

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
497

Interview with
OTTO C. SCHWARZ
August 7, 1979

Place of Interview: Granbury, Texas

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

Terms of Use: OPEN

Approved: O. C. Schwarz
(Signature)

Date: 8/7/79

COPYRIGHT © 1980 THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF NORTH TEXAS STATE
UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF DENTON

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

Oral History Collection

Otto Schwarz

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Granbury, Texas

Date: August 7, 1979

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Otto Schwarz for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on August 7, 1979, in Granbury, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Schwarz in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. More specifically, Mr. Schwarz was a survivor of the sinking of the cruiser USS Houston. He subsequently spent the duration of World War II in various prisoner-of-war camps throughout Southeast Asia.

Mr. Schwarz, to begin this interview, just tell me a little bit about yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education-- things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Schwarz: Okay, I was born in Newark, New Jersey, on September 6, 1923. I probably had a typical life as everybody did during the Depression. We didn't have any money, holes in our shoes. I finished my second year of high school, at which point I became bored and anxious to do other things and really to have a couple of dollars in my pocket.

Consequently, I dropped out of high school and joined the CCC, which took me out to Nevada. I was in a camp up in the mountains outside of Carson City. Actually, I was in California, but we were near the Nevada border. While I was out there, we had a visit from Navy recruiters, and that sounded real good to me. So I didn't even come home; I just joined the Navy out there in California.

Marcello: When was this?

Schwarz: This would be around September of 1940, and I was called a couple of months later in January of '41.

Marcello: In other words, you remained in the CCC until you were actually called into the Navy for your boot training and so on.

Schwarz: That's right. I never came home from that point on. I was sent to San Diego for my training. All of this was really an exciting change for someone like me who had been born and raised in a city near New York, and here I'd been sent out to these beautiful mountains, the Sierra Nevada mountains, and was able to pack a lunch on weekends and go out into the mountains and explore silver mines. Then to join the Navy, and here I am in Southern California. It was really, I felt, a great opportunity for someone like myself. So, as I say, I went through training in San Diego, and then I was shipped out to Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: You know, your story up to this point, I think, is very typical for one of your particular generation. The Depression, I

think, influenced a great many people to join the service. The service didn't pay you very much, but there was a certain amount of security involved. The pay was steady, you had a place to sleep, and certain opportunities.

Schwarz: Well, I often reflect on it, and I tell my children that when I joined the CCC I had more clothing at one time than I had ever seen in my life. Then I joined the Navy, and, of course, in the Navy the first thing that happened is that I walk in, and they start throwing all kinds of clothing at you. I had more clothing than I had ever had in my life, and certainly better clothing, and then to get paid \$30 a month in addition was really great. But your remark about all of us from that particular time being similar. I think, again, in reflection, that that had a great deal to do with how we survived the prison camps.

Marcello: In what way?

Scharz: The fact that we were children of the Depression, had been used to very little in the way of creature comforts. I think that when we became prisoners and then started losing more and more and more of what we had and had taken as normal, we didn't notice it as much and were able to survive it. I believe that young men of that same age today would find it a little bit more difficult to acclimate to the jungles and being without and being deprived of everything.

Marcello: How closely were you keeping abreast of current events and

world affairs at the time that you decided to join the Navy?

Schwarz: Well, I think that, again, as you get older and you do an awful lot of reading and you read all different viewpoints and all, you find out that even in those days you were pretty much . . . well, I don't know if "victim" is the word, but you were a product of whatever was being put out in the press. When World War II started, we were ready to find every Jap we could find. Yet, as you became older, you find out there were circumstances that may have accelerated Japanese involvement. But at that time we were all "gung-ho" kids, and all we had been reading about were the Japanese atrocities in China, and we were almost ready for a war.

Marcello: Is it safe to say, however, when you thought of the country getting into war that your immediate thoughts were turning toward Europe and Germany rather than toward the Far East?

Schwarz: I don't particularly remember it as such because I went right out to the Far East, and we could see evidence of something brewing, so our attention was pretty much drawn on where we were.

Marcello: In getting back to my original question, you really did not join the Navy, however, for patriotic reasons. It was basically economic reasons, was it not?

Schwarz: Oh, no. Oh, no. Of course, no. At that time, although on a world-wide basis the war was brewing and beginning, it had never touched me personally, and that was the farthest thing from my mind.

Marcello: The Depression was a more immediate concern than were world events.

Schwarz: Oh, absolutely. I mean, after all, I was seventeen at the time, and it hadn't been too long before that that I got my first bicycle. And I know I never had a new bicycle; it was always an old used thing that someone had finally bought for me for a few dollars. So the period from childhood until I went in the Navy was a very short, quick period, and at that time to me the greatest thing in the world was to have all of these clothes and to be out on my own and already seeing the world. I'd gotten as far as California, you know.

Marcello: Describe the process by which you got aboard the USS Houston.

Schwarz: Very strange circumstances, I think. I left boot camp in San Diego and went out to Pearl Harbor on an oil tanker. In Pearl Harbor I was assigned to the USS Lark, which was a converted World War I tugboat. It had been converted into a minesweeper. There was a whole fleet of these ships all converted into minesweepers, all with names of birds--lark, pigeon, et cetera, and I was assigned to the Lark.

Again, something new in my life was happening. I was learning things. I was assigned to work with the electrician. The ship was being converted into a minesweeper, which meant that we were installing hundreds of heavy duty automobile batteries, and I was in charge of keeping them charged up and in working order, et cetera.

We left Pearl Harbor to convoy the first B-17's going to the Philippines. What we were told was that these small ships were being reassigned to the Philippines, but at the same time we were convoying these planes, and we would be leaving Pearl Harbor at intervals which would place one of those ships between each group of islands, like, Wake and Guam, and Wake and the Philippines, et cetera. In case one of the planes had encountered difficulty and had to ditch, we would be in the area. So we left Pearl Harbor, and it took us thirty-two days to make the trip to Manila because we kept rendezvousing and waiting for planes and et cetera. When we got to Manila, of course, thirty-two days at sea for a small ship like that were quite unusual, so we went into a major overhaul.

I'll never forget my transfer to the Houston. I was down in one of the boilers. I had crawled in, and I was cleaning out the boilers, and I was covered with soot from head to foot. Someone poked their head in and said, "Hey, Schwarz, get outta there and pack your seabag! You're being transferred!" And that was how I found out I was being transferred. To what, I didn't know at the time. I went up, showered, and packed my seabag and went in a boat and was taken to the Houston, and that was how I got on the Houston.

Marcello: The Houston was a beautiful ship, was it not?

Schwarz: Oh, it was like a greyhound going through the water. It was

such a beautiful thing. Of course, I wasn't too happy about going on the Houston. I was very happy in what we called the "dungaree Navy." Life on board the Lark was a lark. We wore dungarees all the time and even went on liberty in dungarees. And to get up in the morning and order what you want for breakfast made it really great duty. I went aboard the Houston, and within ten seconds you immediately knew that you were now in the spit-and-polish Navy with GI regulations, and it was not a happy thing for me. However, I very quickly learned to love the Houston and get into the routine of being on a big ship, and I started to enjoy it.

Marcello: What was your particular function aboard the Houston?

Schwarz: Well, I was a seaman second class. You can't hardly get any lower, so I was assigned to turret number one and the fore-castle. We maintained the fore-castle of the ship, and in battle my battle station was the forward powder magazine, which, again, is as low as you can get. It's as far down below the waterline as you can get in the turret.

Marcello: So your cleaning station was in the area of the fore-castle, and your battle station was in turret number one, more specifically, down in the powder room.

Schwarz: Right, right.

Marcello: Okay, when you went aboard the Houston, to where did it proceed at that point?

Schwarz: Well, this was in June of 1941, and we pretty much stayed in

the Philippine area. We made trips down to Iloilo and Tawitawi. Mostly, I believe it was really shaking the ship down and getting it combat-ready. We were getting a lot of people from different ships in the same manner as I was transferred. All of a sudden, the Houston was getting people transferred and increasing the complement.

Marcello: And I guess by this time, they were pulling everything out of the China Station, were they not?

Schwarz: That's right. Ships were coming back with people who supposedly were on their way back home after a tour of duty, and instead they intercepted and stopped at Manila. You could see that something was building up, and we were being caught up in the middle of something big.

Marcello: In the case of the Houston, could you detect any change in its routine as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to worsen? Could you detect any changes in the Houston's routine?

Schwarz: Yes, there was increased training. We used to constantly gripe because we were being made to hold gun drills for such long periods of time. At that particular time, I was assigned for a period in the shell deck. Now, the shell deck is an area between the turret and the powder magazines where the projectiles are stored and sent up on a hoist into the turret. Now, the projectiles for the eight-inch guns stood about, oh, two-and-a-half to three feet high, and they weighed probably

150 pounds each. They were stored on the deck. The compartment is circular, and they're stored completely around the bulkhead, but then there's a shelf about five feet off the deck, where another couple of rows are stored. On the bottom of each projectile is a lug where . . . when you want the projectile to come off the shelf you have a hoist that comes along, and you put the lug in, and you use the chain until you bring it down. That's in theory. And the projectiles are also covered with a heavy coat of grease. We used to go into maneuvers and gun practice, and we'd ask the old-timers how we were going to get those shells off of the shelf during battle, and they always told us, "Don't worry about it because there has never been a Naval battle more than twenty minutes, and you'll never use up the shells on the decks." The first time we went into battle, we used up every shell on the deck, and guys were lifting the shells off the shelf by hand. It was really quite interesting to see the difference between what you had been taught and what you really ended up doing.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less brings us up to the actual beginning of the war. How well do you remember December 7, 1941? In other words, can you recall what you were doing and how you found out about the news of the Pearl Harbor attack and what your reaction was to that news?

Schwarz: Well, sometime before Pearl Harbor--I don't remember whether it was a week or two weeks or ten days--we were over in Cavite

Navy Yard undergoing repairs, and we had some of our boilers dismantled and parts all over the dock. All of a sudden we received orders to weld up all of the portholes. We took all of the parts off the dock and threw them up on the ship, and we took off. We went down to the south Philippines--Tawitawi and Iloilo and places like that. Of course, at sea we hurriedly put everything back together again, and it was obvious that there was something going on. We also, from that moment on, were at general quarters and Condition Two with the guns manned all the time, so obviously we knew that something was coming, and we were getting ready for it.

Marcello: Okay, describe the actual news itself and what reaction you had to it.

Schwarz: It seems to me, in my recollection, it was a rather uneventful day.

Marcello: It would have been December 8th, Philippines time.

Schwarz: It would be December 8th. We were in a condition of readiness. By that, I mean, we were manning the guns on and off. I remember that general quarters was sounded. We all went to our battle stations, and I remember a short message on the PA system that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and that we were in a condition of war. That's all. It just happened that suddenly and that uneventfully, really.

Marcello: What was the reaction of you and your shipmates? What conversation ensued at that point?

Schwarz: Well, I think at that point, as I mentioned before, we were already in a frame of mind that we wanted to get at the Japanese. There was no doubt in our minds that the Japanese were an enemy of ours and that they had been embarking on a campaign to gobble up territory and that they had to be stopped. It seemed to me that we were almost jubilant about the war starting, and, of course, that soon changed after we got our noses bloodied and we found out what life was really all about. But we were all rather young, and we were ready to go, and we wanted to get at them.

Marcello: You would have been seventeen or maybe eighteen years old at the time?

Schwarz: Seventeen.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese at that time, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your mind? Did you have a stereotype of a typical Japanese?

Schwarz: Everybody did. A typical Japanese was about four foot tall and wore round glasses and was not too intelligent and ate women and little children for breakfast. When they captured people, they broke their ankles so they couldn't run away. That's the Japanese that I looked forward to defeating.

Marcello: How long was this war going to last?

Schwarz: Oh, it couldn't possibly last more than five or six months after we got involved. Even when we got captured, I remembered someone saying, "Well, they'll be here in a few days or a

week or so to get us back."

Marcello: If I'm correct, is it not true that from this time up until very early in February of 1942, the Houston was engaged mainly in convoy duty for the most part?

Schwarz: That's correct. Yes, we made trips down through Borneo, and we made a couple of trips to Australia. We were really doing nothing but convoy work, really.

Marcello: Is this for the most part rather boring work, I mean, as long as you don't have any contact with the enemy and so on?

Schwarz: Yes, of course, it's boring and it's not the way one envisions himself fighting a war. It got to be just routine situations where we were at sea a lot, covering a lot of territory but not seeing too much of the enemy at all.

Marcello: According to the record, the Houston had its first contacts with the Japanese on February 4, 1942. Describe that initial contact as best you can remember. This is, of course, when, I think, the Houston and the Marblehead and then the two Dutch cruisers, the DeRuyter and the Trump, and I guess probably some destroyers and so on were attacked by fifty-four enemy planes.

Schwarz: Of course, I remember vividly the incident that you're talking about. My biggest problem in remembering what happened on the Houston in battle is that I was down below the waterline as far as you could get, and I knew nothing about what was going on except from putting two and two together. For instance, if the 5-inch guns went off, we knew that the bombers were

at a higher level; if we heard the .50-caliber machine guns go off, we got a little worried because, you know, they were pretty close. As opposed to members of the crew who were topside and could actually see everything going on, we were pretty much in the dark, and we could only find out what happened after the fact. Again, I was in the powder magazine of the 8-inch guns, which does absolutely nothing during an air raid. We were just manning our battle stations and waiting for whatever would happen. During an air raid, we really don't get to see anything. We only hear noises.

Marcello: How did that 500-pound bomb hitting the number three turret affect you in your position in the forward part of the ship? Do you remember that incident?

Schwarz: Oh, yes. Of course, we felt it. I mean, it really made the whole ship shake. We had been hearing all kinds of noises. We could hear . . .for instance, if a bomb came near us and exploded, a near miss, we could hear the shrapnel hitting the side of the ship out in the water. It's like a sound booth, you know; you get everything.

My reactions to the 500-pound bomb came after we secured from general quarters. In curiosity I went back aft to see what was going on. Of course, at that point there was a lot of feverish activity, attempting to get the bodies out of the turret, et cetera. I'll never forget. I did have a couple of friends in that turret, which is the main reason I went back

to see how bad it was, and when I got there, they were screaming for someone to go inside the turret and get into the turret to try to get out a couple of bodies. Inside the turret there's a little tiny room where the shells and the powder come up from below and then are passed out a little window, and that little window is the only entrance or exit, and you had to be small to get picked for that duty because, otherwise, you couldn't get in or out the little window.

They were looking for somebody small enough to go in there-- there were two bodies in there--and somebody grabbed me. I was pretty small and thin at the time, and so I was chosen to go in there and I did. One of the fellows in there was a guy I had gone on liberties with. The two bodies were fused together, and I had to break them apart and pull them out. That's when I first found out that it was not going to be fun and games, and it finally hit me that we were in for something distasteful and that war was not all the glory of going out and finishing the Japanese in five weeks.

Marcello: I guess that bomb wiped out just about everybody that was back there, did it not?

Schwarz: That's correct. My understanding . . . I may not be fully correct this, but this is my understanding, that the United States Navy was adopting a procedure that had been developed by the British, whereby when large numbers of planes were

coming over, you could fire your main battery, your 8-inch guns, and possibly hit the planes coming from over the horizon. This is what we were told. Therefore, as opposed to the past, when during an air raid we would not load the 8-inch guns but just man them, we were now loading them. That 500-pound bomb hit that turret at the moment that the full procedure for loading was in effect. The powder hoists were filled with powder and working, and the projectiles were being put in the guns. That's why, when it did hit, the fire swept down one side and across the bottom and up the other side and just got everybody in there.

Marcello: I guess that from there you proceeded into Tjilatjap, did you not?

Schwarz: Right. That's correct. We proceeded into Tjilatjap to bury our dead and make repairs. We preceded the Marblehead by a day because she had been hit in her rudder area and was having difficulty steering. We buried something like forty-eight men in Tjilatjap and then went about the business of putting the ship back in order. The next day is when the Marblehead came in, and we were then assigned the duty of burying their dead and trying to get her back in shape.

Marcello: I also gather that the crew by this time had come to have a great deal of respect for the skipper, Captain Rooks. Is that correct?

Schwarz: That's true. Again, I'm drawing upon my memories of recollections of things that happened when I was very young, so my impressions about what went on were obviously affected by my youth or my

being a seaman, my lack of knowledge of what was going on and all, but we had heard many stories about Captain Rooks. I was aboard the Houston when he took command from Captain Oldendorf, and, of course, everybody wonders about what the new skipper is going to be like. Well, the stories went around that he was fresh out of war college and that he was untried-- which we all were. But after our first meeting with the Japanese, then the legends started to go through the ship about this great skipper, where he had actually watched the bomb bay doors of the planes and would time the bombs as they come out and have the ship steered so that we had never been hit. Of course, this 500-pound bomb was a fluke. It was the last bomb out of the last plane out of the last run, and somehow or other it had separated itself from the stick and had hit us.

Marcello: It supposedly was out of its pattern.

Schwarz: Right, exactly. It was a fluke, you know.

Marcello: How long did you stay in Tjilatjap getting repairs and burying your dead and so on? Of course, that number three turret was gone; it was never back in operation again.

Schwarz: No, no. As a matter of fact, we started unloading all the ammunition from the number three turret and distributing it between numbers one and two. My memory is not that good in terms of how many days we stayed in Tjilatjap because I'll tell you, to be very honest with you, those days started to run together. From the exuberance of youthful wanting to get in a fight with

the enemy, we soon settled down into a day-by-day routine of, you know, "what's coming next," and it all then became hard work and tension and not so much excitement anymore.

Marcello: I gather you're still doing convoy duty, and you're getting very little sleep.

Schwarz: That's correct. Those were really hectic days, and I think that it was really a great test of the training and the morale and the general attitude of the men on the ship because from that period on until the day we were sunk, we had very little routine. You could never count on a night's sleep; you could never count on getting a good meal. Everything just changed into a period of almost being in limbo; you just went from day to day and from one event to another.

Marcello: The Japanese, of course, had complete control of the air.

Schwarz: Everywhere,

Marcello: And they're fast getting complete control of the sea, too.

Schwarz: Right. That's right. It just seemed at that point that it was a constant withdrawal. We kept getting farther and farther from the Philippines, and it just seemed like that the circle was getting tighter and tighter and tighter all the time.

Marcello: Maybe at this point we ought to bring the story of the Houston up to the Battle of the Java Sea, which, of course, occurred on February 27, 1942. What do you remember about the Battle of the Java Sea?

Schwarz: Well, I think--if I might interrupt your train of thought for

a minute--I think there was an event that happened prior to that that I think is one of the most memorable events in my life, and I'm sure in many others, and that was when we attempted to convoy four transports of reinforcements--troops--up to Timor. We had met them in Darwin harbor in Australia. We were, as I said, attempting to reinforce Timor to stop the Japanese takeover.

We didn't get too far out to sea when we were discovered by a large number of Japanese planes. These four transports were rather old, slow ships, and I believe that two of them were filled with American troops. I believe that's the make-up of the convoy. When we were attacked, Captain Rooks put on a display of seamanship and just pure guts that I believe will be remembered by . . . certainly by everybody on those transports for the rest of their lives. He used the Houston as a one-man defense of those four ships. Moving the ship rapidly in and out of the convoy and firing constantly, we soon became the target, which is what he wanted, I suppose; and the bombers really went after us, and there were a couple of times when people on the ships told us later that they thought we had just disappeared from the sea. Large numbers of bombs would explode, and the ship would just disappear and then come back up a little farther. We drove off the bombers without a single direct hit. There was only one near miss on one transport, and one man was killed, I believe, as a result of that.

Marcello: I believe this is the incident that occurred sometime around the 16th of February.

Schwarz: That's correct. That's correct.

Marcello: Was it also around this time that the Houston was getting the nickname the "Galloping Ghost of the Java Coast?"

Schwarz: That's right. And that was a result of Japanese broadcasts indicating that they had sunk us. They sunk us on December 8th as we were leaving the Philippines . . . they kept reporting that we had been sunk, so we ended up getting the name of the "Galloping Ghost."

Getting back to February 16th, when we put back into Darwin-- I remember it vividly--the four transports . . . oh, and getting back a little bit . . . my memory starts to come back a little more. The night before we went out on that attempt to reinforce Timor, we had been tied up near those transports, and we had been throwing cigarettes and PX items, candy and all, to the soldiers on the transports and got a very close feeling of comradeship between the two, although we had never seen each other before and never even touched each other. But throwing our cigarettes over to them and then catching the cigarettes, and them thanking us, it meant something later.

After we had defended those four ships against the bombers, we aborted the mission and went back to Darwin. We let the four transports go in the harbor, and then the Houston went down between them, and they lined the rails and cheered at the top

of their voices. I shall never forget that. That was one of the most exciting moments of my life, to have those people so thankful for us actually having saved them. I think that that's an incident that should not be forgotten in the overall picture.

Marcello: From time to time during this period, you were, of course, operating with the ships of other nations whether they be Dutch or British or Australian or whatever. I would assume that this caused some problems in communications and maneuvers and things of that nature. Again, maybe as a seaman second class, you wouldn't have been familiar with this sort of thing.

Schwarz: I was going to mention that because, being a seaman, I really wasn't made privy to any of the inner workings of the higher echelon, but, of course, the stories always filtered down. We knew that we were having problems in that the observers from the different countries were stationed aboard various ships, and they were having great difficulty in communicating. We also knew that we were part of a rag-tag outfit. I mean, here we had some Dutch ships and some British ships and Australian ships, and really none of them were top-notch, modern vessels. The Houston, as beautiful as she was, and as good a ship as she was, had not been refitted with any modern gear. We had no radar. So we knew that we were members of a very hastily-put-together operation.

Marcello: Okay, this again brings us up to the Battle of the Java Sea,

which, I guess, is one of the more important incidents in the life of the Houston. What do you remember from the Battle of the Java Sea? By this time, like you pointed out earlier, the ring is being narrowed even more.

Schwarz: Oh, is it! Yes. I guess it became quite obvious to everybody now that we were really fighting a defensive battle for survival at this point. There were rumors that the Japanese fleet was advancing down through the Celebes and through Borneo and that we were going out to look for them.

I remember leaving Surabaya at dusk to go out and find the Japanese fleet. There was always a rain squall when we were leaving Surabaya at night and gray, overcast skies. The whole atmosphere was one of almost apprehension or depression. Even the weather was gray and dismal. Of course, these are things I'm remembering now in looking back. We would go out at night, and we would go out for hours and hours. Of course, I was stuck down below in the powder magazines and didn't know anything about what was going on.

Then we'd go back to Surabaya again. We'd have an air raid the next day, and we'd be up all day, and we'd go out the next night. All we knew was that the Japanese were coming, and we were going out to meet them. Of course, when we did meet them, we had one heck of a time. Again, most everything that I know about what occurred had to be pieced together later because I was down blind in my battle station.

Marcello: Do you remember the 8-inch shell that pierced the Houston somewhere up forward during this Battle of the Java Sea?

Schwarz: Well, again, I only found out about it later.

Marcello: I thought that perhaps, since it had pierced the ship up forward, you may have had some sort of knowledge of it.

Schwarz: Yes, well, we knew about it; we heard it. We were obviously in contact with other parts of the ship, but in lull periods we would get some information about what had transpired. But for the most part, really, unless you're topside, you're so busy doing your job or waiting to do your job that you do not know what's going on until later.

Marcello: By this time, of course, that is, by the time of the Battle of the Java Sea, the Houston is throwing out a lot of those 8-inch shells, so I guess you are pretty busy during this period.

Schwarz: Oh, yes. You know, all the old stories from the old-timers about, "Don't worry, kid; no battle lasts more than fifteen or twenty minutes," really became a joke with us. We'd be passing powder up for hour after hour, and we'd say, "Oh, boy, these twenty-minute battles are really something." We were really very, very busy, and you really don't have time to even think about what you're doing. You just have the urgency of doing your job. But we were really pouring out the fire.

Of course, being down below, all we knew . . . we could feel the motions of the ship. We knew we were going fast, and we knew we were maneuvering, and we were turning. Other than

that, we really had to wait until the battle was over to find out what happened,

Marcello: This obviously has to be somewhat disconcerting, that is, being in the position where you were and really not knowing what was going on. The uncertainty must have been very disconcerting.

Schwarz: There's no doubt about it--it's frightening. It's a frightening experience, especially when things get real hot and you know you're being hit and you know that any second you expect a projectile to come through that wall that separates you from the water. It is a frightening experience, and when you're very busy in the middle of battle, you get no information at all except instructions on passing up the ammunition; so you really don't know what's going on, and your mind is left to wander as to what may happen.

Marcello: Well, after the Battle of the Java Sea, there isn't very much left except the Houston, is there?

Schwarz: That's correct. When we came out of the final Battle of the Java Sea, the Houston was the biggest thing afloat, and, of course, the Berth was still afloat. At that point the fleet, if you call it a fleet, began to split up. It was obvious to those that were calling the shots that we were no longer a viable force, and so now it became a matter of getting out what they could get out, I would imagine, because we certainly were not an instrument that could do any damage to the Japanese after the Battle of the Java Sea.

Marcello: The Houston was pretty lucky up to this point. After that disaster of February 4th, when the 500-pound bomb hit the number three turret, the Houston really hadn't sustained too much damage since that point.

Schwarz: That's correct. Of course, we had many air attacks, but we had always been successful in dodging the bombs or driving the planes off. Even tied up at the docks at Surabaya, we never got hit. When we first went into action in the Java Sea, we were well out of range of the danger. We were able to shell the enemy, and from what I understand, we sustained some damage on them without suffering any damage of our own. It was only at the point when we were ordered to close in that the enemy started to zero in on us. Even then, the Houston seemed to be able to go through those waters and not really get hurt too much.

Marcello: So after the Battle of the Java Sea, you proceed back into Tjilatjap for a very, very short period of time, do you not?

Schwarz: That's right.

Marcello: And then, of course, the Houston and the Perth get orders to get out of there.

Schwarz: No, after the Battle of the Java Sea, we didn't go into Tjilatjap. The Battle of the Java Sea was just above Surabaya, which is at the eastern end of Java. When we started to disperse, whatever destroyers were left, some of them went around the eastern end through Bali Straits and places like that. The Houston and

the Perth were ordered to Batavia. We went into Batavia, and, of course, rumors started to go through the ship then. Well, we were supposedly on our way home. We were going to make a run for it and go home. No, then we weren't going home. We were supposedly going around the western end of the island and over to Tjilatjap on the southern end to pick up American troops and evacuate them to Australia. So you had your choice. You could take either story.

We attempted to refuel in Batavia, and my understanding is-- and I'm not sure whether this is correct--that we could not get all of the oil that we wanted. Also, I understand--and, again, this is only hearsay--that Dutch patrol bombers had given us a signal of "clear," to go through the Sunda Strait. We left Batavia that night, the night of February 28th, and started to proceed east toward the Sunda Strait. Of course, we then ran into the Japanese invasion forces landing on Java in the Bantum Bay area.

Marcello: I guess by this time everything was scarce, was it not--fuel, ammunition, so on and so forth?

Schwarz: We had very little ammunition left after the Java Sea Battle. We had already taken all of the ammunition out of the disabled turret three and dispersed it up into turrets one and two. We were firing star shells, you know--ammunition that you normally use in practice. In other words, we were giving them everything including the kitchen sink.

Marcello: Okay, so describe the end of the Houston.

Schwarz: Well, of course, from my vantage point, or disadvantage point, I knew we were in one hell of a battle because, boy, we just shot everything we had. As I said, I'm down . . . general quarters had been called so quickly that night that the only clothing that I had on was a pair of khaki pants. We had been issued two sets of full khaki Marine uniforms. As a little sidelight, we were told when we were issued these uniforms that they were protection against flash burns. I could never understand why we couldn't wear dungarees to cover our legs and arms, but then the next story we got was that a transport going to Wake Island with supplies had to put into Manila instead because Wake had fallen; and they had to get rid of the khakis some way, so they made us buy two sets each. Anyway, we had khaki uniforms. General quarters was called, and all I managed to get on was my pair of khaki pants.

Marcello: In terms of time, this is about eleven o'clock or 11:15 at night, is it not?

Schwarz: That's correct. As I said before, we knew we were in one hell of a battle because, boy, we just started shooting everything. Of course, being down where I was, we didn't know what we were shooting at or anything else. The speakers on the telephones could just hear all kinds of things going on: "There's another cruiser over there; we hit one over there!" It was really pandemonium. The ship was moving at great speeds and making

all kinds of maneuvers, and we were shooting like crazy.

Marcello: One historian described this as a "barroom brawl."

Schwarz: Oh, that's exactly it. It was just a knock-down, drag-out affair. Of course, as it turns out, we really, literally, ran into the invasion force, and it was like a turkey shoot.

Marcello: In other words, you were in among the Japanese troop transports in addition to their warships and torpedo boats and whatever else they had out there.

Schwarz: That's correct. Of course, the Perth went down first and went down rather quickly. The Houston continued on, and as I said before, we were shooting everything, including .30-caliber machine guns, at Japanese ships. Of course, very rapidly it became obvious that we were in trouble, and the ship started to lose speed. Down where we were, we knew that we were in trouble. The next thing we knew, we were given orders to abandon ship.

Marcello: Could you feel the Japanese shells hitting the Houston?

Schwarz: Oh, yes, yes. We could feel . . . we knew we were being hit because we could feel all of the jarring and the explosions. When the torpedoes would go off, we could feel it.

Marcello: I guess the torpedoes really gave you quite a jolt, did they not?

Schwarz: Oh, those are the things that really make you stop and think. We got word to abandon ship, and we were in quite a predicament where we were because in theory, when you go to abandon ship,

there's supposed to be a repair party to open the hatches and let you out. Of course, all the hatches are battened down very tightly. Well, no repair party was there to open our hatches. Either they'd been killed or were busy or whatever. I don't know. I never did find out. But we had a mallet which we could use in an emergency to undog the hatch from our side, which we proceeded to do. We let the crew out of the powder magazine inside. I was stationed at the hoist, sending the powder upstairs, up topside, and then there was a group of people in the magazine behind us. We let all of them out into our compartment, and then we decided to undog the hatches and get out of there.

I led the group. I had the mallet in my hand, and I opened up the dogs. Of course, when you open up the hatch, you don't know what's on the other side. Maybe that compartment has been hit and it's on fire; maybe it's flooded. So you really don't know, and each time you open up another hatch, you go through this trauma of not knowing whether you're going to be alive in the next instance. We got up okay on the next deck, and we started to make our way up forward. Everything was filled with smoke, and you could hardly breathe. You couldn't see at all; everything was pitch black with smoke and powder. I hollered back and said, "Okay, everybody put one hand over your nose and mouth and one hand on the shoulder of the guy in front of you, and we'll try to get out!" And

I led the way,

I remember going up another deck. At that point I felt the guy's hand behind me leave my shoulder. For what reason I don't know, the guy behind me went left toward the port side of the ship, and I continued going forward through these compartments on the starboard side.

A short time later, a torpedo hit on the port side, and it knocked me off my feet and knocked me unconscious. I found out later that the entire group behind me that had let their hands go off my shoulder were killed by the torpedo. As I say, I was knocked unconscious, and I came to and I knew that I was in the Marine compartment because I felt the bulkhead, and I felt their gun rack where they store their rifles. So I knew where I was then, and then I quickly made my way up topside.

When I come out of the compartment and onto the deck, it was like the Fourth of July at an amusement park. We were dead in the water. We were just drifting or floating, and the Japanese were . . . it seemed like they were out there ten feet away with searchlights on us, and, I mean, stuff was coming at us like crazy. Shells were exploding all over the place.

Marcello: They were even raking the decks at this time, were they not?

Schwarz: Sure they were--with machine-gun fire. It was just a duck-shoot. They had us surrounded, and they were just sitting out there shooting. Of course, guys were running all over the place.

I came up on deck, and I had no life jacket, and I started to go forward to my Abandon Ship station, which was in the forecastle, right up at the front of the ship. Some guy passed me, running, and he stopped and said, "Don't you have a life jacket?" I said, "No," and he said, "Here, take this one." He had one on, and he had one in his hand. So I took it, and I put it on, and I went up forward where the rest of the guys from my division were forming, those that were still alive.

I'll never forget, orders came to cancel the Abandon Ship order. By that time, a lot of guys had bailed out already. I saw guys running past me and going right off the bow of the ship which is darn high. The Houston had a very high bow, and the ship was still . . . as I say, we weren't underway, but she was drifting quite rapidly. I remember looking down at the water and watching them dive in the water and then go past the ship just like little corks.

I decided not to do that. I went up forward to wait for orders, and I'll never forget Ensign Nelson jumping up on top of number two turret and ordering us all back to our battle stations. And everybody (chuckle) said, "What battle stations?" We had no more battle stations. Our compartments were flooded, were on fire. We had no more shells left. So there were no more battle stations.

And then I remember shells were exploding all around us.

Pieces of the teakwood deck were flying in the air, and . . . , oh, to get back, that was . . . I did not have a life jacket at that point. That's right. I came out of the compartment, and all I had on was the pants. I was bare from my waist up. The shells were flying, and hot shrapnel was flying all around. I remember a guy named Barrett, from my division, who knocked me down to the deck and fell on top of me. He was fully clothed, and he had his life jacket on, and I guess he figured he would protect me from all this hot shrapnel. Then when I got up is when the guy ran past me and said, "Here, take the life jacket," and I took the life jacket and put it on. Very shortly, we got word to abandon ship.

Marcello: Proceed with the story in terms of how you abandoned ship and got into the water.

Schwarz: Okay, I went down on the port side of the bow, and I knew that there was a boom, a boat boom, that is let out when you're at anchor, and your boats tie up to this boom. This boom is a few feet below the deck level, so I went over the side and lowered myself onto the boom, and then I jumped in from the boom. I was not jumping at full height down from the deck of the ship. I started to swim as rapidly as I could away from the ship. I remember the sensation. Shells were exploding in the water, and I remember my stomach hitting my backbone, just kept bouncing back and forth.

Marcello: This is from the concussion.

Schwarz: From the concussion in the water, I remember that I only had one objective in mind, and that was to get away from the ship because the suction would take me down with it. I didn't even look back at it. A lot of guys can tell you very vividly of their last glimpse of the ship going under. I can't. I just headed out and just kept going as fast as I could. I found swimming with the life jacket very difficult because they were not the new, modern Mae West inflatable ones, but these were the old-fashioned kapok canvas jackets that just completely enveloped you, and you couldn't even move.

But anyway, I kept swimming, and, of course, then everything started to quiet down. The ship had sunk, and the ocean was dark and silent again. I could hear occasional screams from some of the guys in the water, and then I embarked on an attempt to save my life and reach land. I swam for hours, all by myself, and I didn't meet a single soul.

Marcello: You're really not too far from the land, are you?

Schwarz: No, we're not far from land. As a matter of fact, I could see the outline of a mountain or a hill in the distance,

Marcello: I hear everybody talk about that.

Schwarz: Right. I knew that that was Java, so I started out for Java. Sometime during the night, I heard boats going through the water; I could hear the engines. They were some sort of small craft, but fairly large, but yet not ships but boats. I could see searchlights in the water, and I could hear machine-gun

fire. Again, as I said, I was all alone at this point.

I saw a boat approaching me, and I became very frightened. I knew that from what I could hear that the Japanese were machine-gunning in the water, so I decided that the only thing that I could do would be to attempt to make them think I was dead already. I tucked my face up underneath the collar of my jacket and got an air pocket there, and I just bobbed up and down in the water.

What happened after that, I often look back on and think how strange it was. I heard the boat come up to me. They shut the motors down, just to an idle. I could hear a foreign language being spoken; I could hear them jabbering away. Then I had the strangest sensation. I could "feel" a searchlight on me. Then I felt myself being poked with some sort of a hook or a pole, and I could hear the jabbering going on. Then I felt the searchlight to go out. The boat started up again and took off and left me.

Marcello: What kind of thoughts are going through your mind during this period?

Schwarz: Scared, scared, scared! I mean, you know, I really . . . well, to get into a little deeper sense, at that point in my life, I had been born and raised Roman Catholic. Thinking back on my entire background, I had been an altar boy and a choir boy. I was very church-oriented as a child. But I found out at that time of need that my orientation had been one of a God that I

feared. What I mean is, I tried to pray that night and seek help, but I didn't find any feeling of association. I prayed a lot, but I didn't feel that it did any good. And, boy, I prayed; I mean, boy, I really prayed.

I continued swimming, frightened the whole time, but with one thing in mind--to get to that land that I could see. I found that the life jacket started to cut my armpits very deeply, almost to the bone, really, but I was afraid to let it go because it was my only . . . my last hold on life, really. It became a hindrance; it became water-logged after several hours. Again, I was afraid to let it go. So I really was battling the ocean and the life jacket and everything else.

Sometime during the early morning, I came across another Houston survivor in the water, a pharmacist's mate, and we started swimming together for a while. But I started to develop very severe leg cramps, I suppose from my many hours at battle stations and lack of sleep and everything else.

Marcello: Are you just floating and drifting aimlessly, or are you still trying to reach that land?

Schwarz: I'm trying to reach that land. We could see it in the horizon--just this vague outline of a mountain or a hill. The pharmacist's mate became a little angry at me because he felt that I was slowing him up because I had to constantly stop and try to work out the terrible cramps I had in my legs. I finally told him that it was a big ocean, and he might just as well take off

and go, which he did. He left me, and I didn't see anybody else after that.

Toward morning, I could start to see surf way in the distance, and I could hear surf. But everytime I would take one stroke forward, I'd go back two strokes because the currents were extremely swift. I just couldn't get anywhere. The best I could do was to . . . I got to a certain point, and the best I could do was to stay at that point. I couldn't go forward. This struggle went on for hours.

Finally, just after dawn, a Japanese landing boat came up, and at that point I was glad to get out of the water. They pulled me out of the water, and that's when I first met J.O. Burge. He and I were picked up by the same barge, and we were brought in to the beach.

Marcello: When you were picked up and brought aboard that barge, did anything eventful happen at that point?

Schwarz: Not really. They didn't mistreat us. They just threw us down into the bottom of the barge. We didn't understand them. We just sat there wondering what was going to happen next.

Marcello: In other words, they did not necessarily handle you gently, but not really roughly, either.

Schwarz: Right. That's correct. They did not mistreat us at that point.

Marcello: Did you believe all the stories and the rumors about the fact that the Japanese did not take prisoners?

Schwarz: Oh, yes, yes! Listen, I still thought that I was being brought

somewhere to be chopped into pieces. I just figured that we had "bought it," you know. But at that point we were so exhausted and so beyond any more physical endurance that that was it. I mean, we had been at battle stations for months; we hadn't had any food; we had just fought some fierce battles; and we had just fought the ocean for six or eight hours. That was it. I mean, there was just wasn't another ounce left.

They took us into the beach where we were united with several other Houston survivors--not a large crowd, just a very small group, something like seventeen or eighteen of us. The Japanese were unloading their supplies and personnel, and I'll never forget. I came out of the water and got rid of my life jacket, and I just couldn't stand up--I was so exhausted. I spotted a box laying there with Japanese writing on it. I didn't know what it was, and I went over, and I sat down on it. When I did, a Jap came over and just started clobbering me. He just beat me and knocked me right off of that box. So whatever was in the box, I wasn't supposed to sit on it.

Marcello: How did he knock you off the box?

Schwarz: He just came over and smacked me--knocked me right off the box (chuckle).

Marcello: Smacked you with his fist or hand?

Schwarz: Oh, yes, yes. We sat around for a while. They put guards on us, and we sat just there.

Marcello: These guys are bigger than what you thought they were, too.

Schwarz: Oh, yes. Well, they looked pretty big then (chuckle). They weren't all four foot, and they all didn't have the big glasses. As a matter of fact, they were pretty frightening, really. Again, at that point I wasn't mistreated to any great extent except getting knocked off of that box. Whatever I did, I apparently deserved it (chuckle), but I don't know what it was.

So then they started taking us one by one into the . . . we were on the beach at the edge of a stand of palm trees. A Jap took me into the trees, and he pulled out a pistol, and he held it up to my head. In very, very clear, precise English he asked me if I ever wanted to see my family again, and I said, "Of course, I do." He said then, "You will answer my questions correctly." He asked me who I was, what ship I came off of. Then he started asking me questions about how many American airplanes were in the area, which was really a joke because if we had seen one American airplane, we'd have been jubilant. Then he wanted to know how many American battleships were around, and he got very belligerent with me.

Marcello: He didn't like your answers, in other words.

Schwarz: No. It seemed to me that he wanted me to tell him that there were a lot more American ships around, which I couldn't do. Then, of course, with regard to his questions about how many planes were on Java and all, no seaman second class in the Navy would have known that, anyway.

It was interesting, to backtrack a little bit, when he asked me my name, he pointed out to me that I was German and that Germany was an ally of Japan, which didn't mean a heck of a lot to me at that point (chuckle). But, anyway, he interrogated me for a while, and then he brought me back to the group.

We then started out on a three . . . I believe it was three days and four nights of marching, pulling carts loaded with supplies and ammunition. What I gathered was that we had sunk the ship that held the little ponies that were to pull these carts. These were very large carts made out of tubular steel, like piping, with two large rubber-tired wheels on them. The carts were loaded with all types of supplies. One prisoner was put in each cart, in the front of it, and assigned a guard with a rifle and a bayonet. We started out going where I don't know, but we went down . . . we were on a macadam highway--this group of eighteen. I believe it was eighteen Americans. This trip lasted about . . . my recollection is a little bit vague because at many times I was unconscious during that time, but I think it lasted about three days and four nights, something in that area.

Marcello: At this point how would you describe your own physical condition?

Schwarz: Extremely weak, extremely hungry, extremely thirsty.

Marcello: You had not been fed at all?

Schwarz: We had not been fed at all.

- Marcello: And by this time, that is, by the time you started pushing and pulling those carts, how long had you been a prisoner?
- Schwarz: My recollection is that that occurred sometime in the early afternoon of the day I was captured. I was captured sometime after dawn because it was light. It was on March 1st, and that same afternoon we headed off the beach with the supplies.
- Marcello: What sort of clothing did you have at this point?
- Schwarz: I had the same pair of pants, no shoes, no shirt, no hat, no nothing. A great many things happened on that march. Most of them are vague recollections that flash in my mind.
- Marcello: There's something else that I want to get clear here, and maybe I misunderstood you awhile ago. You mentioned that these were relatively large carts, and then you also mentioned that one prisoner was assigned to each cart. Could one prisoner pull one of these big carts?
- Schwarz: Well, this is the point. It was extremely difficult, although once you started they rolled fairly easily. They had good wheels with rubber tires on them, but they were intended to be pulled by a small pony, from what I'm told. But one American equals one small pony in their minds, I guess.
- Marcello: How large would the carts be in comparison to the bed of a regular pick-up truck?
- Schwarz: Oh, smaller.
- Marcello: Smaller than that?
- Schwarz: Smaller, yes. I would say they were maybe half the length of

a pick-up bed and slightly more narrow. But to me they were quite large; I mean, it's not something that you would pull around in your back yard, you know.

Marcello: Bigger than a wheelbarrow for sure.

Schwarz: Oh, for sure! Bigger than five or six wheelbarrows. They were quite large.

The events that took place in the next few days are . . . some of them are very vague in my mind, and then I run into periods where I'm very lucid.

Marcello: When you say you were unconscious, I assume that you were still on your feet and you were still functioning, but you weren't really aware about what was going on around you.

Schwarz: Right. There were great periods, or long periods, rather, where, because of a great physical weakness . . . I mean, we were absolutely at the end of our rope when we were picked up, and then to just get a couple of hours of rest on the beach, no food, and to be put into this situation . . . so there were times when we were . . . well, the only reason we were going was because the guy was prodding us with a bayonet and making very free use of his rifle butt. Everytime you looked like you were staggering or stopping, you got hit on the head or the back or the back of the legs with the rifle butt, or you got poked with the bayonet.

I remember that this went on day and night. We didn't stop. We stopped whenever the guards got tired. We stopped

for five or ten minutes, and we'd go. They did not feed us; they did not give us any water. During the night I remember all kinds of military equipment passing us on the road--trucks, small tank-type vehicles.

Marcello: At night would you stop and sleep?

Schwarz: At night, again, if there was a lot of trucks or something coming along the road, they'd pull us off the side of the road and let us collapse. When all the trucks went by, whoosh, we'd go again.

I remember one point where I lost consciousness completely, and my last recollection is that I was falling, and the Jap was beating me with his rifle butt. I apparently passed out, but he got me going on my feet again because later in the morning I came up to my group again. I had fallen way behind, and when they saw me, they said that they thought that he had killed me because they saw me fall and they passed me, and then they heard a rifle shot. So they thought that he had done me in.

Marcello: How many of these carts were there altogether?

Schwarz: Well, my recollection is that we each had one.

Marcello: So there were eighteen prisoners and eighteen carts?

Schwarz: Right.

Marcello: And eighteen guards.

Schwarz: Yes, that's right. We had one guard with each. There may have been a few extra Japs around--I don't know--but there were enough.

Marcello: In the meantime what sort of a reception are you getting from any natives that you might see along the road and so on?

Schwarz: Extremely poor.

Marcello: They knew who's winning by this time.

Schwarz: They were very hostile toward us, and, as a matter of fact, in some places they would run out and hit us with sticks and throw things at us. They were very hostile.

I remember one point . . . , during the day, the asphalt highway would melt because of the extreme heat. We had no footwear at all. I remember once we came into a small town, and the Japs stopped us to give us a rest, and they took us into a small one-room schoolhouse. We went inside, and my feet were one blister from toe to heel. A little Jap came along, and I'm sure he was nothing but a private. He came by and he made me put my feet up on the desk in front of me in this schoolhouse, and he took a pair of tweezers, and he ripped the soles of my feet off. Then he poured iodine all over them, and then he ordered me outside. Outside the schoolhouse was a gravel path, and I had to walk over the gravel path to get to where the carts were. I've seen these Indian fire-walkers, and I'm going to tell you that that smarts (chuckle). Yes, that was really a horrible thing.

Marcello: He probably thought he was doing you a favor.

Schwarz: I would imagine. Finally, we ended our trip. We got to wherever we were supposed to go, I guess. My group was housed in,

again, a small schoolhouse alongside of a canal behind which was a larger house where there were some Japanese, a small detachment of some type. In our group by that time were the original Americans, whatever it was--seventeen, eighteen, nineteen of us, something like that--two Englishmen that the Japs had picked up along that road that were members of a radio group, and one Dutch soldier. That was our prison camp.

Marcello: How long were you to remain here?

Schwarz: Okay, we stayed there for the entire period that the main group were in Serang Theater and Serang Jail, so that would be about five or six weeks.

Marcello: So I guess you lucked out to some extent. Describe what your quarters were like inside.

Schwarz: It was a small schoolhouse with nothing in it--it was bare--and we just slept on the floor. We were not seriously mistreated at any point. While we didn't eat well, we certainly didn't starve. The Japs gave us food when they got their rations--this little detachment of Japs. They also brought us a large snake one time--allowed us to kill it and skin it and eat it.

Marcello: By this time, you were hungry enough to eat snakes and things of that nature.

Schwarz: Oh, yes. Oh, I had no problems with food. I'll never forget. Having come from the city, I wasn't used to some of the things that the old farm boys were used to. I'll never forget that the Japs gave us a couple of live chickens, and it was the

first time I was taught on how to wring the neck of a chicken. I did it, but it was a little repulsive to me.

I'll never forget, also, that we . . . as I said, we were alongside of this canal which had little dams or dikes on both ends, and a duck was in that canal--one lonely, single duck. The Japs gave us permission one day to go get the duck. Well, if you want to see something, you ought to see a bunch of guys in the canal trying to catch a duck. We'd get near it, and he'd go under the water and come up on the other side, and I don't believe we got the duck.

Another time, the Japs spotted a native on the other side of the canal with a couple of goats, and the Japs said to us, "If you can go get one of the goats, go get it." We went after the goat, and we got one. We almost got killed by the native; he was really going crazy.

But by and large, the experience was not too traumatic. We were not abused; we were not worked. We just were there.

Marcello: It probably got a little boring after a while, did it not, in a sense?

Schwarz: Yes, in a sense. If we got bored at that point, thinking, "Gee, what the heck is this, just sitting around doing nothing?" it wasn't too long after that that we'd have been mighty thankful to go back to that boring experience.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you ate snake here and that you had chicken from time to time, and you even tried to get a duck.

Were the Japanese actually supplying anything out of their commissary, such as rice and so on?

Schwarz: Well, as I say, we were getting fed from whatever rations they were getting for that detachment. What apparently was happening was that the Japanese had come across all these prisoners now, and they didn't know what to do with them. They had no instructions or orders, and this was the period of time when they were deciding what to do with us. I suppose all these little groups were around somewhere.

Marcello: I guess this was pretty good duty for these Japanese guards, also, was it not?

Schwarz: Sure, sure.

Marcello: They were staying off the front lines if nothing else.

Schwarz: Well, assuming that there was a battle going on, which I found out later there wasn't, these guys were in good shape.

Marcello: And so they weren't really bothering you at all.

Schwarz: No. We stayed there . . . excuse me. We didn't stay there five or six weeks. We stayed there a relatively short time, maybe a week or so. Then we were taken to a town called Rangkasbitung and put into a civilian jail. Rangkasbitung is a fairly good-sized little village, big enough to have a large masonry jailhouse. We were placed in this jail in cells. The jail was filled with civilian prisoners, but there were some empty cells, and they put us in these cells. The cells consisted of a slanted, wooden shelf that became your bed--

everyone sleeping alongside of each other on this shelf--with a large board going along the top, which was your pillow. It had a bucket, a wooden bucket, in the corner which were the bathroom facilities. Again, we were not mistreated unduly at this point.

Marcello: Were you locked in these cells?

Schwarz: We were locked in the cells constantly. Outside the cells in this jail was quite a nice courtyard, a little compound, and we finally convinced them to let us go out and walk around as exercise. We were not mistreated at all. We were not fed well. We got a little rice a couple of times a day--slops.

Marcello: How much rice did you get per serving per meal?

Schwarz: Just a small bowlful, that's all. They would come around with a bucket and scoop out a little rice, or sometimes it would be rice mixed with some kind of a liquid.

Marcello: When you say a "bowl," are you talking about the equivalent of a cereal bowl or something like that?

Schwarz: Yes. Some guys had . . . the army guys, the British, they had their mess kits. The Houston people had nothing. I don't remember, really, what they gave us. It seems to me that we had coconut shells and things that we had picked up along the way.

Marcello: You were already beginning to improvise at this point.

Schwarz: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, very rapidly. Once that horrible march was over, we then were able to have time to start to think about

our survival. During that week or two that we were in that schoolhouse, we were able to gather up whatever we could--a clay bowl or a coconut shell. Most of us, I think, had coconut shells that we had broken open.

Marcello: I guess the natives are "fair game" even at this early point. In other words, if you can steal something from them, so much the better so far as you're concerned.

Schwarz: Right, right. Exactly, exactly. Well, very rapidly it became a matter of survival. You wouldn't dream of stealing anything from your friend sleeping next to you, but, by God, if a Jap left a bowl of rice somewhere, or a native left a hand of bananas, you know, it was fair game.

Marcello: Were the Japanese preparing any of this food for you, or did you have to prepare your own rice and so on?

Schwarz: No, it was all prepared for us at this point. We had some interesting things happen in that jail.

Marcello: At this point there's still the same original group, is that correct?

Schwarz: The original group, right, and these two Englishmen and . . .

Marcello: And the Dutchman.

Schwarz: And the Dutchman. "Pinky" King was with me in my cell, and he was an extremely funny person. We always found a lot to laugh and joke about. Of course, at that time we were of the opinion that the Americans were probably landing on the island right now, and we'd be out of there in a week or so,

so we weren't really too concerned.

Marcello: What do you talk about during this period of the enforced idleness, so to speak?

Schwarz: Everything. You learn about everybody's childhood and their favorite dishes. Actually, if there were no cruelty and mental torture and illness involved, it's a great period of time for learning, you know, about other people--who they are and what they are, the English, the Dutch.

I found my whole experience one of great value to me in that I think it helped form me into whatever I am now. I was at a very early age in my life, and this exposure to other people in this period of time and being able to absorb what other people are about, I think, helped make me what I became later, good or bad.

Marcello: You're still seventeen years old at this point.

Schwarz: Right, I'm still seventeen.

Marcello: You mentioned that "Pinky" King was a great morale booster in terms of a sense of humor?

Schwarz: Great, great. Great sense of humor. We then, again, not being forced to work, with plenty of time on our hands, did a lot of talking and always looked for something to break the monotony in terms of a practical joke or whatever. There was a fellow in my cell by the name of "Red" Krekan, also a Houston survivor, who had been up the river (Yangtze) in China for a while, and, of course, we always joked about the guys who were up the river,

you know, that they were a little bit flaky and off the wall. "Red" acted as if he was, and I suspect he really was, to an extent. The two Englishmen were also in my cell.

Marcello: How many were there of you in each cell?

Schwarz: I believe that there were about eight, I think, or seven . . . something like that. The two Englishmen were in my cell, and one of them was very feminine in behavior, and also very timid and shy, so it was very difficult for him to use that wooden bucket in the corner in front of everybody. "Red" Krekan became aware of that very early, so "Red" Krekan took on the role of being a sex-hungry sailor from China. He started making passes at the Englishman just for the hell of it, and we had more fun over that. This poor Englishman . . . I believe he would have died if we didn't get out of there because he couldn't use our facilities too easily,

I also remember the Dutchman, who could not speak a word of English, and I believe it was "Pinky" King who taught him a few words of English. Now one of the jobs . . . the Dutchman was given the job of coming around in the morning to collect the wooden buckets and go empty them and bring us an empty one. Somebody taught him . . . and I suspect it was "Pinky." He would come around in the morning, and he'd say, "Good morning," and he'd hold up the slop bucket, and he'd say, "America, shit-pot! Japan, flowerpot!" He'd give us our pot. Such was life in the Rankasbitung jail for a month or five weeks or so.

- Marcello: In the meantime, did the Japanese allow you outside those cell blocks?
- Schwarz: Just occasionally out into the compound to take a little walk around the compound.
- Marcello: But you're still doing no work.
- Schwarz: No work at all, no. One day they came and took us all out in trucks, and as it turned out, we drove to Serang, met the other group in the Serang Theater in jail, and then drove on to Bicycle Camp in Batavia.
- Marcello: What did they look like at first glance?
- Schwarz: They looked like hell. They had obviously been through something very different than what we had been through. We had been very fortunate, we found out later. While we were not mistreated . . . I mean, while we were not fed well or given anything to do, we were not seriously mistreated. We did not have the dysentery problems that obviously the guys from Serang encountered, and we were quite appalled to meet our group in Serang. They were in bad shape.
- Marcello: Speaking of dysentery problems, obviously you had to drink water somewhere in here. How did you compensate for the unsanitary water that you might find?
- Schwarz: Well, apparently, where we were, the conditions were not that bad in that respect. We drank the water that was available in the wells and streams where we were, and aside from the "runs," you know, a little diarrhea or something, we did not suffer

any serious effects from it.

Marcello: Were you losing some weight by the time you were ready to go into Bicycle Camp?

Schwarz: Yes, but I think, again, it wasn't a dangerous loss of weight or a hardship loss of weight. I think it was the kind of weight that one loses when they lose the good life. You know what I mean? Some of the fats go, and you really get in better shape at that point. We were in good shape at that point.

Marcello: Before we get you into Bicycle Camp, I'm curious about one thing that you mentioned earlier--something that occurred very shortly after you were captured. You mentioned that the Japanese had brought you this snake, and I was curious as to why perhaps they didn't eat it, and then how you went about preparing this snake and cooking it. Could you elaborate on that?

Schwarz: Okay, I'll try to remember it. My recollection is that the Japanese brought us this snake, and the snake was already dead, if I remember correctly, but they were reluctant to skin it and gut it. They wanted to eat it, too. It was quite a large snake, if I remember. Remember, being born and raised in the city, I had never, never come within a hundred feet of a snake, let alone have one in my hand. So I became involved with preparing it, but doing whatever that farmboys told me to do. I remember that we skinned it, and I remember the Japs watching us skin it and actually cringing. They were repulsed by having to skin it and gut it. We cleaned it all up, and we cut it into

little sections maybe two or three inches long, and we put bamboo slivers up through the spine, the back of the snake. We had a fire from which we had removed the wood and just left the coals, and we stuck the bamboo slivers in the ground around the fire, slanting in over the coals, and we roasted the snake, and we ate it. The Japs helped us to eat it.

Marcello: How did it taste?

Schwarz: It tasted real great. I would have no problem today eating snake done the same way. It was really good.

Marcello: Under those circumstances, I'm sure.

Schwarz: Under those circumstances, it was filet mignon, but I wouldn't even turn my nose up at it today (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, this brings us up to the period when you were going into Bicycle Camp. Describe what Bicycle Camp looked like from a physical standpoint.

Schwarz: Well, Bicycle Camp was a Dutch military installation that housed Indonesian troops that rode bicycles, and that's where it got its name. It was a bicycle regiment. It was quite a . . . well, I suppose you could call it a Hilton of prison camps.

Marcello: You're comparing it to what you had had before and what you were to be in afterwards.

Schwarz: Exactly, exactly. When you become a "connoisseur" of prison camps (chuckle), Bicycle Camp is a Hilton. It had very sturdy buildings made out of masonry with cubicles, and there were four men assigned to each cubicle.

Marcello: What was in each cubicle?

Schwarz: Nothing. When we got there, there was nothing. But getting back to something that you mentioned earlier, about how rapidly we start acclimating ourselves to our situation and then trying to improve upon it, when we got into Bicycle Camp, the Americans immediately started to scrounge and steal and pick up anything we could find that would be useful to improve our standard of living.

Marcello: I would assume that initially, since all the Houston survivors are together again, you recounted your various battle stories and so on concerning what had happened during the past month.

Schwarz: Exactly. That's right. That's where I learned what happened to the Houston in battle that I couldn't see. We started retelling the stories over and over, and, of course, the officers were very interested in getting down as much as they could of what happened in each place before we forgot about it or before our memories started making it different than it really was. So that would be one of our main activities--story-telling.

Marcello: You were talking about scrounging and stealing and this sort of thing. I would imagine that there were a lot of skilled personnel among the Houston survivors in Bicycle Camp. In other words, aboard a ship there were a lot of specialists, and so you can improvise and specialize and do things.

Schwarz: That's true. Also, it's amazing what the human being can do and is capable of learning to do under adverse conditions.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that one of the first things you do when you get into Bicycle Camp is to try and make yourself or your life more comfortable and easier?

Schwarz: Exactly.

Marcello: How do you go about doing it?

Schwarz: That's what I started to explain. We immediately started to make our lifestyle more bearable. Of course, we then were taken out on working parties from Bicycle Camp. We went to Tanjong Priok, which is the port city of Batavia. We worked in oil refineries; we worked in go-downs, warehouses, on the docks. We worked all different places, and we were able to scrounge. At that point the Japanese would allow us to bring certain things into camp.

Marcello: What are you looking for personally? What do you want?

Schwarz: Well, I want something to build tables and chairs and a bed and things of that nature. That's what most everybody was doing at that time.

Marcello: How about a pair of shoes?

Schwarz: Well, I would have liked to had a pair of shoes, but I didn't know where I could find them. The Japanese weren't about to let Red Cross in, so I went bare-footed for four years.

Marcello: Who else was in the cell with you? Do you recall?

Schwarz: The only one I remember was a fellow named Joe Snyder from Ohio. I haven't seen Joe since we came out of the jungles, and I haven't been able to find him. He's one of the thirty-five or

so survivors that I have not been able to trace,

All kinds of innovations were made in our cubicles. People started building bunk beds, tables and chairs out of bamboo and pieces of wood. We had a very good artist with us, O.C. McManus. He had the walls of his cubicle painted with murals--interesting murals that caused quite a bit of controversy at first amongst the Japs. Then finally they got curious, and they would bring visitors. He drew a beautiful native girl . . . O.C. was a good artist, a portrait artist. He drew a very beautiful native girl with six breasts, and the Japanese were very curious about that. He had a lot of visitors.

Marcello: Where did he get the paints and so on?

Schwarz: He scrounged them from someplace. Don't ask me. You could get anything you wanted.

Marcello: Where did you scrounge your materials?

Schwarz: On the docks and wherever I went on working parties. We picked up whatever we could. Everything was useful. There wasn't anything that was left around, not bolted down, that didn't get picked up and taken away and made into something.

Marcello: Before we started the interview, you and Griff Douglas and I were discussing some of the automobiles that were in Bicycle Camp when you arrived, and we were talking about how the prisoners had salvaged portions and parts of those automobiles to fashion this implement or that implement or something else.

Schwarz: I don't remember that, and I don't know why I don't remember it. But I just don't recall the automobiles at all.

Marcello: Do you remember Griff saying that he actually took a chisel and fashioned a frying pan out of part of a fender or door of one of those cars?

Schwarz: That's right. And that would be consistent with the way we lived. People made all kinds of utensils, and they were just ingenious. People were making footwear out of wood, you know, clogs, we called them. It was unbelievable, the way the human body or the human mind operates under these conditions. But life in Bicycle Camp soon settled down to a routine.

Marcello: I would assume that there are British and Australians in this camp when you arrived.

Schwarz: Yes, there were some British and Australians, and the Perth survivors came with us from Serang. We got into Bicycle Camp in the beginning of April, I believe.

Marcello: That's probably reasonable because the 131st Field Artillery comes in in May of 1942.

Schwarz: I was just going to say that the 131st came in in May, and we had already been there a month or so. That was quite an event-- the 131st coming into Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: Describe their coming into Bicycle Camp and what it meant to you.

Schwarz: Well, of course, we were a group of 359, I believe, Americans, Houston survivors, in a camp with British and Australians. Of course, we had always said that the Americans probably already

had landed on Java, and one day the main gate opens up, and here comes a regiment of Americans in full uniform. We said, "See, they landed!" (chuckle)

Marcello: You actually thought you were being liberated?

Schwarz: No, not really. You see, they landed, and they caught them, too. Geez, so much for our landing party. But the 131st came in, and they were put into their own barracks, and soon it became a real happy time. We went in and visited their barracks to meet Americans, and as I said before, most of the Houston survivors had nothing by the time they reached shore.

Marcello: Evidently, some of the Houston survivors, even at this late date, still had oil on them and things of that nature and so on that they just couldn't get off,

Schwarz: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. Oh, yes, yes. The oil has to wear off, really. We didn't have anything to take it off with. But the 131st guys . . . it was like a festival when they came in. After they settled down and were assigned their cubicles and all, we all went over and were roaming through their barracks and introducing ourselves and looking to see if there were any people from near where we lived. Then, of course, they very quickly became conscious of our situation in that, you know, most of us had maybe a pair of pants or a G-string. We had nothing, and they started to share with us the clothing that they had, and a great many of our fellows were really helped by the 131st. It was a gay time; I mean, we really had a great time when they

came in.

Marcello: You still couldn't get a pair of shoes.

Schwarz: I got nothing. I had nothing, no. I guess I didn't find anybody from my hometown, so I got nothing.

Marcello: Okay, awhile ago you were mentioning the work parties here in Bicycle Camp. Describe how the work parties operated and what you did when you were on them and so on and so forth.

Schwarz: Well, of course, we're talking about a period just following the invasion of Java. The fighting was over, and now the damage was left to be taken care of--the oil refineries and whatever damage the Dutch or Aussies or English could do before they turned it over to the Japs. There was a lot of work in the oil refineries. The Japanese started taking whatever they could that they needed from there, and we would load trains with drums of petroleum products. We worked on the docks repairing damage--just all kinds of jobs, mainly on the docks.

Marcello: Were the work parties voluntary?

Schwarz: No.

Marcello: You were assigned to them.

Schwarz: Yes, we were assigned to them.

Marcello: I guess in a sense it was a welcome assignment.

Schwarz: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. I think that . . . well, I always looked forward to going out to work when I was physically able.

Marcello: Were you worked hard on these parties?

Schwarz: I don't recollect at that point of our captivity that we were under any special strain.

Marcello: And you were all fairly healthy at this point.

Schwarz: Yes, at that point we were in good shape. Bicycle Camp certainly turned out to be, in comparison with everything else that followed, the kind of a place where you could survive four years without a high mortality rate. It was not that bad.

Marcello: Describe the conduct of the guards on these work parties. I assume that you still had Japanese guards at this stage.

Schwarz: All Japanese at this point. I don't remember any extreme brutality. I know that they took full advantage of the fact that they were the conquerors. They were very conscious of their physical structure--the fact that they were much smaller than we were. There were an awful lot of bashings, a lot of beatings, face-slappings. But I don't remember it being much more brutal than that. They were harsh on us at the work parties, but I don't think that you could consider it really slave labor at the time. It was maintenance jobs, cleaning up here and cleaning up there. I don't believe there was any real great pressure on us at that time. They were very impatient with us, and it was difficult at first trying to understand what they wanted us to do until we became more acquainted with their language and would understand what they told us to do.

Marcello: And is it perhaps accurate to say that this is one of the reasons for the frequency of the bashings, also? They couldn't communicate

with you very well or very clearly, and so one of the ways that they could make you understand what they wanted you to do was to give you a good belt, so to speak.

Schwarz: Yes, I think that that's probably very true. That's one of the main reasons why . . . there were two reasons why we had bashings. One was that they were overcome with their new found power over the white man, and they used that. Then again, they would give us an order, and we wouldn't know what they were saying, and they'd bash us.

Marcello: And at the same time, given their mentality and philosophy, I'm sure they felt that you had disgraced yourselves by surrendering or allowing yourselves to be captured. A good Japanese soldier or sailor would not have allowed himself to be captured.

Schwarz: Oh, I've been told that many times. Then, also, I think that there's another aspect to this. They treated their own troops the same way.

Marcello: Describe how they treated their own.

Schwarz: Of course, well, we may be getting a little bit ahead, but I've seen Japanese troops in training in Burma, and they were actually physically assaulted--beaten with rifle butts and cursed at and kicked. This is the way they treated themselves, so how could we, who now became the lowest rung on the ladder, how could we expect to be treated anything other than worse than that?

Marcello: Do you find very quickly that it's best to stay away from those guards as much as possible?

Schwarz: That became your primary motive all the time.

Marcello: There's no such thing as trying to establish a friendship with any of them.

Schwarz: No, no. Well, okay, first of all, you have to avoid the guy who's going to slap you in the face every time he decides to.

Marcello: And I'm sure that pretty soon certain guards get certain reputations.

Schwarz: Well, of course.

Marcello: Not to mention nicknames.

Schwarz: Every guard had a name, based on some characteristic—"Donald Duck," "Mickey Mouse," "Boofhead," things like that, "John Dillinger." You know, their nicknames fit particular characteristics, either their intelligence or lack of intelligence, their brutality, or whatever.

You avoided contact as much as possible. We were under strict orders that, whenever a Japanese of any rank approached us, the first person seeing him had to shout in good Japanese and call the group to attention. You then all had to properly bow to the person. You had to bow from the hips down with the face tilting up and facing the person. If you deviated from this at all, you very quickly got bashed, so you had to learn very quickly how to give orders in Japanese. We were always being counted every time you turned around, so you had to learn

to count in Japanese. These are little things that you had to learn for survival and not to become punch-drunk in the first six months. We were getting slapped every time we turned around.

Marcello: You do have to adjust. You're living with an alien culture, and they're giving the orders, so you do have to make certain adjustments.

Schwarz: That's right. Then you asked me a question about avoiding your tormenter and not making friends. There's another little aspect to this. In order to survive, and without doing harm to your fellow prisoners, you then have to try to get the best for yourself and your group. Japs would come into the camp to take out working parties. For instance, the Japanese that were in charge of the docks might come in and say, "I need a hundred prisoners." So we would be lined up, and the first hundred that were counted off went to the docks. So you learned very rapidly to watch who was coming in for working parties, and you tried to guess whether they were the next one being counted. Sometimes you guessed wrong, and you ended up where you didn't want to go. But you'd always try to get to the working party with the Jap who might give you a cigarette during the day, or the work might be easier, or there might be accessibility to something to steal. So you quickly become ingenious and learn.

Marcello: Are you saying that some Japanese guards took their jobs more

seriously than others?

Schwarz: Oh, yes. Well, Japanese are people just like we are, and there are some who were less stringent. Perhaps some of them had been brought up as Christians, and if they could, they might . . . while they wouldn't be kind to you, they would not be unnecessarily cruel, or they may give you a break in the morning and give you a cigarette, whereas the next guy wouldn't. You have to learn all of this, and you have to maneuver, and you have to do the best for yourself that you can without hurting your fellow prisoners.

Marcello: You did mention awhile ago that there were all sorts of opportunities to steal and pilfer things on these work parties.

Schwarz: Yes, that's correct.

Marcello: Would this also be dependent on the guard and the work detail and things of that nature?

Schwarz: Oh, sure, of course. There had to be something that you wanted or needed to steal. The guards were not too much of a problem because . . . of course, we're talking about the very earliest stages, but as we went on throughout the years, we became very proficient. As a matter of fact, I doubt very much whether people like John Dillinger or Al Capone would have been any special characters in our camps. We all learned how to be proficient at stealing or hiding things. Throughout the years we learned how to do it right under the very noses of the Japanese, and there were many stories of individual instances

that are even comical. As I go along, I'll remember some of them, and you'll see what I mean when I say that we all became master crooks. We all became Birdmen of Alcatraz.

Marcello: What opportunities were there to sabotage anything on these work parties here out of Bicycle Camp?

Schwarz: Not too much, I don't believe, at that point because, as I say, we were really new at the game. It was right after the fighting, and it was just a clean-up period. Later on, years later when we got into, say, Indochina, when we worked out on the airport, places like that, we were able to do a little better job. Maybe it was not enough to seriously hurt the Japanese war effort, but enough to make us feel we were back in the war.

Marcello: Would the work parties normally be an eight- or ten-hour a day job or something along these lines?

Schwarz: Well, in the early days, in Batavia, it was fairly relaxed. To my recollection I don't remember ever working physically hard or long. I think we went out in the morning and came back in the afternoon. I don't remember, myself personally, having any real ordeal at that point. Everything started after September, 1942.

Marcello: What role did the officers play here at Bicycle Camp? I'm referring, of course, to the American officers and so on. What role did the officers play in this situation? What is their function?

Schwarz: Well, I never associated with the officers to any great degree. They were very much in evidence in Bicycle Camp because it was the very beginning, and the Japs had not separated them from us at that point.

There certainly was a big distinction between officer and enlisted man. We were still a fairly military group of people, and there was a big distinction. The officers, of course, were definitely the liaison between the Japanese and the "coolie."

I do remember an incident . . . and I think some of the officers stand out in my mind as behaving in an outstanding manner; others, I think, were just interested in surviving, and I can't blame them for that. I do remember an incident in Bicycle Camp where the Japanese wanted us to sign a statement that we would not escape; and if ever free, we would not fight the Japanese again. Well, of course, we decided that we weren't going to sign this thing, and they got a little tricky for a while. They took the officers, and they beat up a lot of the officers very badly. The final outcome was that the officers established that there was duress. In other words, they made themselves get beat up, and then they came out and said, "Okay, we have sufficiently established that we're doing this under duress, so you guys go ahead and sign it." Some of them still held out and said, "We're going to continue to hold out." But they instructed us to sign the escape form, and then some

of them went back and got mistreated for another few days, and then they signed it, too.

Marcello: For the most part, was there some semblance of military discipline being maintained in these camps?

Schwarz: Absolutely.

Marcello: It was essential, was it not?

Schwarz: Absolutely. Discipline's essential for survival at every level of life, whether it be military or school or prison camp or wherever. For instance, in between the American barracks, we had a common latrine. Now this latrine was a Dutch device where water would fill into a tank and tip it over and flush a trough. However, when we started to experience diarrhea and dysentery, it wasn't sufficient to keep the place clean. The Americans immediately set up a duty roster, and we all were assigned duty in the latrine, and we had to wash it down constantly. Our dysentery rate was negligible compared to the British section. The British didn't bother taking care of themselves. So this kind of discipline is necessary because I don't think any group of troops would on their own set up a duty roster and keep things clean. They'd be fighting each other probably not to do it. But with the officers and keeping their discipline over us, we survived very well.

Marcello: I'm sure that you would forego the formalities of saluting and things of that nature.

Schwarz: We didn't, no. I don't remember ever saluting Americans. The

British tried to get us to salute in Singapore when we got there later.

Marcello: Describe in a little bit more detail what your bathing and sanitary facilities were like here at Bicycle Camp.

Schwarz: Not bad at all. Every barracks had bathing facilities at the end of them. We could shower, and we could wash, and we had very decent latrines which we kept clean ourselves. By and large, I feel that, as I said, Bicycle Camp in Batavia was a Hilton. I found it very bearable.

Marcello: With what frequency could you take baths?

Schwarz: Any time, that I remember. As far as I recollect, you could bathe any time. Life took on a routine in bicycle camp. We had volleyball matches; they had boxing matches. There was rivalry between the Americans and the Aussies, and it became a fairly bearable routine.

The guards for the most part patrolled an outside perimeter outside the barbed wire. The only time you had to worry was when the guards would patrol in through the barracks, and if you didn't come to attention quick enough or salute properly, you might get hit. But you could avoid trouble for the most part, and I found Bicycle Camp, especially from our experiences later, a very bearable place.

Marcello: Describe what the food was like here at Bicycle Camp, and then let's talk about the kitchen facilities themselves. What sort of food were you getting here at Bicycle Camp, and how much were

you getting?

Schwarz: I don't really remember anything significant about the food. I know that we could survive. I know that we were hungry most of the time; we weren't being filled with food. I remember that we were always jockeying to get in the back of the line to get seconds, if there were any left over.

Marcello: By this time what sort of a container did you have in which to eat your food?

Schwarz: I've been trying to remember that. I know I never had a proper container like a mess kit or anything like the Army fellows had. It was always some kind of a makeshift piece of tin bent over or a coconut shell or something like that. During the whole period, I never accumulated any great possessions like a mess kit or a canteen. I always had a bottle that I picked up somewhere that I could put water in or something like that.

Marcello: Could you expect rice three times a day at least as part of the meal?

Schwarz: As far as I remember, we had a fairly routine feeding schedule in Bicycle Camp. Of course, by then the food was being cooked by our own troops.

Marcello: How was the rice cooked and prepared?

Schwarz: The rice was cooked in large metal containers that looked like World War I steel helmets upside down.

Marcello: Only much bigger.

- Schwarz: Huge. They would put the rice in with the water, and they'd bring it to a boil and then stir it with large wooden paddles. I think that in Bicycle Camp we occasionally even got meat and some vegetables, that I remember.
- Marcello: I guess you were always looking for something to flavor that rice, were you not?
- Schwarz: Oh, always. They were ingenious. People were setting up . . . making rice cakes and putting red peppers in the rice and frying them in a pan and things like that. So it took on a routine very much like you see in the movies, you know, of the German prison camps where they lived in barracks and had their mess lines and all that. That's pretty much what we had in Bicycle Camp.
- Marcello: Were you still getting approximately the equivalent of a cereal bowl of rice per meal?
- Schwarz: Yes, as far as I recollect, yes.
- Marcello: Did you have any ways of supplementing your diet here in Bicycle Camp?
- Schwarz: Yes, at that point a lot of the fellows had money that they had been captured with, and there was a lot of trading with the natives when we went on working parties. The Japs even at that point were allowing you to buy things when you went out to work.
- Marcello: I do know that in the case of the 131st Field Artillery, it came in with company funds, and I think the company funds

were used to supplement the food ration provided by the Japanese. Did the Houston survivors get to share in whatever supplements came from those company funds?

Schwarz: Yes. After the 131st got into the camp, we ended up becoming . . . whatever they had, we got. They shared with us, and I do know that there was a great deal of money from company funds which was being used for all kinds of things in the camp, and we became recipients of that, also.

Marcello: I assume that you had a lot of time on your hands here at Bicycle Camp.

Schwarz: Yes. That's why the program of athletics soon developed--volleyball and boxing. Also, the Aussies and British set up a mini-university, so to speak. You could go down and sit in on French lectures. You could sit in on lectures of all types. There were a lot of schoolteachers and quite learned people amongst the British, and they would from memory even stand up there and recite a whole book that they had read at one time in their career. They started putting on shows. A lot of the British and Aussies were old vaudeville people, and they started putting on shows in the camp. So a whole lifestyle developed in Batavia that never existed later, after we went up into the jungles.

Marcello: When you sat around in your bull sessions here in Bicycle Camp, what seemed to be the primary or major topic of conversation?

Schwarz: Food . . . food, sex.

Marcello: But food was foremost,

Schwarz: Oh, yes. We had one guy, Albers, who became a fanatic about food. As soon as you plopped his rice into his container, he ran right back in the back of the line. He started collecting recipes for food that he was going to have when he got home. I'll never forget the Texans giving him a recipe for mountain oysters, and all kinds of crazy things they'd throw at him. He took every recipe. It was really something. If we had been left in Bicycle Camp, I'm sure that most of us would have come home, conditions being what they were at that time.

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

Schwarz: I don't really know. I never availed myself of them, and I really don't know what they looked like.

Marcello: Again, I think, your answer is indicative of the condition of the prisoners there in Bicycle Camp. You were fairly healthy, and you didn't have to partake of the hospital facilities.

Schwarz: That's right. If you could have seen some of the volleyball games between the Americans and the Aussies, you'd be . . . those guys were in really great physical condition at that time. Even the guys that had been in Serang were starting to come back and recover, although I'm quite sure that the damage that was started in Serang soon made itself known in Burma with those guys.

Marcello: I assume, from what you've said, that at this stage the bitterness between the Americans and the British had not yet really developed. Is it not true that later on a certain amount of

bitterness and hostility developed between the British and the Americans?

Schwarz: Yes, true. That's true. We became aware at this point, though, that there was a great difference between us. For instance, when we were first captured back in the days that I described in Rankasbitung, and in that little schoolhouse, we had decided that we would pool whatever money we had. I remember I had absolutely nothing. I didn't have a . . . well, I had on a pair of pants, but I had no wallet, nothing. Some of the guys had . . . whatever they had in their pockets, twenty-five or thirty dollars, or two dollars or ten dollars . . . and the British had nothing. When we met in Serang and went to Bicycle Camp, we decided to split what was left, and we split it equally among everybody, regardless of what you put in. When I met those same two British in Bicycle Camp later, they were enjoying purchases which could not have been made with the money that they got out of the split, so I suspected that they had held out on us in the beginning.

I also told you how we immediately started scrounging-- building tables and beds and all. The British went into their barracks, dropped their gear, and wherever it lay, that's where it stayed until the day they moved out. They did absolutely nothing. They laid on the floor the whole time. This is just a little insight into the difference between the Americans and the British.

The British had a lot of ringworms--diseases of the skin that were caused by dirt, filth. The Americans maintained themselves, showered, kept their cleanliness, disciplined themselves with latrine duty--things of that nature--so it became very obvious right from the beginning that there was a big difference.

Marcello: On the other hand, a very good and close relationship developed between the Americans and the Australians.

Schwarz: Absolutely. I think from the very first day we were captured, it again became obvious that the Perth survivors, especially the Perth survivors, and the Americans were the closest thing to brothers that there could be. There were friendly rivalries in volleyball games, always between the Perth and the Houston and the 131st guys. The other Aussies, we had an extremely deep relationship with them--2/2nd Pioneers and all of these infantry groups and all. It showed itself later in Singapore when we had trouble with the British, and the Aussies came to our side.

Marcello: Awhile ago we were talking about the rice, and I forgot to ask you about the quality of the rice. How was the rice in terms of quality?

Schwarz: I don't think I can honestly remember. I just don't remember the food in Bicycle Camp as being anything worse than not being enough, really. In other words, I don't remember it being as bad as in Burma where we got the sweepings off the

warehouse floors and things like that, so I would suspect that the rice was fairly good.

Marcello: Did you ever witness any extreme forms of brutality here in Bicycle Camp?

Schwarz: Oh, there were occasions when people were forced to kneel at the guardhouse in the hot sun and were beaten and things like that, but I think that they were more scattered in occurrence than later. There was a lot of slapping, a lot of bashings. That was routine; you could usually expect to be bashed if you came close to a Jap.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever pull sneak inspections of the barracks or anything like that?

Schwarz: Yes. Yes, they did that. That was one of their big things.

Marcello: What would they be looking for?

Schwarz: I suppose radios, diaries, weapons. But if we had warning, that was really never any problem. We could always find ways of getting around their inspections.

Marcello: Your answer to my last question kind of made me curious. What things couldn't you have? Obviously, you couldn't have weapons.

Schwarz: Right. We couldn't have radios, obviously.

Marcello: But were there radios?

Schwarz: Yes. I never saw one personally.

Marcello: And you probably didn't want to.

Schwarz: No, I do know that there were some in camps, and as a matter of fact, amongst the Aussies they had radios right on through

the jungles and all. We were getting news in Batavia. They would come out with a news broadcast once in a while. For instance, after the 131st was already in prison camp, we heard about Colonel Searle still fighting in the hills with his "Valiant 500," and they were in the prison camp with us. But that had been broadcast.

Marcello: How about writing materials?

Schwarz: Writing materials, they were very touchy with. They wouldn't let us have any.

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

Schwarz: (Chuckle) Well, after the 131st guys got there, some scissors and razors appeared, and up until that time we all had beards and long hair. The Houston survivors had nothing until the 131st arrived.

Marcello: Of course, at seventeen years of age, you didn't have to worry too much about shaving, I guess.

Schwarz: Oh, no. Well, no, I had a little fuzzy red beard, yes (chuckle).

Marcello: Is there anything else that we need to discuss relative to Bicycle Camp, or have we more or less covered everything there?

Schwarz: Well, I think that's pretty much it. I was in Bicycle Camp from April until September or October of 1942. I left with the first group leaving Bicycle Camp to go to Burma.

Marcello: I have one last question about Bicycle Camp, and I probably should have asked this question earlier. Were you ever processed

in any way by the Japanese? By processing, I'm referring to getting your names and serial numbers and keeping some sort of records of your whereabouts and this sort of thing.

Schwarz: When we got to Bicycle Camp, we all had to supply that information.

Marcello: In other words, they had a regular form that you had to fill out?

Schwarz: I believe so. I don't remember the actual process by which we gave them the information, but I do remember that we had to give them the information. Then we were issued with a POW number in the English and Japanese, which we had to wear.

Marcello: You say that you were issued a number, and you had to wear it. Was it a little token or tag or something?

Schwarz: Like a little badge that had the number on it.

Marcello: Then you pinned this on your uniform or whatever clothing you had.

Schwarz: Right, you were supposed to wear that visible at all times so that you could be identified.

Marcello: You mentioned that in either late September or early October of 1942, you were in the first POW contingent that left Bicycle Camp. Did the Japanese give you any warning that you would be leaving? In other words, was there any advance notice?

Schwarz: Well, we had heard rumors for quite awhile that there would be some movement going on and all kinds of rumors about where we were going, you know, from repatriation to going to Burma and

Japan. There were rumors flying all over the place.

Marcello: Was it kind of unsettling to have to pick up and leave after you had gotten into that routine that you had talked about earlier?

Schwarz: I don't recall that I had any particular feeling about it at all. I can't remember anything.

Marcello: Okay, describe the process of leaving.

Schwarz: Well, we were told by our officers who was going, and we just packed all our gear, and we were taken to Tanjong Priok and put on a ship.

Marcello: Do you recall the name of the ship?

Schwarz: There were two ships that I went on during this journey. One was the Dai Nichi Maru and King Kong Maru or something like that.

Marcello: I think this is the Dai Nichi Maru that you went on the first trip.

Schwarz: Dai Nichi was the first one, yes, I think so.

Marcello: Okay, describe what conditions were like on the Dai Nichi Maru.

Schwarz: Oh, beautiful (facetious remark)! We were packed solid into the holds. These were old rust-buckets, and we were put aboard these things with five or six hundred of us jammed into a small hold. The hatch was put down on it, and that was it. If I remember correctly, I think we stayed in Tanjong Priok for two or three days without even moving--just stuck in the hold. We weren't given any bathing facilities or any water or anything--just left down in that hold.

Marcello: How much room did each prisoner have in that hold?

Schwarz: Oh, we were just jammed tight. You couldn't stretch out or anything.

Marcello: Could you stand up?

Schwarz: You could stand up in the hold that I was in. In some of them you couldn't because they were stuck between holds, but we could stand up. But, again, we were just jammed in there so tight that you could hardly move.

Marcello: And I assume that it must have just been extremely hot down in that little hold.

Schwarz: Oh, sitting out in that harbor in Indonesia in the tropical climate in a steel coffin, which is what it really was, we soon became intolerably filthy, and we were just soaking wet, and we had , . . we couldn't clean ourselves, and it just became a hell hole.

Marcello: I would assume tempers become rather short in those circumstances, too.

Schwarz: They sure do.

Marcello: You're not very tolerant.

Schwarz: No, that's for sure, It was very bad; it really was. I don't know why we didn't lose more people than we did.

Marcello: I guess you're lucky that everybody didn't have dysentery at this stage.

Schwarz: That's right. Had that same trip happened a year-and-a-half later, nobody would have survived--nobody,

Marcello: Okay, now describe the trip from Tanjong Priok to your destination, which was Singapore.

Schwarz: Singapore. I believe it took us about three days to get up there.

Marcello: How did they feed you?

Schwarz: Just buckets of rice were sent down to us once in a while.

Marcello: And then was it up to the prisoners to distribute that rice?

Schwarz: That's right.

Marcello: Was this done in an orderly manner?

Schwarz: Yes, I think we stuck together pretty well as a unit, and we didn't cut each other's throats at this time. I think we all realized that our survival depended upon each other, and I don't remember any serious trouble between ourselves. Our trouble was surviving under the conditions.

I think we were allowed out of the hold when we got out to sea. We were allowed out of the hold a couple of times, and if I remember correctly, they hosed us down with salt-water hoses a couple of times.

Marcello: I understand the latrines aboard the ship were rather harrowing experiences, also.

Schwarz: Well, the latrines were just little shanties tied to the railing and were hanging over the side of the ship. If you did get a Jap to let you go and go out into the shack, which was filthy and dangerous, it was a harrowing experience to be bobbing up and down in a rough sea and trying to squat in that little

container--pretty crude.

Marcello: For the most part, then, you were down in the hold of the Dai Nichi Maru all the way to Singapore.

Schwarz: Just about all the time. I'm trying to remember whether I got out of the hold once or twice during the whole trip.

Marcello: Fortunately, the trip did not take too long.

Schwarz: That's correct. I think it was about three days. Yes, I think it was three days going up. I don't remember exactly.

Marcello: I've heard some of the prisoners refer to the Dai Nichi Maru as being similar to the African slave ships of an earlier era. Do you think that's an accurate description?

Schwarz: Oh, I would say so, except that we weren't chained. We were just packed down in there. But at least I understand that in the slave ships they doused them with water once in a while, but we weren't even given that.

Marcello: Could you sleep in those ships?

Schwarz: Yes, if you fell asleep eventually from exhaustion, but you really couldn't sleep with any regularity.

Marcello: To your knowledge, were there any fatalities on this voyage to Singapore?

Schwarz: Yes, I think we had one or two that died, but I think they were dysentery cases that died.

Marcello: Okay, so you get to Singapore. Describe what happens at that point. You land in Singapore.

Schwarz: Well, we were taken to a barracks, and it was quite interesting--

that short period of time we spent in Singapore. We were quite amazed to find the British troops all sitting there with full equipment, all kinds of storerooms filled with food and clothing, none of which they shared with us, by the way. We didn't go to work or anything. We were really in transit, so we were more or less just waiting for another ship.

Marcello: We should mention that you were actually in Changi Village, isn't that correct?

Schwarz: That's correct, yes, as opposed to Changi Jail. It looked to me that apparently the Japanese just came in and said, "Okay, you guys are prisoners, and this end of the island is your prison camp. Stay there!" They had Indians as guards, not Japanese. We were free to walk about and go from one barracks to another or one place to another. A lot of quite comical things happened while we were there.

I don't think we saw a Jap the whole time we were there because we were just put out in this area and left alone, and we never saw any guards or anything.

Marcello: The British ran this camp.

Schwarz: It was a British installation, and the British were conducting it as if they were back in London and as if there wasn't even a war going on.

Marcello: Could you elaborate on that?

Schwarz: It was the strangest thing I've ever seen in my life. By the time we got there, we were well aware that we were prisoners-of-war,

but these guys acted as if they were on regimental maneuvers. As a matter of fact, we were given an old truck with just wheels and a chassis and a steering wheel, and the Japs gave us that to use to go to a section of the camp to pick up firewood for our cookhouse. It became quite a lark with us. We would get around it, ten or twelve guys. It's quite hilly in the section where we were in Changi, and we'd push this thing up to the top of the hill, and then we'd all jump on it and ride down the hill like a bunch of kids.

I might describe that the British held regular drills--complete uniforms, full field packs--and they would march up and down the hills, and the officers with their little "dog-chasers," the little sticks they carried, would be marching alongside of them. They'd be out on maneuvers, and here we'd come along with no clothes or anything--a bunch of Americans, pushing this thing over the hill.

One day as we came down the hill, a company of British came up the road in their maneuvers, and we went right through the middle of them and just scattered them into the ditches alongside the road. This and other instances like it made us very popular (facetious remark). They soon started calling us the American gangsters from Chicago and all this kind of stuff.

I guess you've been told many times the famous instance with the American Naval officer who didn't salute a British

officer when he went by. We were told that we had to carry on in proper military fashion, and as I had said before, we weren't used to saluting our officers anymore. We had whatever respect we had for them, and they didn't insist on us saluting them. But the British insisted upon the same military courtesies as if they had never been captured, and you had to salute every officer.

One day one of our men was walking along a path, and he had just a pair of shorts or something on, like most of us were dressed, and this British officer came down. They always had that little swagger stick tucked up underneath their armpit. The American walked right by him, and the British officer called to him and called him back and said, "Do you realize that I'm the senior British officer present here?" And he laughed and said, "Well, I don't know whether you realize it, but I'm the acting admiral of the United States Navy present here." Things like that were always popping up.

Marcello: I've also heard the stories about the controversy over the so-called "King's coconuts" and that sort of thing.

Schwarz: Yes, the "Queen's fruit."

Marcello: The "Queen's fruit?" I'd never heard it referred to as the "Queen's fruit."

Schwarz: Yes, there were coconut trees in Changi, and when you're living on just plain rice and very little else, coconuts look pretty good. But everytime we tried to get coconuts, the British

had their MP's patrolling the prison camp, and we'd get stopped because it was the "Queen's fruit," and you couldn't pick the "Queen's fruit." Well, of course, the Americans told them what they could do with their queen, and what they could do with their fruit, too. It got to be quite hairy for a while. The British and the Americans really . . . I think Changi was the turning point where we really knew that we did not like the British.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that the British were hoarding Red Cross supplies here. Is that true?

Schwarz: We were told that the British had warehouses filled with Red Cross supplies, British military equipment, all kinds of food, all kinds of clothing. Yet we were never allowed to have . . . well, they never gave us anything. They never shared anything with us at all. It gave a very bitter taste to us. We just did not get along with the British at all.

Marcello: What sort of work did you do here at Changi?

Schwarz: I don't remember ever doing anything in Changi.

Marcello: I know certain groups did clear ground in a rubber plantation that was supposed to be converted into a garden. Maybe this is a later group that came along.

Schwarz: It very possibly could be. We didn't do anything. We were not there too awfully long.

Marcello: Approximately how long were you there?

Schwarz: I've tried to remember, and I don't think we were there more

than a couple of weeks.

Marcello: What were your barracks like here at Changi?

Schwarz: Well, they were regular British military barracks, so they were quite nice. When I say nice, I mean as far as being out of the elements. In other words, it was a nice masonry and tile roof barrack with two floors, as I remember, and it was quite nice in comparison to what we were going to face in later months. They had no furnishings or anything, but it was a place to lay on the floor and be out of the wind and rain. So it wasn't any great hardship, really.

Marcello: I know some of the groups had trouble with bedbugs here in Changi.

Schwarz: Oh, yes, the barracks were infested with bedbugs.

Marcello: How did you get rid of them?

Schwarz: (Chuckle) Well, if you have any blankets or anything, which I didn't have at that time, you put them out in the hot sun, and you let the bedbugs come to the surface, and then you snap them between your fingernails. You know, it was the same way with lice. You put your . . . either boil your clothes or your bedding, or you put them out in the sun, and the heat brings them to the surface, and you snap them.

Marcello: What was the food like here at Changi?

Schwarz: Pretty bad. Again, I think they supplied our cookhouse with rations, and our people cooked the food. I remember having rice and raw peanuts in Changi. That's my most vivid recollection of Changi--the food, which was rice and raw peanuts.

Marcello: When you say "they supplied the food," are you referring to the British or the Japanese?

Schwarz: Well, I don't really know. I never worked in the cookhouse, and I never paid much attention to it. All I know is that we were supplied rice, and it was cooked and rationed out. I remember "Pack Rat" McCone building a shower that would be operated by two men.

Marcello: I've heard his name mentioned from time to time.

Schwarz: Oh, he was the world's super scrounger--ol' "Pack Rat." He was quite a scrounger. He almost got us all killed one day for stealing something, but he was a good scrounger.

Marcello: Did this occur later on?

Schwarz: This was later on in Saigon.

Marcello: Describe the shower that he built here in Changi.

Schwarz: Well, our barrack was up on the top of a hill, and as I recollect, there was not adequate bathing facilities. We had a well down at the foot of the hill, so "Pack Rat" got the idea that if he could scrounge up piping and everything, he would build a shower, which he did. He scrounged up enough piping, and you could take a shower with a buddy by having the buddy down at the bottom pumping the water up through the pipes and you up on the top of the hill with a showerhead he had built. He actually built a shower that way in the camp.

When we left there, we were given a ration of a few tins of food each, I remember, and I don't know where it came from,

whether our officers convinced the British to give us a little or the Japanese gave it to us or what. I know we each had a few cans of some kind of food.

Marcello: When you left Changi, did you know where you were going?

Schwarz: Well, the rumors were pretty strong that we were going to Burma to build a railroad.

Marcello: But, of course, you had no idea what conditions would be like on that railroad.

Schwarz: On, no, no. Then when we finally got started and we left Singapore to go to Burma, then it was confirmed that we were going to Burma to build a railroad. We were told that we would be responsible to dig a cubic foot of dirt a day per man.

Marcello: Well, this all comes later on, I guess, doesn't it, or were you told this right there in Changi?

Schwarz: No, I think we knew that because on the way up we were trying to figure out what a cubic foot of dirt would look like. Everybody said, "Oh, thirty-six by thirty-six by thirty-six, that's nothing! We'll do that without any trouble!" We found out later that it wasn't so easy, but . . . no, we knew by then we were going to Burma.

Marcello: Were you a part of the group that was referred to as the Fitzsimmons bunch?

Schwarz: Yes, yes. We were Group Three, under Captain Fitzsimmons.

Marcello: Describe your leaving Changi. Where did you go from Changi?

Schwarz: Well, we went right to the harbor in Singapore and got on a ship.

Marcello: Oh, you went to Singapore to the harbor and got on a ship?

Schwarz: As far as I remember, yes.

Marcello: And this took you directly up to Moulmein?

Schwarz: It took us right up . . . took us to Rangoon, and then on Rangoon we got on a smaller vessel and went to Moulmein.

Marcello: The reason I asked you was because I know some of the groups of prisoners took a train from Singapore up the Malay Peninsula to Penang, and then from Penang they went to Moulmein.

Schwarz: Oh, no, no, no, no. We went directly from Singapore up to Moulmein.

Marcello: Okay, describe the trip from Singapore to Moulmein. You were back aboard another freighter, I assume.

Schwarz: Another repeat of the Dai Nichi Maru. We were jammed into this dilapidated old rust-bucket--hundreds of men packed into a space that wasn't adequate for one-tenth of them.

Marcello: By the time that you left Singapore, had more of the Americans from Bicycle Camp arrived there?

Schwarz: They came up in . . . they left in January, and we were gone before they got there.

Marcello: I see.

Schwarz: They followed us very closely after we left.

Marcello: Okay, get back to describing the ship again.

Schwarz: Well, as I say, it was the same as the Dai Nichi Maru, only it just got worse, that's all. The Japs got more vile-tempered, and they wouldn't open up the hatches and even let any air in.

You have hundreds upon hundreds of men packed in these spaces, and, again, very, very shortly it became absolutely filthy, you know, and you just wondered why you didn't go insane from the conditions.

Marcello: How long did this trip last?

Schwarz: Now my memory is vague on this trip. It seems to me that this trip lasted four or five days, but, again, my memory is not too good on that. But I know we got up into Rangoon, and we unloaded in Rangoon and found out that the . . . then we went up from Rangoon to Moulmein, and we found out that the Moulmein Pagoda doesn't look eastward to the sea or whatever or however Kipling said it. We were then taken . . . we got in Moulmein late at night.

Marcello: Let's just back up a minute because maybe we're getting a little bit ahead of our story here. So you're on this freighter going from Singapore ultimately to Rangoon.

Schwarz: Yes.

Marcello: Do you use the same freighter from Rangoon to Moulmein?

Schwarz: No, no, we were put on a smaller barge-type vessel and went up the Irrawaddy River into Moulmein. It wasn't the same one. It had to be a smaller thing.

Marcello: What sort of food did you get on this particular vessel, that is, when you went from Singapore up to Rangoon?

Schwarz: The same slop that we had on the Dai Nichi Maru. It was cooked by . . . I don't even know if our own people were brought up

on deck to cook. They may have been, although I don't know. I don't remember even getting out of the hold more than once or twice on that whole trip.

Marcello: By this time are you very hungry?

Schwarz: Oh, yes, sure! Everybody was really ravenous by then, and what we got was very meager and just slops. It was terrible.

Marcello: So when you get into Rangoon, are you simply transferred from one vessel to this barge and then you continue right away?

Schwarz: Yes, right. We unloaded onto the docks, and we went onto this little barge-type thing. We were just all standing up in this thing and went up into Moulmein. This was all at night. It was in typical Japanese fashion. Everybody screaming and hollering and pushing and slapping and counting everytime you turned around. It was just pandemonium, you know. It was really crazy. I remember it rained like anything, and we were standing out in this open barge, soaking wet, on our way to Moulmein.

Marcello: So when you get to Moulmein, what happens at that point then?

Schwarz: Well, at Moulmein, as I said, we arrived late at night, and we were put into what looked like a jail, and it was a large brick or masonry structure with a wall around it, and we were allowed to just run in and find a place to flop on the floors. I remember I went with a group of guys . . . we were kind of crowded, so we went looking for more space, and we found a smaller building off in the corner of the compound, and we

flopped in there. The next day we found out that the building that we were in was where the lepers were kept, and one had died just a few days before.

Marcello: I'm sure that was rather disconcerting.

Schwarz: Yes. Then we went and asked some questions about the possibility of us contacting leprosy.

Marcello: You were mentioning the Moulmein Pagoda awhile ago.

Schwarz: Yes. We went right by it; we weren't far from it. We were only there overnight, and then from there we were taken to Thanbyuzayat, which was the terminus or railhead at the Burma side of the railroad that they were going to build.

Marcello: Thanbyuzayat is sometimes called the base camp, is it not?

Schwarz: The base camp, that's correct, yes.

Marcello: Okay, what happens when you get Thanbyuzayat? Is this where you meet Colonel Nagatomo?

Schwarz: That's right. That's where we met our new boss. Nagatomo was the Japanese colonel in charge of the Burma side of the operation. That's where he lined us up and read us a speech in which he told us that we were the rabble of a lost army, that the Japanese were going to build this railroad over our dead bodies, and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. We found out that he meant every word of it. From Thanbyuzayat we marched up into our first jungle camps.

Marcello: I'm curious as to how a copy of his speech made it back with the prisoners. Was this speech distributed all along the rail

line? Do you know how the speech got back?

Schwarz: I don't even remember how I . . . see, I distributed it to all the Houston survivors, and I don't even remember how I got it in my possession. I didn't bring it home with me. Somebody sent it to me, oh, a number of years ago, and I reproduced it. I really don't know how it got out. I would suspect that somebody like Rohan Rivett (author of Behind Bamboo) or one of those guys that was in with all the negotiations with Nagatomo probably got a transcription of it and wrote it down at the time. I would suspect that that's where it came from.

Marcello: Okay, so you get to Thanbyuzayat; you get your orientation speech, so to speak; and then you're sent out to your first camp. Do you recall which particular camp this was?

Schwarz: Fourteen Kilo.

Marcello: You went directly to the 14 Kilo Camp. How did you get from Thanbyuzayat to 14 Kilo?

Schwarz: We walked.

Marcello: This was during the dry season, was it not?

Schwarz: That's right. It was a dry, dusty road, and I'll never forget, boy, we were so thirsty, and we had been told not to drink the water because there was cholera and typhus around. But the longer we marched, the better the water looked, and I'll never forget that at one place they gave us a break, and we just dove almost in unison into a little brook. We had an officer

from the 131st who told us that we couldn't drink that water, and, by God, if we drank that water, we'd have to get past him. Well, you don't stop a bunch of cattle that are dying from thirst, and we drank the water with no ill effects.

Marcello: Evidently, the road had a chalky dust on it, did it not?

Schwarz: Oh, it did, sure. You were just covered with it all the time, yes.

Marcello: And evidently with every step you took there'd be a cloud of dust to come up.

Schwarz: Oh, Burma was either a torrent of water, or you were covered with dust--one or the other. There was no in-between.

Marcello: Approximately how many of you went into the 14 Kilo Camp? These were all fairly big camps, were they not?

Schwarz: Pretty good-sized. I think our group , . . oh, boy, I'm trying to think. We were not a very large group. I think there were 600 Americans and about 1,200 Australians, something like that. I think that's what was in our group when we started.

Marcello: Describe what the 14 Kilo Camp looked like from a physical standpoint. I'm referring to the grounds and the barracks and all this sort of thing.

Schwarz: Well, the grounds were very little more than a clearing in the jungle, and there were no fences or anything around it, just some strands of barbed wire.

Marcello: They didn't need too much to keep you in, did they?

Schwarz: No, they didn't need anything because there was nowhere you

could go. You couldn't escape anywhere. The huts were long bamboo huts made out of bamboo with native atap for the siding and the roofs. We slept . . . down the middle was a dirt path, and on each side--the huts, I'm speaking of--were just shelves of split bamboo, and that's what we slept on. That was typical of every camp in the jungle; they were all made the same.

Marcello: Approximately how much room would each man have?

Schwarz: Oh, very little more than the width of your shoulders, just enough room for guys to sleep shoulder-to-shoulder, really.

Marcello: That was, in a sense, your space within the barracks. You slept there, you ate there, you had your belongings there, and so on and so forth.

Schwarz: That's correct. That was your turf. Whatever possessions you had you hung either from the ceiling bamboo or from the bamboo going up the side behind your space, and that was it. There was no more of building beds or bunks and tables and chairs like we had in Batavia. You just had . . . the width of your body was really your domain, and that was it.

Marcello: Okay, describe the type of work you were doing here. In other words, relate to me a typical workday here at 14 Kilo Camp. The work wasn't too bad here yet.

Schwarz: No, no, that's true. Well, we were in an advance group, really. We started out by cutting the roadbed for the railroad. We had very crude instruments, chunkels, and we carried the

dirt in one of two things, either a native-woven basket which we carried in our two hands, or we had burlap rice sacks which had rope or wire loops from them, and then two guys with bamboo poles would carry the dirt away. We were assigned in the beginning one cubic meter a day to dig.

Marcello: Per man.

Schwarz: Per man, so you would work in groups of four or three. One or two guys would be digging and filling the dirt into the basket that would be carried away by the other two guys.

Marcello: So you were making either cuts or fills.

Schwarz: That's correct. We would be cutting the dirt from one place and filling it into some other places making a level roadbed.

Marcello: Were you working on relatively level ground here? And you were kind of out of the jungles in a sense, weren't you?

Schwarz: That's true. That was the very beginning of the railroad on the Burma side, so you weren't yet into the dense jungle, which even the Burmese natives found impossible to live in.

Marcello: Well, was it not true that the British tried to build this railroad years before and had given up the project?

Schwarz: Well, many years . . .

Marcello: At least they had surveyed it.

Schwarz: That's right. Well, many years ago the British had decided that they could cut a railroad from Moulmein hooking up with Bangkok and saving the trip all the way around the Malay Peninsula up into Burma. However, after they surveyed it

and laid the road out on paper, they decided that there was no way to get modern building equipment into the jungle and that the cost of lives and money just made it impossible. So they scrapped the idea. When the Japanese came along, they captured all those plans, and they desperately needed a method of bringing supplies from Japan to support their Burma and India campaigns because American submarine activity was just too great, and they couldn't get the supplies around. So they decided, "Well, hell, we've got all these thousands upon thousands of prisoners with nothing to do, so we'll build a railroad." And that's what they did. They wiped out entire villages of people and tribes of natives from Burma and India, and they built it over dead bodies.

Marcello: Yes, we have to remember that there were American prisoners, Australian prisoners, Dutch prisoners, British prisoners, some New Zealanders, and a whole lot of natives that were working on this railroad.

Schwarz: More natives than prisoners. They conscripted many thousands upon thousands of natives with offers of good pay and working for this new Co-Prosperity Sphere, only to find that when they got in the jungles, they just died like flies and were given nothing for it. Entire villages . . . the entire male populations of villages were just wiped out that way and never returned home. Tamils and Burmese and all these natives were used.

Marcello: When would a typical workday begin here at 14 Kilo? We're concentrating on 14 Kilo at this point.

Schwarz: Things weren't too rough yet in 14 Kilo, if I remember correctly. I think the routine was fairly easy, comparing it to what we would end up with later, and I think we worked almost a normal-type day. First of all, we were able to accomplish the task that they gave us without too much trouble. We were still in a fairly healthy state; it hadn't started to take its toll on us. They weren't rushed yet, and they hadn't gone into their speed-up, "Speedo-Speedo" program. I think that typically we probably went out probably around seven o'clock in the morning and worked eight or nine hours and came back again without too much trouble.

Marcello: Is it not true that for a while there, the prisoners were fulfilling their quota quite early and therefore were coming in early?

Schwarz: Too early, too early. Well, that didn't last too long.

Marcello: And then what did the Japanese do?

Schwarz: Well, they increased the quota. Obviously, if a guy goes out and digs his meter of dirt by one o'clock in the afternoon, they can't have him going back in camp, so they kept increasing it, you know, to three meters and four meters and five meters. Then I think quotas went out the window completely, and you just worked until they decided to let you stop. As we went farther in the jungle, and as their deadline wasn't being met,

things became more critical. Then finally there was no such thing as quotas or times or days or anything. You just worked constantly.

Marcello: We'll talk about that in a minute when we get into the "Speedo" campaign. By the time you get to the jungles, do you get the Korean guards, also?

Schwarz: Yes, that was one of the marked changes. As soon as we got into the jungle, we ended up with Korean guards.

Marcello: Describe what the Korean guards were like.

Schwarz: Well, the Korean guards were one step above us in the rung on the ladder. They were far below the Japanese. The Koreans were conscripted by the Japanese to work as non-combatants in all of their areas of operation. They were treated pretty badly by the Japanese. They were beaten on many occasions, and they were considered quite a bit lower as people by the Japanese. Consequently, they had to have somebody to dump it all on, and that became us.

Marcello: The Koreans evidently even had no rank, did they?

Schwarz: No, not that I know of.

Marcello: Could you distinguish the Japanese by the stars and so on on the uniforms?

Schwarz: That's right. Well, yes, the Koreans' uniforms were even a little different in color, and they had just a star, a big star, on their uniform, whereas the Japs had little metal stars and stripes. We could tell their ranks after a while.

You learn who was a private, who was a lieutenant, who was a captain. It became very easy to distinguish.

Marcello: Compare or contrast the treatment given by the Korean guards with that having been given by the Japanese guards earlier.

Schwarz: Well, we found that the Koreans were uncontrollably vicious. They vented their viciousness on the prisoners at every excuse.

I found the Japanese quite different. You would run into a Japanese who was nasty and . . . as a matter of fact, sometimes the Japanese would treat you very nicely in the morning, and then they would get drunk during lunch and come out and beat you up after lunch. I found that we could learn which Japs hated us to the point where they would practice their brutality on us and then avoid them; whereas with the Koreans, I don't ever remember meeting a Korean that did not beat up the prisoners. They were just an absolutely vicious, cruel group of people.

Marcello: Did their punishment seem to be more harsh than that of the Japanese?

Schwarz: Oh, absolutely. There seemed to be no control over their punishment. They just . . . beatings, first of all, were common, so beatings no longer became anything to write home about. You expected to get beaten up, but they would actually kill people, you know, and beat you senseless. They were really terrible people.

Marcello: What were some of the worst kinds of treatment or torture that

you would see the Koreans use?

Schwarz: Well, I've seen them shave guys' heads and kneel them down on a gravel path or something out in the sun, put a bamboo stick behind their knees, and make them kneel down on that bamboo stick. I've seen them take a foxhole and fill it with water and put a guy in it up to his neck in water for days and days and days--all this kind of stuff. The use of bamboo sticks and poles was nothing out of the ordinary. You were always getting bashed and beaten and hit.

I've seen them take . . . I saw one guy, an Englishman, who tried to escape. I seen them make him swallow dry rice and then drink gallons of warm water and then jump on his stomach with hobnailed boots.

They even treated animals . . . they tortured animals with great delight. They'd beat dogs and chickens and anything. It just seemed like they were absolute sadists--terrible.

Marcello: Of course, as you proceed back into the jungle, and as you get behind schedule, I'm sure that the punishment got even more severe and worse.

Schwarz: The Japanese engineers building the railroad were getting desperate. They were falling behind because of many factors--poor equipment, poor help, and the monsoon seasons--and they became desperate then. Then they embarked on what we called the "Speedo" program. All you ever heard from a Jap or a Korean was "Speedo! Speedo! Speedo!" Nobody ever worked

fast enough or long enough or hard enough, and it then became a nightmare of working.

We were going out at five o'clock in the morning and staying out until eleven or twelve o'clock the next night and maybe getting one meal in that period of time of nothing but dry rice and maybe a little watery soup. In the morning our standard breakfast was a handful of rice with one teaspoonful of sugar water, and you'd get that . . . you'd get up at three or four o'clock in the morning and stand out on a soaking wet parade ground and get that handful of rice and then go to work and maybe come back sixteen or eighteen hours later. An absolute nightmare! Unbelievable!

Our group, I think, in one way was fortunate, and I think that's been the story of my life. I think I've always been with the best groups. Our group . . . we started out by cutting and filling, and then we worked our way up to like the 40 Kilo, and then we were pulled back again to the 26 Kilo, and we laid the ballast and the ties and rails and so forth. I think that the diversification of what we were made to do helped us mentally and physically, rather than constantly going deeper and deeper into the jungles and doing nothing but clearing and cutting and all that. Although our death rate was very high, I feel personally, myself, that we were better off.

Marcello; How long did you remain at the 14 Kilo Camp altogether?

Schwarz: I can't relate. I cannot relate times or how long I stayed at one place. My mind runs together. I can remember places where I was; I can remember jobs that I did; I can remember incidences that happened. But I can't relate them to periods of time.

Marcello: Where did you go from the 14 Kilo Camp?

Schwarz: My recollection is that we went to the . . . I went to the 14, 18, 26 and 40 Kilo Camps.

Marcello: And you worked among those camps the whole time.

Schwarz: Among those camps, back and forth. But then I went up to the 80 Kilo.

Marcello: When did you get up to the 80 Kilo? Well, here again, you didn't remember the times.

Schwarz: I don't remember the times, but it would have to be . . .

Marcello: Well, for example, the "Speedo" campaign begins in May of 1943, and, of course, that was about the same time that the monsoons also had begun.

Schwarz: That's right, yes.

Marcello: Do you recall where you were around that time?

Schwarz: I believe that we were . . . I think that we were around the 40 or 80 Kilo Camp--somewhere in here.

Marcello: Well, if you were not at the 80 Kilo Camp or the 100 Camp, then you perhaps might have escaped some of the worst of that "Speedo" and monsoon business.

Schwarz: I think so. Well, also, I became very ill. I had malaria,

dysentery, and beriberi--all at one time--and when we were leaving the 80 Kilo . . . now this would probably be in mid-1943. Let's see, we came out of the jungles in . . .

Marcello: October of '43?

Schwarz: No, January. We started out in December of '43. We started out. So I became ill, I guess, in about the 80 Kilo, and we got orders to move farther into the jungle. Doctor Hekking called me in and said, "Look, if you go with us, you're going to die. If I send you back to 55 Kilo Camp, which is known as the 'death camp,' you might live." So he said, "I'm going to send you back." He did and I went back to that camp, and I stayed there for a good number of months. That's where Colonel Coates, the Australian surgeon, was doing all the amputations.

Marcello: Okay, let's try and get some of these things in some sort of a logical sequence here, Mr. Schwarz. Let's talk a little bit more about the routine in these camps. We mentioned the physical layout of the camps, and we talked about the Korean guards. Let's talk a little bit more about the food in these camps, and let's go back to the 14 Kilo Camp. What sort of food were you getting there?

Schwarz: Rice, some vegetables, a melon that we used to cut up and make a soup out of. And at that time they were trying to supply the camps with some meat. As a matter of fact, they had some herds of cattle which the prisoners ran up and down

the road, and we did get a little bit of meat--very little, but some.

Marcello: Also, I think we should mention that here at the 14 Kilo, you had been fairly close to the base camp--Thanbyuzayat, where all the supplies were coming from.

Schwarz: That's correct. Of course, the farther you go in the jungle, and the farther we got into the monsoon season when the roads were impassable, the worse your rations became,

Marcello: How did this work? Was there a regular road paralleling the railroad or fairly close to the railroad?

Schwarz: Yes, there was a dirt road--the same dirt road that we marched from camp to camp in. As I said before, in the dry season a fly couldn't fly by without kicking up a cloud of dust, and in the rainy season you couldn't even move because it was just a quagmire. So that was the only road, and as things got worse, especially before any rails were laid and any trains could be pulled up, our only source of supply was that one road, and you couldn't get anything in.

Marcello: Was it quite a while before they actually put trains on that road?

Schwarz: Yes, it was quite a while. First of all, they had to build a lot of bridges, and they were very difficult, very difficult.

Marcello: Describe the bridge-building.

Schwarz: (Chuckle) Well, bridge-building was done by just manpower, driving teakwood logs into the ground. They did it by attaching a long

shroud to heavy weights, and they'd get twenty or twenty-five prisoners on these shrouds, and they'd pull the weight up and drop it and just keep tamping the teakwood logs into the ground. Then they'd build one on top of the other and then connect them with pieces of wood. They were real works of art.

Marcello: There was very little machinery at all used in the building of this railroad.

Schwarz: I don't remember any machinery at all. We used to have to develop a chant when we were driving those piles, (singing) "Ichi, ni-no, san-yo," and when you say "yo" you drop the weight. They were really great works of art. I'll never forget my first ride in a train across one of the bridges that we built, and the pilings actually just moved as the train went over them. I'm sure they didn't last too long.

Marcello: Were there Japanese engineers in charge of the building of the railroad?

Schwarz: Oh, yes. Yes, they had the Japanese Engineer Corps, a special, elite group of people who were sent to build this railroad.

Marcello: Did you ever see very many regular Japanese Army people on this railroad?

Schwarz: No.

Marcello: It was basically either engineers or Korean guards?

Schwarz: Engineers or Korean guards. The Korean guards had a Japanese, regular Japanese, in charge of them, you know, the officers.

Marcello: Awhile ago you were talking about the punishments and bashings increasing after lunch, especially if the Japanese had had too much to drink. Did you find that the Japanese would be hitting the bottle quite regularly on this assignment?

Schwarz: Oh, yes, drinking was a problem. I would suspect that assignment to duty on the Burma railroad, even on the part of the Japanese, was not exactly choice pickings. I know we had a lieutenant who was an alcoholic. He was drunk all the time, and he used to go on rages. He'd run down the middle of the camp at night with his drawn sword, ordering the guards out with their guns and attacking the camp and all this kind of stuff, you know. But he was always drunk. Even Nagatomo didn't like him, and he finally court-martialed him.

Marcello: Well, I would assume that the Japanese also were not going to use their best troops to guard prisoners that would build a railroad. Their best troops were probably out on the front lines fighting.

Schwarz: True. Yes, that's another angle. It was not choice duty by choice people, by any means.

Marcello: In all this time, have you ever been allowed out to communicate with the outside world? In other words, have the Japanese provided any means for you to write home?

Schwarz: We wrote several postcards. They were pre-printed postcards which contained a message, and we could choose the proper . . . like, for instance, they'd say, "I am alive and doing

well" or "I'm sick" or you'd just check off what you want.

Marcello: If you didn't say you were well, the card probably wouldn't get home.

Schwarz: Yes, right. Well, not only that, but you didn't want to alarm the people at home to think there was anything wrong with you. So we were able to send three or four of those home during the entire three-and-a-half years.

Marcello: Did you ever receive any mail from home?

Schwarz: Once, but that was not until much later, when we got into Thailand. We received mail once--one time.

Marcello: From time to time in our conversation, we've talked about escape attempts.

Schwarz: Yes.

Marcello: Were there ever any escape attempts here in the jungle?

Schwarz: There were several that I know of. No Americans, that I know of, attempted to escape.

Marcello: Was there ever very much talk of escape?

Schwarz: No, Very little.

Marcello: Not even in your bull sessions?

Schwarz: No. Nobody in their right mind could possibly entertain the notion that there was any way that you could travel through thousands of miles of uninhabitable jungle with no food, no clothing, no weapons, nothing. And being a white man in a black man's world, there was no way that you could get anywhere. I helped bury a couple of people who tried.

- Marcello: What threats did the Japanese make for those people who tried to escape and were caught?
- Schwarz: Well, it was very simple. It was a standard order that if you were caught attempting to escape, you would be executed--no two ways about it.
- Marcello: Were the Japanese bluffing?
- Schwarz: No, they weren't bluffing because I helped bury a couple of guys in Thanbyuzayat that had been caught--a couple of Aussies.
- Marcello: Was this when you first arrived in Thanbyuzayat?
- Schwarz: No, it was . . . I was sent back to Thanbyuzayat, I think, from the 26 Kilo Camp. I had . . . I forget what was wrong. Thanbyuzayat was also the hospital camp, and I had been sent back there. During the period that I was there, they caught two Australians who had made it quite a ways toward the Burmese-Indian border. They brought them back, and they were sentenced to death, and they were shot. I was on a detail to go out and bury them. So, no, they didn't make any bones about it. I know of three executions for attempts to escape.
- Marcello: Did you ever witness any of these executions?
- Schwarz: No, they herded us into the barracks . . . we saw them take the guys out. They herded us into the barracks . . . but we dug the graves and put a grass mat at the head of each grave . . . and they herded us into the barracks, and then we would hear the shots, and then they'd grab a couple of us to go out

and bury them. I did that once.

Marcello: I guess the message comes through loud and clear from that point forward.

Schwarz: Oh, yes! Oh, yes!

Marcello: Where was it that your group seemed to experience the greatest hardship? In other words, at which particular camp?

Schwarz: Eighty Kilo.

Marcello: At the 80 Kilo Camp?

Schwarz: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, describe what conditions were like here at 80 Kilo. I assume that by the time you got to 80 Kilo, the "Speedo" campaign and the monsoon season had begun.

Schwarz: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, first of all, talk about the "Speedo" campaign. You talked about it briefly before, but let's talk about it in more detail. It begins in May of 1943. What does the "Speedo" campaign mean in terms of working on the railroad?

Schwarz: Well, the "Speedo" campaign meant the end of any semblance of a routine or a normal pattern of work. You no longer went out and were required to dig a certain amount of dirt and then sent in. Whether it took you eight hours or ten hours or whatever, you now went out and you worked until they decided you would quit, and it was a constant atmosphere of urgency, constant bashings by rifle butt and bamboo poles. Everything had to be done as fast as you could do it. You would be

carrying extremely heavy cross-ties made out of teakwood, and we used to carry them with two men, one on each end. Then it got down to one man, and we were getting weaker all the time, and yet were doing heavier work all the time. You'd end up with one man on each cross-tie. Guards were lined up all along. It meant getting all the sick men out on sick call and some Jap private walking up and down the line deciding who was sick and not sick, despite our own doctors.

Marcello: In other words, the Japanese had to have a quota of men out on that railroad.

Schwarz: They had to have workers on the railroad. It meant that . . . as time went by, everybody was getting sicker more rapidly and weaker more rapidly. The sick calls were becoming bigger, and the bigger the sick calls became the less food they gave us because they cut the rations for the sick. So it was a circle that we just couldn't get out of because the harder we worked the sicker we got and the less we got to eat. There was just no sunup or sunset. You just went out, and you worked. We would work all through the night and all through the rains, and it was just a . . . time became nothing. You just went on from one . . . one day became the next, and time didn't mean a damn thing.

Marcello: What was it like working in the monsoons under these conditions?

Schwarz: Absolutely horrendous! The footing was bad . . . the rain you didn't mind so much, but everything was a torrent of water.

Even in the huts, down the middle of the huts, it'd be like a swimming pool--a stream running down your hut. You never was dry, never dry at all. Nothing that you owned could ever be dry, and this went on for months. It was just a nightmare.

Marcello: I assume that whatever possessions you did have very quickly rotted or deteriorated in this kind of a climate.

Schwarz: Absolutely, absolutely. You know, actually, you really didn't need clothes because they weren't any good to you, anyway. If you had clothes on, they'd be soaking wet all the time. Of course, we had started to get a lot of pulmonary problems, bronchitis and all, from the constant, cool wetness. It would be humid-wet in the daytime, and at night it would be cool, cold-wet. Tropical ulcers were all over the place. As soon as you cut yourself, you became infected and ended up with an ulcer.

Marcello: Did you ever have any of the tropical ulcers?

Schwarz: Yes, I had quite a number of them.

Marcello: Describe how you got yours and what you did to combat them.

Schwarz: Well, as I said, any cut or sore became an ulcer immediately. It ulcerated and rapidly got bigger and bigger. I was fortunate in being with Doctor Hekking, who I believe was more advanced in his treatment of ulcers than some of the other doctors. I think he was the first one who started the "spooning" of the ulcers, where you would take a spoon and dig out the pus

and keep them clean. I stole some gasoline and burned my legs where the ulcers were. I used to go out and just douse gasoline in them to burn the junk out of them. I was very fortunate. Mine did not spread and did not get big, and I did not end up like so many people with amputations.

Marcello: I'd never heard of anybody using gasoline before. That's a treatment I hadn't heard.

Schwarz: Yes, I used gasoline.

Marcello: You simply poured the gasoline on the open sore?

Schwarz: Yes, right, yes. Doctor Hekking also was taking blood out of the upper portion of my body and injecting it in the lower portion of my body. Whatever that was supposed to do, I don't know,

Marcello: Did you ever see the people using the maggots to put on the tropical ulcers?

Schwarz: Oh, yes, sure, yes.

Marcello: How would that procedure work?

Schwarz: Well, maggots were no problem getting because the whole place was filled with maggots. They would just take the maggots and put them in the open wound and wrap it with rags and let the maggots eat away the flesh. The whole problem with tropical ulcers is that they turn everything into this pus, and you have to get it out. I watched Colonel Coates personally doing his amputations at the 55 Kilo Camp.

Marcello: You mentioned that at one point you had a combination of

beriberi and malaria and dysentery. Where did this occur?

Schwarz: This happened at the 80 Kilo Camp.

Marcello: And it was from the 80 Kilo Camp that you were ultimately sent back to 55 Kilo Camp?

Schwarz: Yes, right.

Marcello: And this is where they had established that so-called death camp?

Schwarz: Yes. They called it a hospital camp, but all it was was that they took all of the people who they determined . . .and when the Japs determined that you were unfit for work, you were just about ready to check out. They packed all those people in a train and sent them all back to this area at the 55 Kilo Camp and told them, "Build yourself a hospital." It was an absolutely courageous bunch of doctors and medical orderlies that put this camp together and started saving some lives back there.

Marcello: Well, describe the process by which you got from 80 Kilo back to 55 Kilo. Start with your illnesses and so on.

Schwarz: Well, by then they had some trains that were pulled by trucks that they removed the wheels and put railroad wheels on them, and they were running them back and forth by then. That's how I got back from the 80 Kilo Camp.

Well, the illnesses, I'd had them all on and off--malaria, dysentery.

Marcello: In other words, your combination of illnesses was enough to

keep you off the railroad and from working. Even the Japanese could see that.

Schwarz: Right. Doctor Hekking decided, and they sent me back.

Marcello: Did you want to go back to that 55 Kilo Camp? In other words, did you know what possibly awaited you had you gone back there?

Schwarz: Well, considering the alternative that was given me, there wasn't really any choice.

Marcello: And what was the alternative?

Schwarz: Doctor Hekking said that if I went with them up to the 100 Kilo Camp that I would die. There was no way that he could keep me alive. On the other hand, if I went back to the 55 Kilo Camp, I might live.

Marcello: I guess the hospital huts in any of these various kilo camps were not great places.

Schwarz: Oh, no. They were filthy, and they stank. You know, it was just a bunch of people dying. It was a question of when would they die.

The only thing that saved me was that I got in with a bunch of Australians who took me under their wing, and these guys were going out at night trading with the natives--there was a native village nearby--and they were giving me meat and eggs and things that they snuck into the camp. They eventually built my strength up, and they were responsible for me living.

Marcello: How long were you back at 55 Kilo Camp altogether?

Schwarz: Oh, I think I was there at least six months or seven months, and then I rejoined the group up at the 100 Kilo when we were coming out of the jungle.

Marcello: And were you basically flat on your back while you were down here at the 55 Kilo Camp?

Schwarz: Most of the time, yes, most of the time. See, when you get malaria, beriberi, and dysentery, you're in dire straits because the malaria has you too weak--they all have you too weak to get up--the dysentery says you have to get up 150 times a day, and the beriberi has you that if you do get up, it knocks you down because of the pain in your legs. So you really just lay there and wallow in it, you know.

Marcello: And this is basically what you had to do.

Schwarz: That's it, until these guys started getting my strength up. Then the malaria got under control a little bit, and little by little I pulled out.

Marcello: Were there any prisoners brought back to the 55 Kilo Camp to take care of the sick?

Schwarz: Well, there was a hospital staff there--Colonel Coates and all his Australian doctors. There were no Americans that I know of back there. It was strictly an Australian operation. But he did a miraculous job.

Marcello: How long were you there before you could begin to feel that you were recovering?

Schwarz: Well, I think I was probably there about a month or a

month-and-a-half, and then I felt that I was going to be all right.

Marcello: And did you do virtually nothing while you were back at the 55 Kilo Camp?

Schwarz: Oh, no, there was no work at all, no work at all--none, none.

Marcello: After you feel well and you are a little bit better, would you then be helping take care of the other prisoners?

Schwarz: Yes, working in the galley or doing any of the odd jobs around the camp that they want until they decide that you're fit for full duty, and then they ship you back up country.

Marcello: And in this camp I guess you didn't see any Japanese or very few Japanese.

Schwarz: Oh, very few. No, there were just the Korean guards, that's all.

Marcello: Did you ever see cases where men actually gave up and died?

Schwarz: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Describe this process. How could you tell when a man had given up?

Schwarz: Well, first of all, the whole secret to living was that you had to continue eating, whatever it was you got, even if it was dirty, filthy rice. The first sign is when they won't eat anymore, and you know that they're not going to have any strength at all. Then there's just the general apathy that they just don't care.

I remember I used to see Colonel Coates going through. He had a special ward for tropical ulcers, and almost all of them

eventually ended up in an amputation--an amputation without benefit of any modern surgical equipment or no operating room or anything, just a little bamboo enclosure. He would walk out there in the morning . . . and there was a cemetery off the end of the ulcer ward, and he'd walk up and he'd come across one of these guys who had given up in their eating, and he knew that they were dying. He'd have the orderlies prop him up and say, "That's where you're going. You'll be there within two days unless you get that rice down your throat. It's up to you." Then he'd walk away. It was the only way you could do it. It was a hard, cruel existence, and we had a staff of undernourished, sick, tired medical people still trying to save lives.

Marcello: I guess the burial details became quite common by that time.

Schwarz: Oh, yes. When we first went in the jungles, everytime a guy died, we'd blow "Taps" or we'd play "Last Call," and everybody'd stop whatever they were doing and stand at attention. After awhile we just forgot about it because they were blowing all the time, you know, all the time.

Marcello: In other words, you did, however, continue to blow "Taps" and that sort of thing, but nobody was paying attention.

Schwarz: Yes, but nobody was paying attention to it anymore, you know. It was happening all the time; it was nothing unusual; it was a fairly traumatic experience.

Marcello: How would the burial procedure take place?

- Schwarz: Well, very simply. There'd be no pomp and circumstance. You've got to remember that we needed everything we could get. There was no such thing as boxes or nails or material to wrap the body in or anything. They tried to be as dignified as possible, not just dump the body as if it had no meaning, but still it was just a question of shallow graves and a small cross.
- Marcello: I guess it took a tremendous amount of strength on the part of the prisoners just simply to dig those graves, considering the conditions.
- Schwarz: Oh, yes, yes, sure.
- Marcello: Were the graves carefully marked and plotted?
- Schwarz: Yes, yes. Of course, Graves Registration went in after the war and got everything out, but, yes, they kept a good record of where everything was.
- Marcello: How do you make do, so to speak, in other aspects while you're in the jungle. For example, what do you do about such things as toothpaste and razors and things of that sort, and toothbrushes? How do you improvise?
- Schwarz: Well, I never had a toothbrush. If you could ever get any salt, which was very, very scarce and rare, you'd put it on your finger. Once in a while you'd find some kind of white powder, and even if you didn't know what it was, you'd just rub it on your teeth. Actually it's pretty amazing that everybody got back with their teeth.

But razor blades? If you were lucky enough to have a razor blade, guys used to take a glass bottle and break it or burn it and crack it and just keep rubbing the razor blade inside the glass bottle. Some of the Aussies and English had Rolls razors, which lasted throughout the whole time. It was a question of everybody sharing whatever they had in the way of razor blades. Single razor blades, I guess, lasted throughout the whole time.

Marcello: Did you try and keep your beard as closely cropped as you could?

Schwarz: Well, I never had a beard after that. I had a little beard when I was first captured, by the time I got to Batavia, but after that I didn't, I didn't have any beard.

Marcello: So you tried to keep a cleanly shaven face as much as you could.

Schwarz: Oh, yes, yes.

Marcello: And in terms of your hair, did you try to keep it cut as closely as you could?

Schwarz: Yes, oh, yes. We'd just get a pair of scissors, and we kept it down. One time they made us shave our heads, just once, but after that they let it do anything. But we always kept it cut close, cut short.

Marcello: Was this a sanitary precaution as much as anything?

Schwarz: Oh, yes, plus, who had combs and who was going to take care of their hair? It was the least thing that we wanted to have to do.

Marcello: In terms of toothbrushes, I know that on occasion--and this is especially true among the country boys--they would take

a twig, and they would chew the end of it to a frazzle and use it as a toothbrush.

Schwarz: I never heard of that. But I understand that the lack of hard things to chew actually ended up being beneficial to us. From what I hear, there was no damage to your gums or anything, and your teeth weren't moved or anything.

Marcello: While you were in the jungles, did you have any way of supplementing your diet?

Schwarz: Very, very little in the jungle. We used to take . . . if you could get near a Japanese cookhouse, and they did any slaughtering, you could take the blood and let it congeal and slice it and fry it. Very rarely you came across a native and could trade with him and maybe get a couple of eggs, but it would be very, very rare--very rare. In the jungle, there was very little opportunity to supplement your diet at all.

Marcello: Again, how about snakes and things of that nature?

Schwarz: I only saw one snake in the whole jungle, and that was a huge python that we caught. Some guys . . . I heard them talk about capturing rats and all, but I never had any. I've seen a few dogs go past us, but even the animals were all starving, you know, really. The few times that they managed to give us any cows, hell, by the time they were dressed, I don't think they weighed more than seventy pounds for 3,000 guys. But there was really very little in the jungle--very litte.

Marcello: I guess even in these conditions, however, you had to remain

conscious of sanitation and hygiene as much as possible, did you not?

Schwarz: Oh, sure! Oh, yes!

Marcello: In terms of your cooking utensils and so on, how did you care for them? Or your eating utensils, I guess, in some cases?

Schwarz: Well, what they used to do is take fifty-five-gallon drums and cut them down, and they always had them filled with boiling water. When you got finished eating, you could take your equipment and just dump it and let it hang in that boiling water for a while. Everybody did that all the time. In the cookhouse they used to scrub the stuff out and rinse it out with boiling water and all.

Marcello: Again, I'm sure that everybody was conscious about sanitation and hygiene as being one of the keys to survival.

Schwarz: That's for sure, and I think it showed up in the Americans. I know the Americans had every disease that everybody else had, but I think the Americans avoided some of the diseases that were caused by just plain neglect, like ringworm. I don't think the Americans had much ringworm at all, but it was very common with the British.

Marcello: And I assume all water obviously had to be boiled.

Schwarz: Oh, yes! Oh, absolutely! And very few camps had wells. We had to rely on whatever streams. They always tried to build the camp by a stream.

Marcello: Well, at least there would have been ample opportunity to bathe

then, I guess.

Schwarz: Well, sometimes. I'm trying to remember which camp . . . was it the 100 Kilo or the 105 Kilo? It was by a little stream, and, boy, you got in there, and within two seconds you'd be covered with leeches.

Marcello: You mentioned that when you left the 55 Kilo Camp you went back up to the 100 Kilo?

Schwarz: Yes, that's when I rejoined the group, but that was at the time when we were coming out of the jungles. That would be in December of 1943. We were only in the jungles for something like eight or nine months the whole time. Then we went on into Thailand and Indochina and Japan, wherever.

Marcello: I see.

Schwarz: But the period in the jungle only went from, let's see, September, October . . . oh, it was about ten months, eleven months, something like that.

Marcello: And I guess that was plenty long enough.

Schwarz: Oh, yes! Yes, that was long enough to kill a lot of people.

Marcello: Back in the 55 Kilo Camp, approximately how many people would be dying per day? You would obviously have to estimate that.

Schwarz: I don't really know, but I would imagine there'd be at least four or five a day going, and sometimes more. They were going quite rapidly there.

Marcello: There's something we forgot to talk about at this point, and I guess we should have mentioned it earlier. I know that

virtually everybody formed a little clique in their time as a prisoner-of-war. I'm not using the term clique in a derogatory sense, but it was a case where two or three or four people would get together and look out for one another and so on.

Schwarz: Right.

Marcello: Did you participate in this sort of activity?

Schwarz: Oh, yes, sure. I was one of the "Dead End Kids." There happened to be three or four of us from the New York area, and we became labeled as the "Dead End Kids," and that was basically the group that I hung out with. We were all Navy, all young sailors.

Marcello: Was this an important factor in your survival?

Schwarz: Oh, I would think so. You always have a tendency to look after each other, and it gives you some sort of a . . . it's a lot better than being alone, okay? Alone, you're fighting everything. At least you know that whatever you're fighting, you're fighting with friends and people who're going through the same thing. I guess it had a value. I don't think we ever looked at it in terms of what psychological value it had. I mean, we only became conscious of those things now that we got home and got over it. All we knew was that it happened, you know, and that was the natural way.

Marcello: You mentioned that in December of 1943 that you left the jungle after you had returned to the 55 Kilo to the 100 Kilo Camp.

I guess that was quite a relief to get out of that jungle, was it not?

Schwarz: Oh! The difference between our jungle camps and going to Tamarkan, Thailand, was just unbelievable. It was just like coming out of the darkness into the light. It was just a whole new beginning for us.

Marcello: Describe what it was like riding on that railroad.

Schwarz: Oh, that was a little bit scary. First of all, we knew when we built the railroad that it wasn't going to last too long, but when we had to ride on our own handiwork, that was the last straw. The hairiest spot is going around a curve called Hintok, where the British . . . it seemed to go on for miles and miles, and it was built right on a sheer cliff overlooking a very deep ravine of solid rock. It was built like matchsticks--one layer of trees or poles on top of another--and as the train rolled around it, we would be sitting in these railroad cars with the doors open and looking out. It just felt like the whole bridgework was swaying as we went around. I'll tell you, when we got on the other side . . . we were afraid to breathe all the time we were there. We all let out a sigh of relief as we got across the bridge. It was terrible.

Then as we went down the railroad on the Thailand side, we passed some camps that were still occupied by British and other camps that were already abandoned, and we made our way to the spot by the Tamarkan Bridge. We went in that camp.

Marcello: Okay, describe what Tamarkan looked like from a physical standpoint. That was a fairly large camp, was it not?

Schwarz: Tamarkan was a large camp. Again, the structure of the camp is similar to all camps. They all looked alike, really.

Marcello: With the atap huts and so on?

Schwarz: Atap huts and all lined up in a row. We weren't there too long. I don't know exactly in terms of time, but we weren't there for any long period of time until we were moved on.

Marcello: What did you do while you were at Tamarkan?

Schwarz: Nothing really physical compared to what we had just come from. We did spend some time down along the river cutting bamboo and little general jobs like that, but nothing heavy. We seemed to be getting a breather. The only hardship that we had in Tamarkan was the fact that Allied bombers started coming over, and there were a couple of nights when the Japanese anti-aircraft battery alongside the camp opened up.

Marcello: At Tamarkan there were two bridges that crossed the river there, were there not?

Schwarz; That's correct.

Marcello: One of them was a concrete and steel bridge, and then what was the other one like?

Schwarz: The other one was wood, just a wooden bridge.

Marcello: Were you there when the raids took place?

Schwarz: No. My group left before that. As I said, we weren't in Tamarkan too long.

Marcello: By this time, that is, by the time you get to Tamarkan, what is your physical condition like?

Schwarz: Well, when we got to Tamarkan, of course, we were all in very poor physical condition.

Marcello: But you were at least better than what you had been at the 55 Kilo when you first went there.

Schwarz: Right. Well, I had gotten to the point where I was now declared physically able to go back to my camp. Fortunately I didn't go back to a camp and face many more months of jungle, but instead I came out of the jungle. It's amazing how rapidly . . . when you get in a camp where the food supply becomes a little better, and you're not being forced to do that horrendous slave labor, your body starts to recuperate, and it's not more than a couple of weeks before the guys coming out of the jungle behind you look terrible to you. Just a few weeks before you were in that same boat.

Marcello: So I guess even the Japanese knew that they had gotten about as much out of you as they possibly could have when you left the jungle.

Schwarz: Oh, yes, and they had completed the railroad, so out we came.

Marcello: And so you did manage to pick up weight and so on while you're at Tamarkan.

Schwarz: Oh, yes, I started to pick up a little weight, and more importantly we started gaining strength.

Marcello: Okay, so where do you go from Tamarkan?

- Schwarz: Okay, from Tamarkan we went by train to another camp called Nakhon Pathom, and we stayed there for a couple of weeks, and then again by train we went into Bangkok. We went into Bangkok where we were kept in the railroad yards, locked up in the railroad cars, for a couple of days while we had several very severe air raids.
- Marcello: Did they occur while you were in the marshalling yards there?
- Schwarz: While we were in the yards, yes. Fortunately, we didn't suffer any direct hits.
- Marcello: Describe that episode. It seems like a rather interesting one and a rather harrowing one, I'm sure.
- Schwarz: Well, how does one feel when they've survived a sinking of a ship, swimming eight hours in an ocean, and then going through two years of absolute terror in the jungles, only to come out and be locked up in a metal box while your own Americans are above dropping bombs, and two hours later they'll be back at the base drinking Coke? You know, it's pretty hard to stand there and cheer them on, so it's very . . . well, bombing raids under any conditions are terrible things to go through. To be locked up in a box and not able to run and get in a hole or anything makes it that much worse.
- Marcello: Do you talk about anything in a situation like this? What do you do when you're in there? Every man to his own thoughts or what?
- Schwarz: Oh, yes, and, you know, some guys are making remarks to tell

them to go away, and others are telling them to drop them. You know, everybody has their own nervous reaction, but mostly everybody is quiet in their own fear.

Marcello: When you had time to think about this raid, that is, after the emotional and psychological aspects of it had subsided, did you look upon that raid as an indication that it was perhaps one step closer to liberation, that is, that maybe we were winning now?

Schwarz: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! Anytime that planes came over--when we're not locked in a box in the target--we always cheered and we reflected, "Okay, they've got to be within so many miles now." So we do know that at least the war has taken a turn where the United States or the Allies have some sort of superiority. Oh, no, we welcomed Allied planes.

Marcello: Was this the first Allied raid that you had experienced at this point?

Schwarz: Well, up at Thanbyuzayat, we had them in the very beginning of the building of the railroad, and then this was the first since then. Yes, this would be the first since very early 1943.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the Japanese after this raid?

Schwarz: Well, the Japanese would "go bananas" during raids. They're definitely afraid of airplanes, and after every raid you always get a reaction from them. They always vented all of their anger for American raids on Japan, and it seems like every time there was a raid it renews their recollections; and

they come around, and they're nasty, and half a dozen people get beat up because they didn't move fast enough. There was always a counter-reaction, but it's a good one to go through because we know that we're getting under their skin.

Marcello: I assume that you left Bangkok shortly thereafter.

Schwarz: Right. We left Bangkok and we went to Phnom Penh in Cambodia, and from there we boarded a barge and went down river to Saigon, Indochina.

Marcello: About how many of you are there?

Schwarz: Not too many, just a couple of hundred. We were with Captain Fowler.

Marcello: Is this a mixed nationality?

Schwarz: Mixed group, yes, yes, but a small group. We went to Saigon.

Marcello: At least in Saigon you're getting closer to civilization again.

Schwarz: Right! And things got better constantly in terms of our conditions and being able to cope with the situation we were in. Again, we went to a large city. With a lot of working parties, we had a lot of opportunities to steal and opportunities to put on a little bit of weight and gain a lot more strength.

Marcello: Describe what the quarters were like here in Saigon, that is, where you were staying.

Schwarz: Okay, we were in what apparently was some sort of a French military base, or ex-French military base, and it had very good huts, but typical huts in the Far East. In other words, it had the long platform where everybody shared a common platform,

except this time we had a little more room, and it was solid wood instead of the bamboo poles that dug into your back. By then we were quite accustomed to living on slabs of wood or stone or bamboo. But they were quite nice. For bathing facilities we had a large concrete tank in the middle of the compound with water flowing into it all the time, and we'd just go there with a bucket or something, and you could bathe anytime you wanted. So in terms of accommodations it was a great improvement over the jungle.

Marcello: Did you still have your Korean guards?

Schwarz: Yes, we still had Korean guards.

Marcello: Had their disposition improved any?

Schwarz: No, the Koreans never changed the whole time we were there.

Marcello: All this time that you had these Korean guards, were you kind of waiting for the day that the war was over so that you could perhaps take out some sort of retribution upon them? Were there thoughts of revenge in your minds?

Schwarz: Yes, of course, guys always talked about what they were going to do when the war ended, and strangely enough, when it did end, nobody did anything. So it was kind of strange,

Marcello: But you did talk about it?

Schwarz: Oh, yes.

Marcello: It made good conversation,

Schwarz: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

Marcello: What kind of jobs were you doing here in Saigon?

Schwarz: Well, we had all kinds of work parties. We went out and worked on the airfield; we worked on the docks loading and unloading ships; we worked on oil refineries, radio stations. Every morning the Japanese would come in . . . all of the different Japanese units around the city would come in and give their orders: "I need ten men"; "I need fifty men"; "I need a hundred men." Again, we went back to that old routine that we had early in our prison camp life of jockeying for position to be picked by the . . . to go to the right Jap, you know, to work. It got to be a real science every morning, trying to jockey. But the working parties got to be known by their reputation, and everybody tried to avoid the oil refineries because that was the worst.

Marcello: Why was the oil refinery the worst?

Schwarz: Well, it was hard work. They worked you hard, and you were always rolling drums. Of course, out there we had an opportunity to do a little sabotage, too.

Marcello: Why don't you describe the sabotage activity that would take place at the oil refinery.

Schwarz: Well, we would be rolling large drums of gasoline and storing them and camouflaging them against air attack, and we would do this both at the refinery and also out at the airfield. The Jap guards, especially at the airfield, became very lax, and we had plenty of opportunity to open up the cap just enough that there would be a slow trickle. Over a period of time,

laying out there in the hot sun, those drums would empty out, and we did that a lot, I've also seen people sneak out to where the fighter planes were parked, and they'd take a penknife and engrave an American flag in the windshield of the fighter planes.

Marcello: That took a lot of guts on the part of the prisoners, did it not?

Schwarz: Oh, it sure did, yes.

Marcello: Why would somebody take a risk like that?

Schwarz: I think it's a way of feeling that you're in the war again. You're fighting and you're doing something, you know.

Marcello: What were some of the good jobs that you liked here at Saigon?

Schwarz: Well, the smaller the work party, the better the job. For instance, the radio station out near the racetrack outside of Saigon was a good one. First of all, you have a long ride to get there and a long ride back, and you would ride through town. Saigon is a beautiful, big city.

Marcello: What were some of the other easy jobs that you had at Saigon? You mentioned that the oil refinery was a particularly hard job. What were some of the easy jobs?

Schwarz: Well, usually a rule of thumb would be that if a Jap came in and requisitioned four or five prisoners, or the smallest number of prisoners, the better the job. For instance, the railroad station would only take a few men in the morning, and that was a good detail because, first of all, you had a long ride

in the truck going out to the radio station, which was alongside of the racetrack outside on the edge of Saigon, and a long ride back which was a pleasant respite from the normal prison camp life. The work was also easy, and sometimes the Japs were in a good mood and give you breaks in the morning and afternoon and give you cigarettes.

Marcello: What sort of work would you be doing for the radio station?

Schwarz: I mostly worked on the guy/wires for the antennas. The funny part of it was that the radio station was in a graveyard, an old graveyard, and we would have to dig deep trenches and put in pieces of telephone pole with the guy wire wrapped around it, sink it down the holes. More often than not, we would be digging graves up, digging through bones, but the Japs didn't care about that.

Marcello: Which jobs were highly sought here at Saigon in terms of the stealing that could be done?

Schwarz: Well, the docks were good because we would be unloading ships, and you never know--you might be unloading condensed milk, for instance, highly nourishing and filling, and you tried to swipe that. Of course, the swiping had to be really refined at this point because, if you were taking anything big or noticeable, it's easy to detect, and the Japs now were searching us constantly to prevent pilfering.

As a matter of fact, on the docks I managed to steal from a Red Cross shipment my first pair of shoes, and I never got

to wear them because what I did was, I stole them and I realized I couldn't wear them into the camp brand-new. So I hid them out on the dock, and each time I went out there, I would go and rub them with dirt and try to make them look old. By the time I got to where they were almost ready, I got transferred and went to another place, so I never got to wear my shoes.

Marcello: I would assume that by the time you got to the Saigon docks that theft and stealing had become a highly developed art among some of the prisoners.

Schwarz: Oh, yes, yes. The Japanese seemed to have a strange approach to their searching. For instance, if they found somebody smuggling something in, say, in their crotch, tied up in their crotch under their shorts or under their G-string, then you could be assured that there would be crotch searches for the next two weeks until they discovered somewhere else. Then you'd bring something in under your armpit or some other way. So they were really strange about it; you could always get away with certain patterns for a while.

A lot of interesting things happened. Of course, some of the guys had canteens with false bottoms in them. They'd have water in the top, so the Jap would lift it up and sprinkle water out when he was searching, but yet the false bottom would have sugar or a bar of soap or whatever he could steal . . . or a piece of cloth, which was highly advantageous to sell to

natives.

An incident happened there one day which was really comical. We were unloading a huge barge of condensed milk, and the Jap in charge of the work party came down in the barge and called a break, told us to relax. We were all sitting in the barge facing the back section where you walked up and unloaded it, and the Jap came in, and he sat down on a case of milk, and he started talking to us. He said, "You know, you Americans think that you're smarter than the Japanese, but we watch a lot of your gangster movies, and we know just how you people operate." He said, "Now I'm going to show you what you look like to us." So he went into an act, and he snuck out to the back of the barge, and he looked up, mocking us, looking for guards. Then he sneaked back to a case of milk and opened up the case, took a can of milk out. He took his hat off and covered the can of milk and then sneaked back to the back of the barge and looked around to see if anybody was watching. Then he ran back and grabbed his hat and ran away with the can of milk, and when he did, all he picked up was an empty hat. While he was out looking for guards, one of the guys had grabbed the can of milk.

Well, I'll tell you, he jumped up and down. They got us out on the dock, they spread us apart, and they started searching. They searched us for hours, and they couldn't find the can of milk. Well, finally, they gave up. That evening

when we were leaving the docks . . . we used to walk down the docks and out the main gate of the docks and up the street to our camp, which was across the street from the docks. As we were marching out of the main gate, he was standing there--fuming--and as we went by, a can of condensed milk rolled on the ground to his feet. That was the American answer to him for telling us how we looked. You know, guys took great risks just to have fun, and they also took great risks to survive.

Marcello: Don't you think there was also a psychological satisfaction involved? In other words, whether it's engraving an American flag on the windshield of an airplane or stealing a can of condensed milk or stealing something that you didn't even need, it was a way of putting something over on the captors.

Schwarz: Oh, sure! One of the things that bugged the Japs the most is that they could not understand how we could be cheerful under any circumstances of being a prisoner-of-war. Americans would get together and play practical jokes on each other, even when they were dying. They would laugh and kid, and the Japs couldn't understand that, and it infuriated them. Many times they would put a ban on the congregating of more than one or two people together, you know. But it kept us going. For the most part, these tricks that we played and the stealing that we did, even if some punishment developed out of it, we still were glad that the guy did it or that we

did it.

There were very few times that I've ever seen anybody steal from the Japs where the prisoners got annoyed. There was one incident with "Pack Rat" McCone. We were working out at a Japanese barracks, just general clean-up work around the barracks, and one of the Japs took off his shirt and laid it on the veranda of the building, and in the shirt pocket was his wallet. Well, the wallet disappeared. Well, everybody knew that "Pack Rat" McCone had the wallet. Well, when the Jap discovered it, he "went bananas," and he started what lasted to be, oh, maybe a three- or four-hour search. They did everything, including stripping us absolutely naked, separating us three or four feet apart, so we couldn't pass things. They did everything under the sun and never found the wallet. I was standing behind "Pack Rat" McCone, and I was watching every move he was making. Finally, while the Japs were busy at one end of the line, he dug a little hole in the dirt with his toe, dropped the wallet in it, tamped the dirt down, and stood on the wallet--the whole time. He got away with it, but, boy, the guys were ripping mad because it just wasn't worth the risk he took because they beat up quite a few of the people over that incident.

Marcello: Did he just steal that wallet for the sake of stealing it, or was he planning to use the contents of it?

Schwarz: Oh, I would imagine he was looking for the money in it, sure,

but he took a great risk with a minimum chance of getting away with it.

Marcello: What would be the punishment if one were caught stealing?

Schwarz: Well, I guess it would depend on who you stole it from, but they would most certainly, at the very least, give you a very severe beating.

One time back in Tamarkan, I was assigned to work in a Japanese kitchen, and I was rendering down pork fat, and I thought, "Boy, that would be great to cook rice in." So I stole a canteen cupful, and I got caught. Well, they called six Japs over, and they beat me to a pulp. They worked me over, and they kept kicking my throat, and I was bleeding inside my throat. Then they took me outside, and they stood me up against the fence post, and they all went and got their rifles and bayonets, and they started holding mock bayonet drill. They would charge at me and just stop and prick my skin. Then they started beating me again, and they became furious because they hit me and I spit out the blood. Then they hit me more because I was doing it.

Marcello: Were they hitting you with fists?

Schwarz: Oh, yes, fists and rifle butts and everything. They'd "go bananas." Once they started beating on you, they really do a job.

Marcello: Were these Japanese or Koreans?

Schwarz: These were Koreans.

- Marcello: These were Koreans.
- Schwarz: Yes, Koreans. But it's unbelievable--the way they get at you. To me I would have done the same thing the next day to get something to make the rice a little palatable.
- Marcello: Were you laid up for an extended period of time because of that beating?
- Schwarz: Well, in a few days I was all right. As a matter of fact, they turned me over to an Australian lieutenant who wanted to punish me further by giving me solitary confinement, and the doctor wouldn't let them do it.
- Stealing became a way of life. As long as you didn't steal from your friends, everything was okay.
- Marcello: And did you find anything like this taking place?
- Schwarz: Very rarely, very rarely. Anybody who got caught doing that, you know, I'm pretty sure they would have been taken care of pretty well.
- Marcello: How about such things as homosexuality? Is that a problem? Is there very much of that sort of thing going on in these camps?
- Schwarz: There were a few incidences that I knew of, but I think that the sex drive is just at a very low priority under those conditions. Your first thought is survival and food to keep your strength up, and the sex drive just isn't there. There were some incidences of homosexuality among the British that I heard of, but I couldn't verify it.

- Marcello: You mentioned an item awhile ago that evidently was highly prized by the natives, and that was cloth. I've heard several prisoners mention that.
- Schwarz: They'd buy anything, any kind of cloth, because by then the war had been on for so long, I guess, that they just couldn't get cloth. But you could sell cloth at a very good price.
- Marcello: Is it not true that the cloth off the bottoms of the mosquito netting and so on was highly priced?
- Schwarz: Oh, yes, sure, because it was eighteen inches wide and, of course, several yards long, and a lot of people who were fortunate enough to have mosquito nets got a very good price.
- Marcello: And I understand there were also ingenious ways of smuggling the cloth out of the various warehouses and so on.
- Schwarz: Oh, yes. Guys would wrap it around their stomach and then put their clothes over it. It was just amazing the way things were brought in. If a detail came out with your lunch, you know, with your dinner, they'd put stuff in the bottom of the buckets and throw the rice on top of it. It just became a regular routine of stealing.
- Marcello: Did the Japanese know by this time that the war had turned against them? Can you detect any change in their attitude?
- Schwarz: Not at this point. This would be early 1944, and I think it would be January of '44 when they really started bombing real intensely.
- Marcello: January of 1944?

Schwarz: 1944.

Marcello: Were you in Saigon when these raids were taking place?

Schwarz: Yes, yes.

Marcello: I guess they were rather harrowing because I would assume that Saigon was a prime target.

Schwarz: It sure was. Of course, as I said, our camp was right on the docks, and we had one raid where we lay in the rice paddies outside the camp for fourteen hours. Just a solid wave of American dive bombers just kept coming and coming and bombing, and this went on for fourteen hours. They would come out of their dive and come right over us, and we could see the pilot and the gunner and everybody just beautifully. Then later on, when we moved up country, you couldn't travel in the daytime in the train or anything. It would get strafed and bombed. I left Saigon and went up to a town called Da Lat.

Marcello: I would assume that when those raids were taking place and immediately thereafter, the rumors flew fast and furious.

Schwarz: Oh, yes. They were always landing somewhere, you know, after a raid. I'm sure that the Japs knew by then that they'd had it.

Marcello: Could you detect changes in their attitudes after these raids took place in Saigon?

Schwarz: Yes, and also whenever they got mail--the Japs themselves, not the Koreans--whenever they got mail, there would be a series of beatings and reprisals, for they'd say that their sister had been killed in a bombing raid, or they bombed Tokyo. This

was great for us. They were giving us great news.

Marcello: You mentioned that the Koreans didn't get any mail. The Koreans were evidently just considered sub-humans by both the Americans and the Japanese.

Schwarz: Oh, they were. Oh, yes, yes. They certainly weren't given any status by the Japanese at all--none whatever. They were very harshly treated by the Japs, and they in turn gave it to us.

Marcello: I'm sure that when the war was over, the Japanese didn't give a damn about what happened to those Koreans.

Schwarz: No, the Koreans just disappeared from the surface of the earth. One morning we woke up, and they were all gone--just completely gone.

Marcello: How long were you at Saigon altogether, approximately?

Schwarz: Well, on and off, I was there from the time we came out of Thailand, which would be early 1944, until we were liberated.

Marcello: But you mentioned that you did go to Da Lat at one period in here.

Schwarz: Right. Then we came back to Saigon again later.

Marcello: I see. You weren't up at Da Lat too long?

Schwarz: We were up there a couple of months. We were building . . . Da Lat is a very hilly area. It was actually a resort for wealthy Frenchmen, and the Japs were building tunnels in the mountains with a large control center in the center of the mountains, á la Iwo Jima. That's what we were doing. It was very cold up there, too. We were freezing, had no clothes, and it was snowing.

Marcello: What were the conditions like working up there, other than the fact that it was cold?

Schwarz: Not good, not good at all. The camp was hastily built. It was a small camp. There was only a small group of us. We didn't stay up there too long; they wiped that job out real fast.

Then we went from there to Na Trang on the Indochina coast, and we worked there repairing the railroad and the bridges after the bombing raids. That was interesting. We'd go out to work, and every railroad station along the railroad had a men's room on one side of the station and a ladies' room, and then in the center over the door coming out of the station would be a clock. Nothing would move in the daytime; they couldn't move a train. Well, the B-24's would come down, and they'd fly almost ground-level. We'd wave; we could see the gunners sitting there stripped to the waist, and they would shoot at the clocks in the stations for practice. Everytime they'd pass a station, they'd let a burst go and then go on up the railroad.

When we were going up to Da Lat from Saigon, we got bombed and strafed a half a dozen times, and finally we could only go from tunnel to tunnel, race from one tunnel to another, and stay in the tunnels. There wasn't an engine on that railroad that wasn't filled with bullet holes.

Marcello: How was your food in either Da Lat or Na Trang?

- Schwarz: Not too bad. You see, the food supply was much more plentiful there. There were vegetables and rice, and we got much better food all around.
- Marcello: I assume that you were gaining weight and so on when you were at Saigon and when you were in Indochina in general.
- Schwarz: Right, right. Exactly, exactly, because we could steal more to eat, and the food itself was more plentiful. We got more rice.
- Marcello: At the same time that you knew the Americans were winning--and I use the term Americans here deliberately because, so far as I'm concerned, the victory in the Far East was an American victory--were you worrying about what would happen at the end of the war?
- Schwarz: Oh, yes, definitely because we had very serious indications that they had no intentions giving us up lightly. Every camp . . . the Saigon camp, for instance, and the camps in Indochina, had pillboxes around them with the openings all pointing in, not pointing out to defend the camp, but pointing in, which made it look obvious to us that at some point in time it looked like they wanted to have a go at us. This turned out to be true. After the war they found definite orders from Tokyo that prisoners were to be executed rather than surrendered.
- Marcello: In the meantime, are you guys hoarding any makeshift weapons or anything of that nature?
- Schwarz: No. We had nothing, no. I don't know of anybody that was

preparing themselves. Actually, we couldn't see the end. I don't think we could see the end that fast, anyway. That may have come later. If we had seen the end coming, we may have tried to defend ourselves. I don't know.

Marcello: When you returned to Saigon after your sojourn up in the northern part of Indochina, did you return to the same barracks and so on as you had occupied previously?

Schwarz: No, no. No, we didn't. But before I go into that, if I might, up in Na Trang it was interesting. Some of the natives, Vietnamese, passed us by one day, and they told us that the war was over or about to be over, and we didn't pay much attention to it. We saw evidence of American or Allied victories in the trainloads of wounded Japanese coming through, which we saw all the time. They'd come to one bridge, and they'd have to get out and unload, and we'd bring them across the river in boats and put them on the other side.

Marcello: Were these wounded Japanese duly humble about their predicament?

Schwarz: Well, actually, that's another funny thing. They had very poor treatment from their own people. They had very little food or water, and they were just getting them back. We were sharing our rice with them, sneaking out water and everything to wounded Japs. We were in Na Trang when the atom bombs were dropped. I had just had a piece of steel removed from my eye, and I was in camp. They went crazy. They all got drunk and started burning all the records. Then we were

told by some natives that Japan had been bombed by some new weapon, so we figured that was it, you know.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had a piece of steel removed from your eye.

Schwarz: Yes. I had been working on repairing the railroad, and I was driving spikes, and I hit a spike a glancing blow, and a little piece of steel went in my eye. They couldn't get it out. It was driving me crazy; I couldn't stand the pain. They finally got one of the Japs to give them a water bottle full of sake, and I drank the sake and got plastered. Then they stretched me out on the ground right out in the middle of the compound, and they held me down, and they took a penknife and kept working the steel back and forth until it came out. That was how they got the steel out of my eye.

But they really went crazy up there. They all got drunk.

Marcello: Incidentally, had you received the word of Roosevelt's death?

Schwarz: Yes. Oh, yes.

Marcello: And what effect did that have on both the prisoners and the Japanese, if any?

Schwarz: Well, the Japanese bragged about it, you know, as if to say, "Yeah, your president's dead. You're not going to win the war," and all this baloney. It didn't bother us at all, really. I think by that time we were pretty hardened to our own personal situation, and we knew that one man dying isn't going to stop a whole war effort.

Marcello: But in your case, I guess it was the only president you'd virtually ever known, wasn't he?

Schwarz: That's really true, yes, and he was a favorite of the Navy, anyway, because if it wasn't for him, we would have never had a Navy. Yes, it had some effect but not too much.

Marcello: Okay, so when you return to Saigon, where did you go?

Schwarz: We went back to Saigon, and, of course, we were told the war was over.

Marcello: Oh, you were told the war was over when you returned to Saigon?

Schwarz: Yes, we were told that the war was over but that we would have to stay under Japanese custody for a while.

Marcello: That's the first certain word that you had that the war was officially over.

Schwarz: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: Who told you and how did you get the news?

Schwarz: Well, we were told by our NCO's and all, who, I suppose, were told by the Japanese. Then they expected a lot of trouble because the natives in Saigon were beginning their uprising.

Marcello: Against the French,

Schwarz: Against the French. I guess the Japs just did not want to take the chance of us busting out and getting involved.

Marcello: Anyway, what was your reaction when you heard that the war was officially over?

Schwarz: Very strange reaction. Very quiet acceptance. No jumping around, running, screaming, hollering. Very quiet.

Marcello: Was it mainly an attitude of "Thank God! I made it!"

Schwarz: Yes, yes, but it was a strange thing. Nobody jumped all over the place, and nobody was celebrating. It just was, oh, great. It just seemed like a great relief. It was all over, and we were pooped.

They took us back to what had been a French Foreign Legion camp, and the rest of the Americans joined us there that hadn't gone up to Da Lat with us. Then American planes came over and dropped leaflets telling us to stay there, and they would be getting us out. They dropped food.

Marcello: Did they drop the food in the fifty-five-gallon drums?

Schwarz: Yes, yes. That's the place where Joe Chapman and I were talking one day, and we said, "What the hell are we doing here? We're still prisoners when the war is over!" So we jumped the wall.

Marcello: Was everybody getting a little impatient by this time?

Schwarz: Oh, sure, sure! We knew it was over; they dropped leaflets. We wanted to get out. So Joe and I jumped the wall, and we went into town.

Marcello: Are the Japanese still holding the guns? Or the Koreans?

Schwarz: Oh, yes! No Koreans. They disappeared.

Marcello: The Koreans have disappeared; they're gone already.

Schwarz: They're gone. You know, there's a story I should have told you before when we went up to Da Lat. I told you how I had been in the 55 Kilo with Australians. I had been away from the Americans for a lot of months. I didn't have any real

close friends amongst the Americans. My closest friend had died, and I had these two or three other guys, but I'd been away from them for months. I'd made a lot of friendships with the Aussies.

When we got to Saigon, we heard that there was a shipment of guys going to Japan, and these Aussies, friends of mine, were in the group. So I decided that I'd go to Japan with them, and it was also another young Australian that decided that he'd like to go to Japan with the group. So what we did was we found two guys who didn't want to go, and we would meet with them every night, secretly, and exchange information about our backgrounds--our home, names of parents. We learned everything we could about each other, and then the night before the move we switched places. This young Aussie and I take off. Now I'm impersonating an Australian. The draft went from Saigon back up to Phnom Penh, and from Phnom Penh they were going over to Cam Ranh Bay to get on a ship and go to Japan.

I didn't know it, but I had an Australian lieutenant in charge of my barracks in Saigon. The next morning at muster, he saw that I was missing, and he got uptight, and he went to the Japs and told them. So here we are, we're up in Phnom Penh, waiting to go to Cam Ranh Bay, and the Australian lieutenant comes over and gets the two of us and says, "Hey, something's up." He says, "Somebody must have blown the whistle back in Saigon because the Japs are looking for you two guys." So

they take us over to the hut, headquarters, and interrogate us, but we knew all the answers to the questions. So they got in touch with Saigon and said, "You must be mistaken. We have the right people here." In Saigon, by then, you know, the other guys confessed, and Saigon said, "No, we have a confession here." So they called us in the hut and they started working us over, and they beat the heck out of us. We still wouldn't admit it.

Finally, the Australian chaplain came over to us and said, "Look, it's all over. They know who you are now, so the best thing to do to avoid execution now is to think of a good story, a good reason, why in the heck you did this." So, oh, I couldn't figure out why I did it, and finally when they called me in again, I told them that I had just come out of Burma, that I had been very sick, near death many times, that I came from New Jersey, which had the same kind of climate as Japan. And I thought that if I could go to Japan, which I always heard was so beautiful, that it would help me get back to health.

Well, that did it. Oh, that was great! They didn't touch me again. They were telling everybody, "See, this American wants to go to Japan." So they took us back to Saigon in a truck, took us into Kempei headquarters, and we thought that was it because nobody had ever come out of there. They called it the Kempei Tai. But they kept us in there for a couple

hours and then put us back in the truck and took us back to our camp in Saigon.

When we got there, the camp commander came out, and he was furious because we had embarrassed him. He drew his sword, and he laid his sword on my neck and started drawing it back and forth, telling me, "That's what you're going to get tomorrow morning." Then he ordered us to be stood at attention, so we stood at attention all day, all night. During the night, the guard who was watching us came over and asked us if we had to go to the bathroom. At first we said, "No," and he kept insisting. So he got us over behind the latrines, and he sat us down and gave us a cigarette, and then he started telling me, he says, "You know, your life is going to be saved because of that story you told." He said, "Do you really want to go to Japan?" I said, "Oh, yes, I really want to go to Japan." He said, "Well, it's going to save your life." The next day they called us in and let us go, so it's just a little interesting thing. Now getting back to . . .

Marcello: The escape.

Schwarz: Yes, that was the time that they tried me for escape. They accused me of escaping. Now the second time was when Joe Chapman and I decided that it was crazy to be locked up, so we went over the wall, and we made our way into Saigon. We located the residential area where a lot of French were living. When we were back at the camp on the docks, at night we used

to hear gunfire once in awhile, and we heard that it was young French revolutionists who were fighting against the Japanese. They'd go past the Jap barracks and throw in hand grenades or something and shoot it up. So we went looking for some of them, and we found them. Oh, they took us right in, and the first thing we do is get a shower. They gave us white shorts and white shirt and white shoes and socks, and now we became Frenchmen. So one day we're out roaming the streets . . .

Marcello: You'd been out of the POW camp for several days now?

Schwarz: Yes, for a few days now, and we're living with these Frenchmen. We're roaming the streets one day, and we notice that there was an unusual amount of activity. Thousands of people were in the streets, and there were big crowds of people everywhere. Then all of a sudden we started hearing gunfire, and that was the beginning of what ended up being the Vietnamese War. That was when the Vietminh were fighting against the French, and the Vietcong were fighting against the Vietminh, and they were all fighting each other. Well, the whole town went to fighting, and then they started looking for all the French--to kill them--and there we are, walking on the street.

So a whole mob of natives, about 150 of them, started chasing us, and this Joe Chapman and I and this Frenchman that we were with run down the street. We spotted a two-story government building, and we ran in and they surrounded us,

and they're throwing rocks at us, and they're shooting in the windows. Finally, we retreat up to the second floor, and we can't go any farther now. Then they swarmed up, and I'm underneath a desk. A guy comes at me with a . . . they had spears, sharpened bamboo poles, all kinds of makeshift weapons. This guy's lunging at me with a spear, and he just stopped when he reached my chest, and he captured me.

They captured all three of us, and they dragged us downstairs, and they started dragging us through the streets. There's truckloads of bodies going by--wounded French people, and dead ones--and blood all over the place, and here they're dragging us through the streets. People from both sides are taking "shots" at us, coming out and hitting us.

Finally, they brought us to a jail, and the jail was already filled with French. Just every cell was filled. There was a narrow alleyway between two cell blocks, so they jammed us in there, and they started pushing people behind us by the dozens.

We were in there quite a while, and, finally, there was a priest there who spoke English, and he heard Joe and I talking to each other. He said, "Are you Americans?" And we said, "Yes," and we told him we were from the prison camp. He says, "Well, you can't do us any good here, captured like we are. Why don't you try to get out and go back to your camp? Maybe you can bring the Americans to rescue us."

So we made our way up to the end where the guard was,

and started talking to him, and I kept telling him we were Americans. Well, he couldn't understand me, but he knew I wasn't speaking French because they could all speak French. So he finally went and got one of his higher-up's, and he came back, and I told him that we were Americans. He took us out and took us into a building and interrogated us. He would ask us a question in English and then switch to French real fast to see if we would answer in French, which we didn't.

Finally, he took us back to the prison camp, and then the Americans went to the Japs and told them that we wanted their weapons and to be let out of the prison camp to go get those people. Well, finally, the next morning . . . they wouldn't give us their weapons, but they opened the gates, and we had an American flag we had made, and we went out throughout the town collecting French people and brought them into the prison camp.

Shortly after that, an American from New Jersey, an American captain, named Hejna, parachuted in with a jeep and a radio, and he came in and took over the prison camp. Then I went with him into town into a big hotel, and he set up headquarters, and he radioed back to Calcutta. He told them how many Americans were there. We went around to all the jails because some more Americans had jumped over the wall like we did. We went around gathering them all up.

On September 5th they flew some C-47's in, and we had a

big party in the camp. We had all these French people we'd rescued, including a whole orchestra from the hotel in town. We brought liquor in, and everybody had a big party, and the next morning we flew to Calcutta.

Marcello: What happened when you got to Calcutta?

Schwarz: Well, that was on September 6th that we were liberated, on my twenty-second birthday, and that was my birthday present. We got to Calcutta, and we were sent to the 142nd General Hospital. We stayed there for a short period of time, where they let us go absolutely crazy,

Marcello: What sort of treatment did you receive in Calcutta?

Schwarz: I don't remember getting any treatment. We had a nominal-type physical, and they just let us go. We went right in the mess hall and ate everything we wanted. They gave us each \$200 advance pay, and almost everybody bought a pen and pencil set and a case of beer and went back to the ward and got drunk. Then they came in with a truckload of khakis, gave us each a uniform of khakis, and let us go. We were in town . . . they spread the word in town that when you see anybody with khakis with no insignia or anything, they're POW's. They let us go, and we went crazy.

Marcello: Did you have any trouble adjusting to a wholesome diet once again, so to speak?

Schwarz: No, we ate our brains out. We went to the big restaurants in town and ordered everything we could buy and really went wild.

From there, they . . . I flew home across North Africa into Washington, arrived at Washington at midnight, and at three o'clock the next afternoon I was on a train going home. Everything happened real quickly.

Marcello: So you really didn't spend any amount of time in a hospital at all.

Schwarz: None whatever. Most of our group went to St. Alban's Naval Hospital, and they were there for several months. My group . . . we couldn't go up there because of bad weather, and we landed in Washington, and the very next day I was home on leave.

Marcello: Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Schwarz: Oh, sure. I was absolutely lost, like a fish out of water. I'll never forget, I arrived in my hometown, Newark, New Jersey, late in the evening. I had taken a five o'clock from Washington. I was all alone. Now I hadn't been home in seven years. Washington had gotten a phone call through the day before to tell my parents that I'd be coming home. I stood in the railroad station absolutely alone. I didn't know what to do, but I knew that I didn't want to be alone.

I spotted a young soldier and got to talking to him, and he told me that he wanted to get to Nutley, which was a little town north of where I lived, but he didn't have any money for cab fare. So I said, "Great! Get in my cab!" I had a pocketful of money because they had paid me off. So I had somebody

to talk to all the way to my house, and then I paid the cab fare and let him go.

I was home on three months leave, and I spent the next three months just drinking my way from one bar to another. Most of my old friends from the neighborhood were still overseas. I went back to Washington twelve days early because I was broke. I had to go back and get more money. Really, really absolutely lost! We should never have been left and released like that, you know.

Marcello: I've also heard some of the prisoners say that they had trouble adjusting to all of the lavish attention they received when they got home and that they couldn't stand being around too many people and crowds.

Schwarz: Yes. Well, see, my escape was that I went to the bars where nobody knew me, and I drank my money up and then went back. I didn't want to be around the family with the parties and all that stuff, you know. It's really a strange feeling because you really don't feel like a human being anymore after coming out of those jungles. You really hadn't been with any civilian people, nice people, only with everybody who had been made to be an animal, really, you know.

Marcello: Do you have to clean up your language quite a bit?

Schwarz: At that time I did. I don't have any trouble anymore.

Marcello: That's what I meant, at that particular time, that is, at the time of your release.

Schwarz: Yes, yes. Oh, sure. Oh, yes, yes. I had to watch that, of

course, because obviously, under the conditions we were living under, that kind of language was almost a release for us. But I don't have that problem anymore. I very rarely swear.

Marcello: Were you ever asked to testify or give evidence against any Japanese or Koreans for atrocities or war crimes?

Schwarz: No, no, never. I came home, went on leave, and then went back in the Navy without any fanfare.

Marcello: As you look back upon your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as being the key to survival?

Schwarz: I really can't identify anything. I can't say it was because I was young because a lot of the young guys died. I really don't know why certain people were selected not to have died. It's almost like faith. It's a thing that you can't account for. Either you believe that there's a reason for you coming through or you don't, you know. I can't explain it. I've often talked about it with people. I can't figure out why I should be here.

Marcello: How have your experiences as a prisoner-of-war helped or hindered you in the years since your liberation?

Schwarz: Well, as I told you before, aside from the extreme hardships, and maybe not aside from the extreme hardships, I think the experience molded whatever I am and prepared me for whatever I've become. I really believe that. I wouldn't volunteer to go through it, but I don't think it did me any harm except

physically. But spiritually and philosophically and every other way, I think I gained a lot by being a prisoner-of-war.

It certainly helped me in my own professional life. I addressed a lot of groups in my time that have identified me as a POW. I think it gained me some notoriety that I would not have had before. I think it gave me a drive to reach the top of my career ladder without an education. I had no high school diploma, and yet I went right to the top of the ladder in my career. I think that the background experience gave me that kind of drive. I don't think I suffered from having been a POW, in a great many ways.

Marcello: Do you like rice today?

Schwarz: Yes, I eat rice.

Marcello: Okay, well, Mr. Schwarz, that's all the questions that I have. Is there anything else that you would like to add as part of the record?

Schwarz: No, I think we pretty much covered all of it. I'm sure there's a great deal that I have not remembered to say today and that I've said last week to somebody or that I'll say tomorrow to some of my friends.

Marcello: Well, let us hope that perhaps George Detre or Jack Burge or one of those people that I've already interviewed have put in some of the things that you neglected in the time that we've been together.

Schwarz: That's great, I tell you, I'm impressed with what you're doing

because I've always had the philosophy that whenever I have the opportunity, no matter how I have the opportunity, either newspapers or television interviews or anywhere, one-to-one meeting with people, I don't want the world to forget this. I don't want them to forget the Houston, first of all, because it was an absolutely gallant ship with a courageous crew. I don't want people to forget what men can do to men, and I think it's wrong to let it die and not let people know about it.

Marcello: Well, I want to thank you very much for having taken this time to talk with me. You've said a lot of interesting and very important things, and I'm sure that scholars will find your comments very valuable when they study them and hopefully will use them to write about the experiences of your group as prisoners-of-war.

Schwarz: Well, thank you.