisoners seemed to have a particular kind of food that they thought about over and over and over again. What did you think about more than anything else?

Brown: I just thought about food.

Marcello: How many instances did you ever see where men simply gave up and died?

Brown: The first man that I ever saw give up was in the Bicycle Camp. That man refused to eat. You've probably heard of him--Griffin.

Marcello: It seems to me that somewhere along the line I did.

Brown: His name was either Griffin or Griffith. Have you ever heard of him?

Marcello: No, I can't say that I have.

Brown: I don't know what his name was, but I think he was out of D Battery. He was a big, curly-headed, strapping man.

That man refused to eat, and he wasted away to nothing. But he wasn't dead when we left there, but he didn't leave the Bicycle Camp. They said he died in that Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: I'm sure you saw several instances of men on the railroad who simply sat down or who laid down and died.

Brown: Yes. Then another thing, there were a lot of people that . . . the size of a man or how strong he was . . . you couldn't tell because you'd go to bed one night, and the next morning you'd wake up, and the guy beside you might be laying there dead. There were people dying. Down at that 100 Kilo . . . what I started to tell you, there was eighteen of us that went down there on that truck. Three of us that went down on that truck lived from the 100 Kilo. They died and died fast down there because everybody they sent down there was a sick man. They really died! Charlie Pryor probably told you about going down there on that truck, didn't he?

Marcello: Yes, he did. I'd like to hear your story, though.

Brown: That's just what I'm telling you. We went down there on that truck. He and I were on the same truck. He and I and I think old _____ were the only three

that come out of there alive on that truck, that went in on that one truck. Charlie was an undertaker down there (chuckle). All of us was as long as we could walk. He kept getting around pretty good, but he had a big old ulcer. It seems to me like it was on his leg. It wasn't on his foot. But I didn't walk for six or seven months.

Marcello: Generally speaking, were you on light duty during most of this period?

Brown: I wasn't doing anything really but trying to figure out a way to get something to eat. I started walking shortly after I got down to Tamarkan. It was about a month or so after that.

Marcello: In other words, even after the tropical ulcer cleared up you still had trouble walking around.

Brown: I couldn't . . . when that tropical ulcer . . . when I got to where I could let my foot down and get it on the ground, when I'd walk my foot just turned like that (gesture). I was walking on the side of my foot. I had a deformity in it, you might say, at the time. The longer . . . but I kept walking. When I got to where I could walk, I'd walk on the side of my foot just like that (gesture). It was just turned under.

As I kept walking, it started to getting . . . my ankle was as stiff as a board, just stiff as that bone right there (gesture). As I walked, well, it finally started to limbering up, and my foot straightened out.

Marcello: We were talking awhile ago about the rainy season. Describe what that rainy season was actually like when you were at the 100 Kilo Camp and the 80 Kilo Camp.

Brown: The rainy season . . . there was one of those camps where there was a big mountain up beside it. It seems like that was the 100 Kilo. We were right beside a mountain.

Marcello: In other words, was the 100 Kilo Camp the one that was built in a pitiful place?

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Down in a swampy area or the lowlands or what have you?

Brown: Yes, and it'd look like those clouds would just come against that hill, hit that hill--it was a big hill--just hit that hill, and then the water would just roll down that hill, and it'd just pour on us!

Marcello: Is it true that the water was so deep in the barracks here at the 100 Kilo Camp that there were actually fish swimming around in the barracks? Have you ever heard that story?

Brown: I've seen these things. These are not . . . these are

lungfish. Do you know what a lungfish is?

Marcello: Somebody had told me about those, I think.

Brown: These fish weren't from a stream or anything. Well, they were from a stream. But a lungfish is a type of catfish. It lives in the rice paddies. When the rice paddies dry up, well, these fish live and stay in the mud. They can either live out of water or in water. They either can breathe through their gills or through their nostrils. When the rainy season starts, these fish will wiggle up out of this mud. If there is not enough water there, they'll just wiggle across the top of the ground. I've caught them and ate them before.

Marcello: I'm sure they were a welcome addition to the food supply.

Brown: They're just like . . . they look just like a channel cat nearly. They'll wiggle right across the top of the ground. This was what they were. They were lungfish. They were just moving from one place to another until they get to the streams or something.

Marcello: Did you ever get around to eating the more exotic foods like dogs, cats, and things of that nature?

Brown: No, I never ate a dog. I've eaten a little snake, but I've never eaten a dog or a cat. If I did, I didn't know it. Of course, if I'd have had a chance, I wouldn't

have turned it down. But I never did. Some of them said that dog was really good (chuckle).

Marcello: I'm sure any sort of meat tasted pretty good to you in the jungle.

Brown: I've eaten snake. When I'd be out on a detail somewhere, we'd take and kill a snake. We'd just skin and roast it. It's not bad. It tastes kind of fishy.

Marcello: Okay, so you at least were on your way to recuperation by the time that you moved off the railroad. I gather that you journeyed across this railroad to get to Tamarkan.

Brown: Yes. We went on the railroad, went over the River Kwai. In fact, the River Kwai runs right by Tamarkan. I've bathed in it day in and day out.

Marcello: What was the trip like across this railroad? I understand that some of the prisoners were kind of scared of their handiwork. They didn't like the idea of having to ride across this railroad that they had built.

Brown: As well as I can remember, this big bridge over the River Kwai was pretty rickety. Those Englishmen didn't build that good of a bridge (chuckle).

Marcello: As I recall, there were actually two bridges here at Tamarkan, weren't there? Wasn't there a steel railroad bridge, and then there was another one of these wooden, rickety bridges that you're talking about.

Brown: Yes, it seems like it. There was a foot bridge across it. Yes, there was.

Marcello: How come they sent you to . . .

Brown: It was a railroad bridge and a foot bridge.

Marcello: How come they sent you to Tamarkan rather than Kanchanaburi?

Brown: Tamarkan is right at Kanchanaburi.

Marcello: But you just happened to go to Tamarkan, and some of the others went to Kanchanaburi.

Brown: Also, there's Chungkai. It's another one right there . . . right down from Tamarkan there's a fork. Another river comes in there, and as you turn right up that fork at Chungkai, you've got Tamarkan, Kanchanaburi, and Chungkai--three different camps there.

Marcello: Tamuang was pretty close to there, too, wasn't it?

Brown: Tamuang must've been on down the river. I might have stopped there one time, but I didn't know it by the name.

Marcello: What was this camp like here at Tamarkan?

Brown: Well, the food was considerably better for the simple reason that Siam is a real good agricultural country. They were bringing in quite a few greenbeans. They had greenbeans that must have been two foot long there.

Then they had a lot of green vegetables they brought in there.

Marcello: In other words, you were getting close to civilization again. There was a lot of native traders.

Brown: Yes, yes. We weren't getting a whole lot of meat, but they would bring a little pork in there once in awhile. They'd put that in their stew. For what we'd been used to, man, we were having a banquet there!

Marcello: What were the living facilities like here at Tamarkan?

Brown: They were similar to . . . they just had those bamboo huts with the atap roofs. They had a lot more help in there to take care of them. Most of the prisoners that came in there were sick people. When we came to Tamarkan, they were feeding us pretty good. When I went overseas I weighed 195 pounds. When I got to Tamarkan, they fed us pretty good for a month, and they pulled me out after I'd been eating pretty good for a month and weighed me, and I weighed 115 pounds. So I don't figure I weighed over a hundred when I hit there because I ate everything I could get my hands on for a month there (chuckle).

Marcello: Up until this time, you had been through quite a bit. I gather your clothing had given out.

Brown: Oh, yes.

Marcello: What were you down to?

Brown: I was wearing a pair of old shorts. Then we'd take these cloths and make these loincloths and wear them. Except when we'd go out on working parties, we'd wear a pair of shorts most of the time if we had them. Once in awhile we'd get hold of a T-shirt or something like that. No shoes.

Marcello: What did you do about shaving and haircuts and things of that nature?

Brown: When I was at the 80 Kilo Camp, I had a pretty fair beard. There wasn't anybody . . . and a good crop of lice. I didn't care . . . well, I didn't shave for several months. They finally got up to 100 or 105. When they took us out of there, we went to 105 and then on into Siam. They shaved me there and cut my hair. I was pretty woolly. Then at Tamarkan they kind of had a barbershop set up. If you couldn't walk, well, there was a guy who'd come around about once a week and shave you. They used just any kind of old soap they could to put on your face. They'd have a straight-edged razor. The Japs . . . if you could walk, they had a barbershop place, and you could go over there and get you a shave and a haircut.

Marcello: While you were working on this railroad and while you were on the verge of death, under these circumstances did you observe prisoners all of the sudden becoming very religious? How great a factor did religion play in your work on the railroad when times were really bad?

Brown: Do you know what I thought about most? How in the hell I was going to get out of that place! I didn't really . . . I guess a lot of them took to religion quite a bit, but I was trying to figure out, when the time came and knowing the attitude that the Japs had about losing a prisoner, is how in the hell I was going to get out of that place because I knew that if it came down to the time when there was going to be . . . if we were taken back by combat, those Japs were going to kill all the prisoners they could. I figured this. Rather than give them up and lose face by giving up a prisoner, they'd kill him first. I always . . . what I was trying to figure out was how in the devil I was going to get out of there. This is what I thought about.

Marcello: Did you come up with any particular sort of plan that you were going to follow through on?

Brown: No, because I imagine it was just like . . . you'd just have to take advantage of the situation at the time. That's all I could ever figure out.

Marcello: Now by the time you got to Tamarkan, did you have any idea as to how the course of the war was progressing?

Brown: Yes. We knew a lot more than people thought we did.

Marcello: How did you find out?

Brown: The radio.

Marcello: Were there secret radios in camp?

Brown: Yes, there was radios in nearly every camp.

Marcello: Do you know anything about them?

Brown: No, but we were getting the word (chuckle). We didn't know where they were and didn't know whose they were, but we were getting the word. We knew when . . . what is that island, the first island, the Japs took up in the Aleutians?

Marcello: Attu?

Brown: Attu up in the Aleutians. We knew when that fell. Then there was a Jap who came around and told us. We was up in Burma at the time. He come around and said the Americans took back that island.

Marcello: Up until this time had you been able to either receive or send any mail?

Brown: I think I mailed three or four cards while I was in prison camp. I received, oh, maybe one or two letters. I think I can remember specifically getting one letter

from my mother. Really, that might have been the only letter I got, but everybody got mail sooner or later. Nearly everybody got mail.

Marcello: I'm sure they were real morale boosters, were they not?

Brown: Yes, they sure were.

Marcello: How many times did you read your letter?

Brown: Oh, a lot of times until I got ready to make cigarette papers out of it (laughter). That paper was pretty high-priced. We'd take it and split it, see, and make it thin enough. You think I'm kidding you, don't you?

Marcello: No.

Brown: We'd split it.

Marcello: How did you split it?

Brown: With something kind of like a razor blade. You can split it, too. We had this old tobacco, and we needed something to roll it in. If you rolled in that regular stationary, it's too heavy, and you get too much taste of the paper. So we'd take that paper and split it.

Marcello: Here at Tamarkan what sort of work details did you have to go on?

Brown: Not really a whole lot.

Marcello: This was more or less a type of rest and recuperation camp?

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Was it a big camp?

Brown: It was pretty big. We got bombed once when I was there.

Marcello: I know that Kanchanaburi was a very big camp.

Brown: Well, no. I don't think Tamarkan was as big as Kanchanaburi. I never was at Kanchanaburi. I was at Chungkai. I believe Tamarkan was the smallest of the three.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were there when the camp got bombed. I think you're referring to the bombers that would come over and try to knock out those bridges.

Brown: No, I was there when it was bombed twice.

Marcello: You might describe these incidents. I think they are rather important.

Brown: They had a big kind of like a parade ground out in the middle of the camp. Huts over here (gesture) and huts over there (gesture), and there was a big parade ground. They'd take certain work parties out everyday. They didn't work anybody too hard. The camp was here (gesture), and there was a bridge, and then there was antiaircraft emplacements down this way (gesture). The bridge was . . . we were sitting at one side at the end

of the bridge, and the antiaircraft emplacements were down here (gesture). But they were pretty close to the camp. We were standing out there one day . . . and the Japs would count noses every afternoon. We'd all get out there and line up if you weren't too sick. We were standing there one day and looked off down the river . . . and they had them big old birds down there. They were kind of vultures that would fly in a V-formation. They're great big devils. We looked off down the river and saw this formation coming up through there. Way down there! We thought it was birds. We kept watching, and the damned things kept getting bigger and bigger. Finally, they had four motors on them (chuckle). There was about nine of them, I believe, in formation. Whenever the Japs saw them, we saw them. We all started breaking for the other side of that camp away from the anti-aircraft guns. We was looking . . . then we heard the antiaircraft guns start firing. There was a burst between the lead plane and the one to his left, and it rocked both of them.

Then the "eggs" started falling. I was running to the far side of camp to get out of camp. I was looking up. They were getting pretty well up to me. Around

every hut they had a ditch dug around it about that deep (gesture). I dove in one of those ditches.

Marcello: About three feet deep maybe?

Brown: Yes, two or three foot deep. It was deep enough. Of course, I looked up and out of the tails of those guns . . . they were 9,000 or 10,000 foot high, but you could see tracers. They were strafing from up that high. Those tail gunners were firing. Boy, the ground started shaking! Those bombs were hitting, and whenever they went on over, we got up. Somebody had done tore the fence down out there, and the Japs was going with us, and we all got out of camp. A bomb or two hit right at the edge of camp where there was an English deal. It killed several prisoners that were still in their hut over there. But they weren't bombing that camp because they were after those antiaircraft guns. Of course, a few days later there was some more came in. They really took a good shot at everything around there and even took a good shot at that bridge.

Marcello: Did you get the impression that these bombers knew that these were prisoner-of-war camps?

Brown: I would think so, yes, because they did bomb right up to the camp, and one of them just barely got in the

camp. If they'd have wanted to hit that camp, there was no reason why they couldn't. What they did . . . then a few days later, they came in there again. They bombed down toward Kanchanaburi, and they got into a Jap supply depot down there, and they hit it with incendiaries. They was just coming around in a circle one after another. They peeled off. They weren't in formation or anything. Then one of them would come around and circle back the other way and he came down. He took a shot at that bridge. He flew right down over that thing! They was shooting at him with everything they could. He dropped a pretty good-sized "egg" down there. It shook the whole country around there. He must have dropped one that weighed around a ton or 1,000 pounds.

Marcello: Did they do a pretty good job on those bridges?

Brown: Not that time, but later on when I left there and went to Nakhon Pathom . . . when I went to Nakhon Pathom and then came back to Chungkai, they worked that bridge over pretty good, when I was back there at Chungkai.

Marcello: You're mentioning some places here that I've never heard of before, and I gather that by the time you

get off that railroad, the 131st Field Artillery was now pretty well scattered.

Brown: Oh, yes. We were scattered everywhere.

Marcello: How long were you here at Tamarkan altogether?

Brown: I don't remember exactly how long, but they pulled us out and put us on a train and took us down to Nakhon Pathom. Have you ever heard of it?

Marcello: No, I sure haven't.

Brown: Right after World War II was over, I was home. They still had "Believe It or Not" in the papers. Do you remember that?

Marcello: Ripley's "Believe It or Not." Yes.

Brown: Okay. I saw a deal in Ripley's "Believe It or Not" about Nakhon Pathom in Siam, about this pagoda they have there--the world's second largest pagoda is there. It was talking something about this pagoda, about the gold leaf that was on it or something. It is a big thing because, hell, I sit there and looked at it everyday for several months.

Marcello: I assume this was a relatively small camp here.

Brown: No, it was a pretty good-sized camp. It was getting toward the end of the war, and it was built as a hospital camp, and it was by far the best camp I was ever in.

Marcello: Why do you say that it was the best camp?

Brown: It was a show camp.

Marcello: For whom?

Brown: To put prisoners in in case the Red Cross people came around. For anybody who came around they wanted to show that they had . . . they had bamboo huts and everything, but the decks were made of lumber instead. It was a lot cleaner and had better . . . you'd go down at the end of the hut, and you'd walk out, and they had the latrine built there for you to go into. They had it all fixed up. The food was quite a bit better there, and I stayed there for three, four, or five months.

Marcello: What was the food like here?

Brown: Well, it was just more vegetables and rice and stuff like that.

Marcello: Now by this time are you in fairly good physical condition considering?

Brown: I was beginning to gain weight back now.

Marcello: And again, here at this camp were you going on any work details?

Brown: I did very little when I was at Nakhon Pathom. When was D-Day?

Marcello: June 6, 1944.

Brown: I was there June 6, 1944, because the Allies pulled one of the damnedest air raids you ever heard of that day over there in Siam. Well, that day, that morning about ten o'clock, we started to hearing a drone down toward Bangkok. We was about forty miles from Bangkok. It was an overcast day. In a little while we could hear bombs dropping down in that general area. Then in a little while those planes were coming back over us. They flew from about ten o'clock that morning until three or four o'clock that afternoon. There was planes over us all that time. All the Allies were doing was showing their strength. It was overcast that day, and . . . I walked out one time going to the latrine and looked up, and the clouds happened to break. There was a big old B-24 going over (chuckle). The Japs weren't bothering them.

Marcello: By the way, what was the Japanese reaction to these air raids? How did their attitudes toward the prisoners change?

Brown: Their attitude toward the Americans wasn't too good. They said the Americans were no good.

Marcello: How would they vent their wrath on the prisoners?

Brown: They didn't really vent their wrath on us.

Marcello: I'm sure they didn't allow you to cheer when the bombers came over.

Brown: Well, we didn't cheer anyway. We was trying to get the hell out of there--I'll tell you what we was trying to do--because they'd kill us just as quick as they would a Jap.

Marcello: Nevertheless, I'm sure that the presence of those bombers did do wonders for your morale.

Brown: Yes, that was the year I . . . about that time was when we saw our first B-29's.

Marcello: I'm sure you didn't know what it was.

Brown: Yes, we knew what it was. Them Japs called them, "_____." We knew what they were (chuckle).

Marcello: Now up until this time you'd been a prisoner-of-war for somewhere around three years.

Brown: Yes.

Marcello: Did you live from day to day, from week to week, from month to month? Just exactly how did you take time?

Brown: Well, just like I told you. When it was getting towards the end of the war, especially . . . and we knew it was getting towards the end of the war, we could tell by the Japs it was getting towards the end of the war. Their attitudes completely changed. They

didn't like us, but they knew they were getting kicked around.

But still my biggest concern was how in the devil I was going to get out of that thing. This was my biggest concern because I knew that war was going to be over one of these days. Of course, it ended for us the best way it could--without any fighting on Siam. We found out when the war was over. D-Day in Siam would have been in October. If they'd had to land in Siam, it'd have been pretty rough on us for a short time.

Marcello: Of course, here now again, when we talk about D-Day, we usually refer to the Normandy invasion, which was on June 6, 1944.

Brown: Yes, I know. Yes, I know, but the kick-off date was landing. I'm talking about a landing. I'm talking about . . . the landing date for Siam was set for October, which would have been . . . we missed it by sixty or sixty-five days.

Marcello: You were at this camp here in Siam, and you said you were there for what? Five or six months?

Brown: Yes. At Nakhon Pathom.

Marcello: Right. Where did you go from there?

Brown: I went to . . .

Marcello: Chungkai?

Brown: Yes, I went back up the river to Chungkai. They took us down to . . . have you ever heard of Non Pladuk?

Marcello: No, I'm afraid not. You've been some places that none of the other prisoners have been to that I've talked with.

Brown: There was a camp about eight or ten kilos on away from Bangkok. We were between . . . this place was called Non Pladuk. It was a rail yard there, a marshalling yard. Non Pladuk was about eight or ten kilos, and down at Non Pladuk or close to Non Pladuk this River Kwai ran down in there. They took us down there and put us on a barge. They had one of those old-type motors--one-lung motors--in it. It was just a big old open boat is all it was. It was kind of barge-like that had . . . have you ever seen an old motor like that that had an old plug stuck out? They'd take a blowtorch and heat it, and then they'd get that thing to running. It run like a diesel.

Marcello: No, I never saw that.

Brown: Well, this is what this was. It was a compression motor, and that used some kind of an old coal oil for fuel. The Japs had this native. They hired him to take us up the river. Now this camp you were talking about down the river there, what was it?

Marcello: Chungkai?

Brown: No, down the river. You named it awhile ago.

Marcello: Tamuang?

Brown: Yes. Now I spent the night there one night on that trip up the river. Then we went from Tamuang on up to Kanchanaburi. Then we got off, and they took us over to Chungkai this time. I stayed over there a month or two.

Marcello: How long were you at each one of these places? How long, for example, were you at Non Pladuk?

Brown: Non Pladuk--we spent the night. Well, we just passed through there.

Marcello: I see.

Brown: Then we went on up there and stayed one night at this other camp you was talking about.

Marcello: Tamuang.

Brown: Tamuang. Then we went on up to . . . it was right on the river, this Tamuang was, just right on the river. So was Chungkai. It was on a different river, though. It was on a little fork off of there. We stayed there at Chungkai two or three months. Then they put on the train again.

Marcello: What did you do at Chungkai? That was a pretty big camp, was it not?

Brown: Yes, it was. I didn't do much of nothing there. I might have been on a few of the odd working details, but that's about all.

Marcello: All of this time, did you still have your Korean guards or had you lost them somewhere along the way?

Brown: Yes, we were still having Korean guards.

Marcello: Had their disposition improved any?

Brown: No, they don't ever improve. We got on the train then from Chungkai. There wasn't anything really eventful that happened there except a bunch of horseplaying and stuff among the prisoners--just odd and end things.

But anyway, they sent us back on the train. We got down to Non Pladuk, and we got off and spent the night there at Non Pladuk then. We got on the train again. Now this camp had had the hell bombed out of it when I was at Nakhon Pathom. I mean it just killed a whole bunch of prisoners there. The Allies bombed it one night. We sat there and watched it from Nakhon Pathom. Then they brought the wounded in there where we were the next day or two. They started to bringing them in, and I helped dress them and take care of them. They had legs blown off and holes blown through them. A lot of them died after they got them there. They were cut up pretty bad.

Marcello: These were prisoners-of-war?

Brown: Yes. They had had the hell blown out of them. One guy had a piece of shrapnel that hit him here (gesture) and come out there (gesture), and they'd take a . . .

Marcello: It hit him in the shoulder and came out the other side.

Brown: Yes. They'd take a piece of . . . that guy would sit right there. They'd take a piece of gauze-like stuff and clean it. They were trying to keep it clean and keep it healed from the inside. I've seen them punch that gauze clear through him there (gesture) and pull it out on this side (gesture). You might think I'm lying, but I'm not (chuckle).

Marcello: I'm surprised they even had adequate medical facilities here.

Brown: This was a hospital camp.

Marcello: I see. Where are we at now again?

Brown: Nakhon Pathom is where this was.

Marcello: I see.

Brown: I just thought I'd tell you. But anyway, you should have seen this camp. These guys had dug down in the ground. They had plastered the walls. They actually had underground living quarters there--these PW's that built them. The Japs had let them build them.

You ought've seen it. They had steps and what they made their plaster out of, I don't know.

Marcello: This was the second time you'd been there, is it not?

Brown: I went through there before, but this is the only time I'd actually stopped in the camp. We spent the night there. We were leery about it. The next day they put us on a train. They started us generally south, kind of like you was going to head back down the peninsula, to a place called Rat Buri. Did you ever hear of that?

Marcello: Yes.

Brown: Okay. We got to Rat Buri. The bridge had been bombed out there, and we sat there for a half of a day, got off the train.

Marcello: In the meantime, are the Japanese harassing you at all, or do they sense that the end of the war was close?

Brown: No, they're not harassing us! If you . . . the thing that . . . most prisoners that got harassed real bad, in my estimation, a lot of them brought a lot of it on themselves because . . . there was some guys that I hung around with. We stayed off to ourselves. We didn't ever bother them, very seldom ever talked to them unless we had to. They didn't bother us. When

they come around to tell you to do something you just might as well do it or get the hell beat out of you.

Marcello: By this time had little cliques developed among the prisoners? In other words, were there two or three people who kind of looked out for one another?

Brown: Yes, we had a lot of this. It was all over . . . even the Australians, the Dutch, they all did it. Guys that would buddy up together. We had several of us, and it wasn't necessarily all Army either, and they weren't all out of the same battery either. There was one, two, several of us. There was a sailor and . . . there was a couple of sailors and then a guy out of another battery and then this Ben _____ from Illinois and I. When we got together, we all kind of hung out. If we'd get a chance to get hold of some extra food, we'd always share it. We didn't fool around with those Japs too much. If they came up and talked to us, we'd talk to them, but we wouldn't single one of them out.

Marcello: Where were you when the war finally ended, or when you heard about the end of the war?

Brown: I was at a place . . . I was close . . . I was at a place called Nakhon Nayok. Have you ever heard of that?

Marcello: No.

Brown: It means "no name."

Marcello: Are we talking about . . . at this particular stage of the war . . .

Brown: You're talking about a place about eighty or ninety miles . . . a little bit north of east of Bangkok.

Marcello: At the time that we're speaking, you are . . .

Brown: Not too many people have been at this place, I'll tell you.

Marcello: At the time that we're speaking, I gather you were moving around from camp to camp to camp. You weren't staying very long at any place.

Brown: I would say that the last six months of the war that I walked 400 or 500 miles.

Marcello: Most of your travels were on foot?

Brown: No, we'd go on a train. Then we'd get forty or fifty kilos from a place and have to walk in there.

Marcello: How long were you at this last camp?

Brown: Oh, two or three months.

Marcello: Was it a fairly nice camp?

Brown: Oh, it was average. It wasn't a hospital camp. It was an average camp.

Marcello: I assume that you kind of hated to leave that hospital camp.

Brown: Oh, yes. It was a good place. We didn't have any work details or nothing.

Marcello: What did you do here at this last camp?

Brown: Well, they took us to this Nakhon Nayok, and then they took us over to . . . took us out one day, out of that camp. We stayed in the vicinity of it, and we went over to a pagoda and stayed there one night. Then we went across some rice paddies into some foothills there out of the town of Nakhon Nayok. Now this camp that we called Nakhon Nayok was several kilos out of Nakhon Nayok. We went into these foothills, and we had to go across a rice paddy there. We walked across the terraces. We went across there and worked for several days and built some little huts. This wasn't a very big party here. When we got there and got these huts built, we were going up this mountain and were digging caves back in these mountains. Well, evidently, this was getting right toward the end of the war. We didn't ever get a cave completed.

Marcello: About how many men were at this camp altogether?

Brown: Forty or fifty of us.

Marcello: It sounded like it was a pretty small camp.

Brown: Well, at Nakhon Nayok, the big camp, there was a lot of people there, but this was a small detail. We

lived pretty good there. It wasn't too clean a place. It was right in the edge of the brush and stuff and up in these hills. It was real brushy, and we'd climb up that hill and dig back in there. What we were trying to do is fix some dumps for them back in there where they could store ammunition and stuff, I'm sure. Anyway, we stayed up there, and we never did finish them.

Finally one day they just called us out, and we went back to this pagoda and stayed there a day or two. Then we went back to Nakhon Nayok. We worked around there. They'd take us over there, and we was building some more huts. Then they had an officers' camp . . . that time they had separated the officers from the men. They had an officers' camp over there by us. We were over there building some huts close to this officers' camp.

One day we was sitting there, and everybody just quit working about noon. We saw before noon a bunch of working parties going in. The guards wouldn't say a word to us. We just sat down. They didn't tell us to quit. We just sat down. We knew the war was nearly over. We just sat down. Those guards wouldn't say a word to us. It came time to go in. They said, "Let's

go in." Old Ben _____, this old boy from Illinois that was with me, he said, "What do you think it is?" And I said, "Well, the war is over." He says, "You don't really think that?" I said, "You're damned right! You never saw the Japs act like that in your life." He said, "Well, maybe it is." That night he asked me again. I said, "Yes, the war is over." The next morning they called us out on the parade ground. An old English sergeant major got up and announced that there had been an armistice signed two or three days before.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the prisoners?

Brown: Oh, God! They went hog wild! You could hear them roaring for miles (chuckle)!

Marcello: What did the Japanese do?

Brown: Nothing. Nothing.

Marcello: Did they remain at that camp?

Brown: They kept running that camp, though, because they had to account for all prisoners. The funniest thing that I think that happened there . . . the merchants from Nakhon Nayok came out to the camp where we were. They told . . . our officers over from the other camp came over there where we were. They moved in with us. They

told our officers, they said, "Anything you want you can have. All you have to do is sign a chit for it." They brought in fresh vegetables, fresh meat, and everything. Man, we were eating good then because that is a good agricultural country! Beans and greens of all kinds and peanuts--lots of peanuts in there--and poultry. These durned Japs used to once in awhile give us some dried salt fish. There was a durned old Englishman in there, and he hated Japs. There was a Jap came up to him. He says, "You friend; me friend now." This Englishman looked at him, and he stuck out a piece of dried fish. He said he wanted to trade it to him for some meat. That Englishman, he laid that Jap just as cold as a wedge right there! He walked off and left him laying there. That Jap come to and got up and went back to the hut and never did come in.

Marcello: Were there very many incidents where prisoners took out a certain amount of revenge on the Japanese now that the tables were turned?

Brown: Not that I saw.

Marcello: What were your own feelings when you heard that the war was over?

Brown: Well, how quick was I going to get out of there. I wasn't

worried about those Japs. In fact, I didn't think a helluva lot about them from that time forward. I was just wanting to get out of there.

Marcello: Did you stay in the camp the whole time?

Brown: Yes. I didn't leave the camp. In our case, there wasn't much people leaving camp. Then we stayed there two or three days. Someway they brought in some khaki uniforms for the Americans. They took them and they didn't have enough to go around, so they cut the legs off the pants and made shorts out of them. Then the legs that they cut off for the smaller guys, they made them shorts out of them. They all got us a shirt or a good clean T-shirt. The Japs came in in trucks, and they hauled us to Bangkok. They took us down there. They put us in a great big warehouse on the river there. Then in just a little while after that, we were eating pretty good. We weren't doing nothing--just sitting around that warehouse and fooling around.

Marcello: Now by this time about how many members of the "Lost Battalion" were here at this warehouse? Could you estimate it? Were there very many of you there?

Brown: I don't know. The "Lost Battalion," I wouldn't say it, but with the Houston and the "Lost Battalion," I'll

put it this way: I can tell you pretty close. From out of Rangoon down to Bangkok everyday they were bringing about ten C-47's. Of course, there were . . . there must have been around 100 or 120 Americans there. I'm just guessing. They were bringing these ten C-47's down there and flying them out. The British said, "Well, there's ten Britishers to every American here. We'll send ten British and maybe one Australian and one American. That's the pro rate back on the planes to Rangoon everyday." This went on for a couple of days. I don't remember how many men they were hauling on a plane. But we come to find out the Americans were sending about eight planes down there and the British two. The British was taking up all the planes. So these American fliers stopped there one day. All these British were out there and just a few Americans. This flier says, "Let's ask them. How many Americans are down there in that warehouse?" They told them. They went and got the truck and they said, "Take us down to that warehouse." They brought them on down to the warehouse in the trucks. These American fliers came in there and said, "All you Americans get ready to go to Rangoon." They said, "By God, we're tired of coming

down here and hauling British back when they won't send any planes!" They got every one of us and put us on trucks and took us out there. They put nothing but Americans on American planes, and them damned British people was standing out there swelled up like a bunch of toads. I'm telling you, I never saw such a mad bunch of British, and the Americans were laughing at them. They said, "We're not coming back anymore." These American fliers said this. Then on top of that, while we were there at this warehouse there on the river--the Boondocks we called it--they cut off all Lend-Lease, and they were really miffed about that. As soon as World War II was over, they cut off Lend-Lease. When they did that, boy, those British . . . that just burned them something awful! They thought we ought to keep them up. Hell, of course, I guess we should have. We've been keeping up the rest of the world ever since (chuckle).

Marcello: Anyhow, as you look back upon your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as the thing that perhaps pulled you through more than anything else?

Brown: I'd think it was a helluva lot of luck! I don't know. I know one thing. There was one thing that . . . I

always ate everything I could find. You had to eat or you couldn't get back. I've heard a lot of guys say, "I won't ever eat any of that rice again." Well, I still eat rice. It's a good food, really, as good as any food. I think the people that made up their mind to eat anything they could get were the ones that really got back or had the best chance to get back. I'll put it that way.

Marcello: At the time of your liberation what sort of feelings did you have toward the Japanese?

Brown: At the time of the liberation?

Marcello: Right.

Brown: I wasn't too worried about the Japanese then. I'd done found out how I was going to get out of there, and that was my main worry. I never have had too much hard of feelings about the Japanese, especially the Japanese soldier. Hell, he only did what he was told to do, or he got his throat cut! He didn't have much choice, really. Anybody knows that. I think that there's just a few big shots in Japan controlled it all. That's all it amounted to. Everytime you have a war, I think that . . . I think that if we get in a war, we do our part to get in it.

Marcello: As you look back upon your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as perhaps being the funniest thing that ever happened?

Brown: Oh, hell, there's a lot of funny things. It was a damned scream from start to finish! There's a lot of things that was funny (chuckle). There's a lot of things that you might not think is funny that I thought was funny.

Marcello: Can you mention some of these things?

Brown: No, not right off hand. There were a lot of situations--the way we'd steal food from the Japs. A lot of the things happened that were funny. The Japs are of a single-tracked mind. If they'd go through . . . in some of the camps periodically they'd go through and have a search. If they were looking for radio equipment, you could have a .45 pistol laying out there, and they wouldn't see the damned thing. If they were looking for a .45 pistol and you had a radio tube there, they wouldn't see that tube. They was looking for that .45 pistol. It was just what they looked for. This old boy named _____one time, he made a lot of money in one of the camps. The Japs were real good about . . . they loved baseball. He got a softball cover. He had a bunch of money, but when you left, they'd search you.

All the money you had over a certain amount, they take it away from you. He had about $400 or $500 of that money sewed up in that baseball cover, running around in there, pitching it, waiting to go. There was a Jap who came by and said, "Hey, hey." He threw that baseball to him. The Jap and him played catch there for a while. He said, "Well, I got to go." The Jap threw him back the ball. He stuck it in his bag and walked right on out. If that Jap had known how much money was in that thing (chuckle). . . it was more money than he'd ever seen. It was just something like that going on all the time. There's lots of funny things.

Marcello: I suppose this was one of the ways that you'd keep your sanity in a situation like this.

Brown: That's something the Japs could never understand--how the Americans would sit around and "throw the bull" around and laugh and pull jokes on one another when they were prisoners, and they'd lost all that face. They never could figure that out. They just could never understand it. They really couldn't.