

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

NUMBER

362

Interview with
John H. Owen
February 7, 1977

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: John H. Owen
(Signature)

Date: 2-7-77

COPYRIGHT © 1977 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

John Owen

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: February 7, 1977

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. John Owen for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on February 7, 1977, in Denton, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Owen in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a member of the 131st Field Artillery during World War II. The 131st Field Artillery was popularly known as the "Lost Battalion," and the members of this group spent virtually the entire World War II period in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps through Asia.

Now Mr. Owen, to begin this interview, would you just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of 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. Owen: I was born in Floydada, Texas. I moved from there to Paris, Texas, when I was three years old. I went to school in Paris, Texas, and graduated from Powderly, Texas. I was in the National Guard while I was going to school two years into school in Jacksboro, Texas.

Marcello: Okay. Let's back up a bit. When were you born?

Owen: I was born on May 10, 1922.

Marcello: And what was the town that you were born in?

Owen: Floydada.

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

Owen: Well, I was a kid and I went into the National Guard when I was fifteen years old back in 1938.

Marcello: Now were you underage when you went into the National Guard?

Owen: I was. I was fifteen.

Marcello: What did you do--just lie about your age?

Owen: I lied about my age when I went in, and I knew a lot of guys in there, and I had always been large for my age. Then, I weighed 190 pounds, and I was 5'11" then. And I went into the National Guard. And then when they mobilized in 1940--November 25, 1940--I went into the service. They mobilized us into the federal service.

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

Owen: Oh, to go off to camp and ride those trucks and fire those guns. There was just a bunch of people I knew and that I was associated with there in Jacksboro.

Marcello: I gather that to some extent the National Guard during that particular period that you joined was a type of social club in a way.

Owen: It was.

Marcello: There were good times to be had.

Owen: Yes, good times to be had. All of us just were more or less like one big family.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that the Texas National Guard was federalized in November of 1940, and according to the records, the unit was sent to Camp Bowie in Brownwood, Texas. What did you do after you were federalized and got Bowie, Texas?

Owen: Right after we got to Bowie. . .

Marcello: Or Camp Bowie, Texas.

Owen: . . . Camp Bowie, we . . . our streets was awful muddy, about knee-deep in mud, and we had a lot of trouble getting in and out of our battery street and everything. After that, we went out and would fire guns, and we would have marches, hikes, and everything. About the middle of . . . we stayed in . . . to back up, we stayed in Jacksboro until January, there at Fort Richardson. In January, 1941, we moved to Camp Bowie, and then about the middle of 1941, we went to Louisiana for the Louisiana maneuvers. We were down there close to two months on the Louisiana maneuvers.

Marcello: Now what sort of a unit was the National Guard outfit over at Jacksboro?

Owen: It was a firing battery--75 millimeters.

Marcello: What was your particular function in that unit?

Owen: I was a first class private, and I worked the guns. I could work every position on the guns because I'd been in the National Guard since 1938.

Marcello: In other words, you did work with the firing batteries.

Owen: Sure, I worked with the firing batteries. Then in 1941, I went and made the "first/third," which was the gun mechanic, and it was a rating between a corporal and sergeant.

Marcello: It was called what?

Owen: A "first/third."

Marcello: A "first/third."

Owen: Specialist rate.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that during that period in early 1941, the unit left Camp Bowie temporarily and went on maneuvers in Louisiana. Evidently, the unit made a good record for itself on those maneuvers in Louisiana.

Owen: We did. While we was in Louisiana, the rumor was that. . . we did go to Lake Charles, Louisiana, and the rumor was that we went down to Lake Charles to practice loading onto ships to see how quick we could get on the ship and everything. And some units did load on the ships, and they would take them right straight on into the Philippines. That's what we were supposed to have did. But it got to raining down there so and

everything that we got stuck down there where we was camped.

After that, they brought us back to Camp Bowie. They gave me a fifteen-day pass, and before my fifteen-day pass was up, they called me back and. . . I was in the F Battery, 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery. And so they'd taken the guys out of C Battery of the 1st Battalion--the single guys--and brought them to F Battery and brought the guys that were married and sent them to C Battery in the 1st Battalion. Then we started packing our equipment and crating it up and everything and binding it, and we left for PLUM.

Marcello: Okay, now sometime during this period, is it not true that the Army underwent a reorganization during which it switched from the square divisions to the triangular divisions.

Owen: Yes, and that left an extra battalion of artillery, and that was our battalion, and they were sending us to the Philippines. Our destination was PLUM, which was the Philippines, to form this other division in the Philippines.

Marcello: Now you did not know at the time that PLUM did designate the Philippines, isn't that true?

Owen: No, we didn't know where we were going. We knew we were going to PLUM.

Marcello: Was that the rumor that was going around, though, that is, that PLUM did mean the Philippines?

Owen: Yes, that was the rumor going around--that we were going to the Philippines. PLUM was the destination in the Philippines.

Marcello: Now you also mentioned that the married men and the men over a certain age had the option of leaving the 2nd Battalion at that particular time.

Owen: Yes, all of the enlisted men that was married; the officers that was married, though, did not have the option of leaving.

Marcello: And I assume, then, that the ranks were filled with either draftees or people from the 1st Battalion, as you mentioned.

Owen: Well, they was filled. . . when we went to Camp Bowie, our ranks were filled--with what we lacked--with draftees. Then after we got ready to split up into this new division, they brought people out of the 1st Battalion into the 2nd Battalion to fill up these positions of the ones that had transferred. In other words, if a sergeant transferred up there, they'd bring a sergeant out of C Battery down to F Battery. It was the same way with the other batteries. D Battery got a battery of the 1st Battalion; and E Battery, Headquarters Battery, and Service Battery, they had the same batteries in the 1st Battalion that we had in the 2nd Battalion.

Marcello: Now when the 2nd Battalion left for PLUM, what were the batteries that were contained in it?

Owen: There was Headquarters Battery and Service Battery and F Battery and D Battery and E Battery.

Marcello: Now were F, D, and E batteries the artillery batteries?

Owen: The firing batteries, yes, sir.

Marcello: What would you estimate was the average age of the people in your battery at the time that you left for PLUM?

Owen: I'd say about twenty-one to twenty-two years of age.

Marcello: How closely were these men keeping abreast with current events and world affairs and things of that nature?

Owen: Well, they was keeping abreast with all of the . . . right then, Texas was number one in the Southwest Conference, and TCU, I think, was the last one on the list. When we was in California, well, that's when TCU upset Texas that year.

Marcello: So in other words, I am correct in saying that most of the young men in your particular battery were not that concerned about what was happening in Europe with Germany, of course, or in the Far East with Japan and things of that nature?

Owen: No, they wasn't interested in that. They wasn't paying no attention to that. They were just wondering where they were going to get the next leave and where they're going to, you know, go to town on a pass. It was just a bunch of happy-go-lucky bunch of guys. Well, we just really didn't realize; we was young and everything, and you really didn't care.

Marcello: You just didn't realize the seriousness of the situation.

Owen: That's right.

Marcello: Okay, so you got to San Francisco, and you pick up your transportation to, supposedly, the Philippines. And this is the USS Republic. Describe what the Republic was like.

Owen: I'd like to go back a little. We got to "Frisco," and they put us on Angel Island. And we were always wondering why they called it the Angel Island, and we really didn't know until after we were POW's. The reason they call it the Angel Island is because it looks like an angel when you come back from overseas and come back through there.

As we was going through there. . . at the mess hall, they seat about, oh, 1,500 or 2,000 people at one meal. We wondered . . . in our whole battalion they used all of the privates and all of the PFC's for KP duty. We had to pull it one day, and so the guy who was in charge of this kitchen said that was the fastest. . . and we could break more dishes than he ever saw--that 2nd Battalion.

Then we left there on the 23rd day of November. The Republic was an old ship that was used in World War I. And about ten or fifteen knots was about as fast as that thing would go full speed, and then they wouldn't do that because the boilers and everything was pretty old and needed re-doing.

Marcello: Did you have any trouble with the ground swells when you were leaving San Francisco Bay?

Owen: I sure did. We had cabbage and corned beef that day at noon. We was going under the Golden Gate Bridge when we was eating, and I looked out the porthole to see what was going on, and I looked back around, and the ground swells. . . my tray . . . we had to stand up to kind of a counter, and my tray had already slid down to the end of the counter down there, and another tray was in front of me. An old boy had vomited in his tray, and so about the only thing I could do was vomit in his and send it on down the line (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you remain seasick for very long?

Owen: No, I didn't. We had one guy by the name of . . . we called him "Slug" Wright. He had some pills--seasick pills--and he had taken the seasick pills after he got seasick, and he stayed sick all the way over. About thirty or forty days there, he was sick.

Marcello: Okay, now your first stop on your journey was in the Hawaiian Islands. Were you one of the lucky ones that was able to go ashore there?

Owen: Yes, I was.

Marcello: How much shore leave did you have?

Owen: We were supposed to have four hours, but we had taken a lot more time than that. They was aiming to send half the battalion ashore for four hours, and the other half then would go ashore

for four hours. When we didn't come back, the guys that had to stay--the guys that were supposed to go on the second trip--well, they commenced jumping over the side and swimming ashore. We was docked downtown there in Honolulu. And they come. . . get out. . . and take their britches and shirt off and wring them out and come on to town. We left there on the first day of December.

Marcello: What did you do during this period while you were in Honolulu?

Owen: Just walked around and looked. We didn't have no money because I spent my last money when we left . . . the last weekend I was on leave, before we left on a Monday, which was November 11--left Camp Bowie--I came to Fort Worth and bought a paste-board suitcase for a dollar, and I bought me a case of Paul Jones whiskey and that. And when I left the battery area. . . we had to march over to the train. I had a buffalo nickel and a case of Paul Jones whiskey (chuckle).

Marcello: How long did the Paul Jones whiskey last?

Owen: It lasted until I got to California. I was on the only one that had whiskey on that train, and I had a guy that was named. . . he called his name Miles Laird, but we called him "Goat" Laird. And I told him not to let no one have any of that unless I told him. Everybody wanted him to give them a pint of whiskey, and he wouldn't do it. So we ate pretty good

because when the cooks and the mess sergeant come by feeding us down through the train, we gave them a drink, and so we ate pretty good. We got all we wanted to eat, and a little special extras and stuff.

Marcello: Okay, when you were in the Hawaiian Islands, did you notice any extraordinary precautions or preparations being taken for the possibility of an outbreak of hostilities between the United States and Japan?

Owen: No, I didn't. And another thing, I didn't give it even a second thought. I just was looking around, and I didn't figure we was that close to war.

Marcello: Okay, so you leave Honolulu on December 1, 1941, and you are still on your way toward the Philippines when you receive the news of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. Now describe what you were doing and what your reactions were when you heard about the Japanese attack.

Owen: Well, we was crossing the equator, and it's a custom that you be initiated when you cross it. We was in this initiation, and they had two of them--these initiations--going on. They had one on the back of the ship and one on the front of the ship, but we went ahead and went through the initiation. At these initiations, they'd have about an eight-by-eight through there. I'd call it a pit. It had a barber chair on it and

was full of salty water. They'd cut your hair and turn you over and shoot electricity through the chair and turn you over backwards into this water. Then they had this big air-ducts that had water running on through each end. And they had them up off of each end up off the floor, and you had to jump in that and crawl through that water for about thirty or forty feet. When we got out, they had these deals kind of like a sausage bag, we called it, with a handle on it, and they started beating you when you were running through the other line to keep you going. You know, it's the funniest thing. My hair was real wavy and curly then, and they'd just take a pair of old clippers and clip down through your hair and when I got through going through initiation and back to where our battalion was, somehow or another they didn't get to cut my hair, and so I walked up to the front of the ship to see what was going on up there. So they grabbed me and told me I hadn't been through, and they sent me through again, and I got a double deal of it.

Marcello: And this was what you were doing when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: Now had you heard about the attack prior to the initiation having begun?

- Owen: No. The first I heard of it was when we was going through this initiation.
- Marcello: What were your reactions when you heard about it?
- Owen: Well, a lot of them got to worrying. But me, I was just happy-go-lucky, and I just thought, "Well, if that's it, that's it. There's nothing you can do about it out in this water. You might as well take it as it comes."
- Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese during this particular period, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind?
- Owen: Well, I had never seen too many Japanese. Of course, we had a sergeant in our outfit named Fujita. He was a Jap--Japanese. Well, his daddy was a Japanese, and his mother was an American. I always liked him, and he was a happy-go-lucky guy. Everybody in our whole outfit liked him, and I said, "Well, they're good people probably." Really, I didn't have too much. . . you know, really stop to think too much about it.
- Marcello: Did you think that the war would be a relatively short one?
- Owen: I figured it would be a short one. I got fooled (chuckle)!
- Marcello: You, of course, were diverted from the Philippines as a result of war breaking out and you ultimately landed at Brisbane, Australia on December 21, 1941. Prior to that, you did make one stop in the Fiji Islands, but I don't think anybody got off the ship or anything, did they?

Owen: No, they wouldn't let us off. They just stopped there to refuel. They wouldn't let us off, and they had a band at Fiji Island. They had a band playing music while we was docked and while we were refueling there. But they wouldn't let us off.

Marcello: As we mentioned, then, you ultimately ended up at Brisbane, Australia. Incidentally, during your trip over, didn't you have an escort?

Owen: Yes, we had an escort of one destroyer. I forget now how many ships was in this convoy, but there was one warship escorting us over there. The 142nd was going over in the same convoy we was in, but we was on the USS Republic, and they was on another ship.

Marcello: The 142nd what?

Owen: 142nd Field Artillery. They was going over, too. So I imagine when we got to the Philippines, they was forming this new division. We was going in with them because they was. . .they had taken three. . . as I understand it, they had taken three battalions to make this artillery division, so therefore we was an odd battalion, and they had two battalions and we had one. So that was where we would be the odd battalion--the 3rd Battalion.

Marcello: What happened when you got go Brisbane?

Owen: Well, we unloaded off the ship, and after we got there, they had taken us out to the racetrack. We put up tents and everything and stayed out at the racetrack. We got to selling our clothes, and so they thought they'd better give us a partial pay because we hadn't been paid since the first of November, which was before we left Camp Bowie. We didn't have any money, so we commenced to selling our clothes. So Colonel Tharp decided he'd better get us. . .well, Sergeant Shaw, who was the battalion sergeant major, he told him that he'd better get us some money because if he didn't, he was going to have a battalion of artillery that had no clothes. So they gave us partial pay in Australia.

So they got a bunch of sergeants and, I think, this one lieutenant and a bunch of guys and picked so many of each battery to go in town to be MP's. We went into town earlier than the other guys. So we got the pass, and we'd been in town about four hours, and I think all of the MP's had already got drunk except about eight of us. So they had to take them back to camp and get some more MP's that night.

Marcello: What sort of reception did you get from the Australian civilians when you landed at Brisbane?

Owen: Oh, they treated us like we was a king. They'd take us to their homes and feed us, and they'd show us around. We couldn't

understand their slang too much. Well, they couldn't understand ours, and we couldn't understand theirs. We'd be out dancing, and we'd up and ask a girl to dance, and she'd say, "I'm all knocked up. Go jazz with my sister." In other words, she meant that she was all tired and go dance with her sister. And we didn't know what to think about that because it just kind of dumbfounded us. So finally, this Australian told us, he said, "What do you all look so funny about when these girls tell you that?" And we told him what our version was of that. And he just died laughing. He said, "Well, over here it means they're all tired. Go dance with my sister."

Marcello: Did you get invited to have Christmas dinner in any of the Australian homes during this period?

Owen: No, I didn't because I didn't go to town too much. I was on MP duty, and everytime I'd go to town, I was more or less working. If I went to town . . . we'd always go to town early or stay late, and those people wouldn't be out. You know, the family people wouldn't be out at that time.

Marcello: I understand a lot of the Texans had problems getting used to mutton.

Owen: Yes. I couldn't go that mutton. And I couldn't go their warm beer.

Marcello: I assume that in terms of training and so on, nothing really took place here at Brisbane.

Owen: No, nothing had taken place at Brisbane. Only except whenever we got ready to leave Brisbane, we loaded on this ship, and then we had to . . . when they started unloading it and told us to stay there because the Dutch wouldn't let us have this ship to go to Java. This ship was the Bloemfontein, and it was a transport ship. Finally, they were just going to take it. Since they wouldn't let them have it, just take it. That's what we was told. We set up machine guns on the decks and everything, and I could tell when the ship . . . it was four, five, or six days before we ever left Brisbane.

Marcello: When did the Bloemfontein leave Brisbane for Java?

Owen: It was after Christmas. It was after the first of the year because we got into. . . nearly everything that we did happened on about the 11th of January. We left Camp Bowie on the eleventh.

Marcello: Are you familiar with the torpedo scare that the Bloemfontein had on its way over to Java?

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: You might describe it.

Owen: We got the guns out, set them up on the deck forward on each side--the 75's, which would have been useless. They got these guns out and everything and set them up, and we bolted them down and had taken boards and nails to hold them down so they

wouldn't jump off the deck if we did fire them. And we had the watches besides the ship watches. We had watches ourself up all during the night and day looking for submarines and anything that we saw, and you know, we'd have to report it.

Most of the guys played blackjack all the way over. And we was playing blackjack with the pound just like it was a dollar. One pound looked like it was a dollar. We didn't know the valuation of money. Five pounds was just like five dollars.

We had holds down this ship. We didn't have bunks or nothing; we just had holds, and we was just laying on the floor.

We was kind of lucky. We had a guy from Jacksboro, and he was one of our cooks. He used to work in the bakery there in Jacksboro nearly all our life--old "Slim" Gilmore--and we had fresh bread. He got some flour and yeast and stuff, and he made us fresh bread--hot bread--for F Battery and laughed at it. Every battery had their own kitchen setup--field range kitchen setup.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were playing cards with the Australian pound. Where did you manage to get hold of the Australian money?

Owen: Well, that's when they gave us partial pay there when we got to Australia--to keep us from selling our clothes.

Marcello: Did they pay you in Australian money?

Owen: Yes, they paid us in Australian money.

Marcello: Now there was a submarine scare somewhere along the way over to Java, wasn't there?

Owen: Yes, there was off and on. After we left Darwin going to Java, there was a submarine scare. They got us all up and woke us all up and told us not to go to sleep. There was a submarine. They had sighted a submarine. They discovered a submarine out in that area, so we had to sit up then or to stay awake. Some of them lay on the floor, but we couldn't go to sleep.

Marcello: I understand the Bloemfontein was a much faster and more modern ship than had been the Republic.

Owen: Yes, it was. It was a lot more modern, and it would go faster and zig-zag, and it could make these turns a lot better than could the USS Republic.

Marcello: Okay. So you went to Java and you land at Surabaya sometime around January 11, 1942. Is that correct?

Owen: Yes, January 11.

Marcello: Okay, what did you do after you landed at Surabaya?

Owen: We didn't land at Surabaya. We landed at another place there because Surabaya was on up . . . we landed there at night, and

we got off the ship, and they put us on trains. We went from there to Malang.

Marcello: But you actually did not land at Surabaya?

Owen: No, sir. It was. . . I forget the name of the town, but Surabaya. . .we went to Surabaya later on. After we was captured, we went to Surabaya. But we landed at this other place and went to . . .

Marcello: It was actually Singosari, was it not?

Owen: Singosari. We went to Singosari.

Marcello: This was a Dutch military base outside Malang.

Owen: Yes, outside of Malang. The fact of the business is that there was an airfield there. The airfield was right on the edge of the base there. And we went there, and some of the guys. . . I didn't. I was on MP duty. I was always. . . I guess because I was large for my size, I was on MP duty nearly all of the time in town. But some of the guys worked over at the airfield. After we had gotten there, the 19th Bomb Group flew in, and they was running missions out of this airfield or airdrome. Their planes needed overhauling, and they'd take, say, fifteen artillerymen in a crew, and they'd tell them, "Well, take off these bolts, and when you get through, holler." And that's the way they overhauled their motors. Then they did the major overhaul.

Marcello: In other words, this artillery detachment was actually serving as service troops for the bombers.

Owen: Yes, service troops for the bombers and were loading bombs on them. And they didn't have nothing to load the bombs. They'd just take the bombs and let them fall over on these racks, and they'd take these airplane seat cushions and stuff and let them fall over against them. Then they'd fall down in the racks. They were more or less manpowering in the bomb because we didn't have nothing to load those bombs with. They had so many guys working on these planes and so many guys loading bombs, and so many of them would be refueling. I was on MP duty, and I was in town nearly all the time.

Marcello: What took place in town while you were on MP duty?

Owen: Well, they'd let so many come to town at night, and they had to leave at a certain time. They had several places there where everybody would gather together and dance and drink that Heinekin beer. And you couldn't see the places until you got in. They had these little old go-carts. I called them go-carts; they were little old natives on the back end of a bicycle with two wheels on front. It would hold two people. You'd ride around in those, and then we'd go in and eat and everything. They had good food there in Java. And they had good beer, too.

The funny thing . . . in town you'd go into the restrooms to use the restrooms, and you'd get to looking around for paper, and there wasn't no paper. There was a bottle, and the water was running out of a little old copper pipe, a little pipe there. And what you had to do, you'd have to catch this bottle full of water and wash yourself. Then you'd turn around then and look for something to dry yourself with. You didn't dry yourself. You just pulled your britches up and went on about your business.

Marcello: Describe what this airbase looked like from a physical standpoint, that is, in terms of the runways and your barracks and things of that nature.

Owen: Well, the runways. . . our barracks was a real good barracks. I mean, you know, there was this red tile roofing on it. It had windows about knee-high from the floor. It was a regular barracks and had regular places for their garages where they worked on their motor vehicles and everything. That's where we put our kitchens, and we had our canteen down there in one of them. The airdome. . . I wasn't over at the airdome, but I could see it and the buildings over there. They had quite a few buildings over there, and the runway ran right outside of our camp there, where they'd take off and they'd leave the ground about from our camp there. It was real nice--pretty

buildings. It had a lot of banana trees and coconut trees around it. It was real beautiful, and the jungle was right outside of the camp there.

Marcello: About how many B-17's were there here at Singosari?

Owen: I don't know. We lost quite a few there. Like I say, I never was over at the airdrome because in the daytime I worked on the garbage truck helping haul garbage off from the kitchen and helping haul water. You know, we had to haul a lot of the water in. I was working on that. In the night, I worked MP duty, and I got up in the morning after. . . when I did get up, I'd do that and then I worked on MP duty in town at night.

But we'd have an air raid. We dug an air raid shelter right outside the camp there in between these barracks. These barracks were one-story buildings, and we'd dig our air raid shelters out there--trenches. We'd take some of these boards. They had boards there that they'd put their mattresses on. I guess that's what they'd use it for. It was about the size of a queen-size bed. And we'd put them over this and put sandbags over those boards and stuff, where we could jump in the air raid shelter when they came over.

Then it got to where everybody was running outside of the camp. And I had to . . . the natives over there . . . they

had the. . . well, what they called their. . . what they'd do was dig a big, round hole about three foot round out in a . . . kind of a creek, I'd call it, out there. It was about thirty foot across. And then they'd put poles out through these holes and drive some poles up and wire them on there and then make a little walkway out there, see. And that's what they used for latrines. So they had did away with this one particular place out there. So I was lucky.

We had a guy named Donnie Brown, and he wanted to . . . all of the sergeants got .45 automatics. And I was a gun mechanic, so I got a Browning Automatic and all of those shells. I was on MP duty and I needed a .45, and he said, "Well, I'll trade you my .45 for your Browning Automatic." And so he had this Browning Automatic on him and had about a hundred rounds of Browning Automatic shells strapped across his shoulder and everywhere. So it had came a rain, and everybody run out there to this creek when the air raid would go off and run down this creek and get out of camp and get away from that airdrome. So it came a big rain, and it washed all of these weeds and stuff down around where this latrine was.

So old "Donkey" Brown. . .we called him "Donkey" instead of Brown or Donnie. But old "Donkey" ran out there after this rain, and he had this Browning Automatic on him and all of these

shells. Whenever he run down through this creek. . . well, he'd been wandering around, and he saw where these weeds was, and these weeds was washed down. So he run down through there and run up in this hole and went plumb over his head--gun and all--in this latrine hole. They'd run maybe a half a mile or a mile out of camp to get away from that camp--the ones that could.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about the air raids a little bit. Now the first one occurred on February 5, 1942. Describe this first air raid.

Owen: Well, the first air raid. . . I was. . . by then, we had moved our kitchens out of camp or out of the main. . . well, out of this garage where I said we had the kitchen. We had moved ours outside of the camp there about a hundred yards into a little old native shack down there, into the palm trees and coconut trees and banana trees down there.

So we was down there eating. The fact of the business is that they stopped us from going into town, and I went on KP. I mean, I wasn't on MP duty, and I came in from . . . that night. . . that was the last night. . . the night before was the last night going into town, so I came in. And the First Sergeant Jones come over there. I was just no more had got in bed, and he said, "John, you've got to go on KP tomorrow.

You're the first one up on the duty roster." And I said, "I can't go on KP. I didn't have no sleep." And I'd had a few beers. So he said, "Well, you go ahead and sleep, and after breakfast you can wash up all the cooking utensils." So I was on KP--three-day KP. That was the second day when the bombers come over, and the strafers.

Marcello: Did you have any prior warning?

Owen: Sirens. And they was already on us before the siren went off. Everybody broke and run out through the jungle. In the meantime, they'd dug some L-shaped slit trenches out there to jump into in case they came over, so we jumped in the slit trenches --the guys on KP. There had been warnings before, but that's the first time we'd been strafed with fighters. Everybody run off; the KP's run off. So we run out there and jumped in the hole.

Of course, when I found out I was on KP. . . we had a guy going into town to get supplies and water and stuff, and I got him to bring back a bunch of scotch and some bourbon. And we had one guy that was real scared. We called him "Armadillo," old R. G. Armstrong. We were on KP--Jake Clark and myself . . . and so when the siren went off, old Jake had run up his slanted coconut tree, and he had his hand over his forehead and making out like he was looking for planes and everything. And about

that time, here they came and he no more than got up that tree and he ran out there and jumped in that hole. "Armie" ran out there and jumped in that hole, too. He said, "You know what? My feet told me to run, and my head said to stay here!" When the siren went off, I just stuck that quart of scotch over there and told him to take a drink. Of course, we was all pretty well "looped." Sergeant Baker said that was the best bunch of KPs, and the drunkest bunch of KPs, he'd ever had. But there was one thing about him. If he wanted one of them, he could holler and if they was in hollering distance, they didn't run off and stay all day. A lot of them would run off and wouldn't come back in, you know, because they didn't want to work KP. So him and the cooks would have to do all of the work.

Marcello: What sort of emotions did you have when this air raid took place? In other words, were you scared? Curious? Or how would you describe your emotions and reactions?

Owen: Well, it's just like I say. All of that bunch of KPs was about three sheets in the wind, and really we didn't care what went on.

Marcello: How many of these air raids took place altogether?

Owen: Oh, there was several of them taking place. I don't remember.

Marcello: Did you ever get used to them?

Owen: Yes, we got used to them. After a long time, we could. . . when that siren. . . it got to where that maybe it would be

ten or fifteen minutes after that siren went off before they'd come in.

Marcello: How much damage was done to the base as a result of all those air raids?

Owen: Oh, they hit quite a few of the buildings. . . I don't know about the airfield, but over there at the barracks quite a few of the buildings was tore up, and out there where we had our kitchen there was quite a few bombs that missed the barracks and went out around our kitchen. At one time when I was in this L-shaped trench when they came over and everything, I could reach over and still have my feet in this L-shaped trench, and still I could reach over--about six foot or five foot--I could reach over and touch the edge of the crater where the bomb dropped.

Marcello: In other words, the bomb was that close to you.

Owen: Yes. In other words, if you was in one of them L-shaped trenches, and it was about, oh, three feet deep or maybe not that deep, if you was in that you had to get nearly a direct hit to get you. When the strafers come over--they'd come over from the east--using this for an illustration--if they come from the east going west, you'd get in a trench going north and south, see. In other words, these trenches were just big enough to get in and lay down in--maybe on your side. I had

to lay on my side, as large as I was. They'd have to come just nearly right down on you--the strafers and the bombs, too--to get you.

Marcello: Now what did you do with your artillery pieces in response to those attacks? Were they of any use to you as anti-aircraft weapons?

Owen: We fired some, and they said that they shot one down. I don't know. . . I mean, I don't know whether they did or didn't.

Marcello: But obviously you weren't with the firing batteries at this time.

Owen: No, I wasn't with the firing batteries. I had other. . . they had different guys on different details and everything.

Marcello: Okay, now on February 27, 1942, the remaining bombers leave Java for Australia, and you, of course, were to remain behind. How did this affect the morale of those left behind?

Owen: Well, it kind of affected us. . . I was on guard duty at the time that Colonel Tharp came from the airfield over to the camp, and we'd heard that he was coming over to tell us to get our stuff ready, and we'd fly out with the 19th Bomb Group. Whenever he come through the gate there, he had a phone call. I stopped him and told him that--saluted him and everything--and told him that he had a phone call there, and he went in and answered the phone. He come out and said, "Well, we've got orders to stay." He was coming over to tell us to, you

know, get a few clothes and everything, tear our guns up, throw away our sights, and, you know, mess our guns up and everything; but he said, "We have orders to stay." Then after that, we got prepared to go to . . . well, what I thought was that we were just trying to fool the Japs, which we did.

Marcello: Okay, you might describe what happened. I think you left Singosari sometime around March 2nd or sometime around there.

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, describe what you did.

Owen: Well, we'd go to, say, a large town, and we'd go in the south and come out the north; and we'd go in another way and maybe we'd go through those towns twenty-four hours. Then we'd go to another one and do that. We'd change our column up. Maybe one time the command car would be leading the way through and the next time a kitchen truck, and we'd go out and change our column up. We'd stop and eat, and then we'd get back in and go.

When we got down to about the middle of the islands, we heard it was 70,000 Americans on the other end of the island. We thought, "Well, good Lord! They landed up there after we left!" Whenever the war was over with and we were talking to a Japanese officer who had lived here in the States, he told us that they had 150,000 Japs, and they was aiming to take

100,000 of them to go to Darwin and land on Australia. They was aiming to take 50,000 and land in Java because they knew it was one battalion of artillery there. So he said they heard it was 70,000 Americans on the other end of the island where we came from, and so they just brought the whole 150,000 to Java. I believed it because they was just kind of like piss ants--there was so many of them (chuckle). That's what they always said, and we believed it because it was kind of like piss ants crawling around over the island.

Marcello: Now in other words, you were just kind of keeping on the move all the time.

Owen: We was moving all the time.

Marcello: Did you have very much contact with either the Australian or the Dutch or the British forces on the island?

Owen: Well, really, not until we got there at this rubber plantation which was just before the war was over with--before we surrendered--because when the Japs had landed, then we had taken four of our guns. . . we taken a gun out of . . . we had taken four guns. . . I don't know how many, but I know we had taken two out of F Battery--I don't know which batteries the other two came from--and went up there close to the river because this river. . . I don't know the name of the river. Of course, the Japs was trying to cross, and the Australians

and Dutch was up there fighting them, and they needed artillery support. We went up there.

We had a Lieutenant Stensland and Mark Summers and Dan Buzzo, and, I think, T. B. Lumsden went up and strung telephone line up there. Stensland was a forward observer officer and was giving us our firing data back to the guns. We went up there and fired one afternoon. Then after that, we pulled back and out on the road, and they let a couple of guns-- one of our guns. . . and had it bore-sighted down the road where it could shoot just straight down the road there when the Japs got across.

Then we went on back, and we started moving again, and we went to another rubber plantation. The Dutch finally told us that they couldn't give us no more gas because if they did, the Japs said they'd start bombing their residence section, and which they did. They didn't believe them, and they started bombing the residence section, and they said that they couldn't take that--killing their wives, their women, and children and everything--so they couldn't give us no more gas.

So then we got this big Australian warehouse there around this rubber plantation. They had quite a few of them; I saw three of them myself--big old buildings. We went up there,

and we got us a bunch of rum and a bunch of chocolate candy and a bunch of stuff and food and stuff. Then they had us . . . the Japs told the Dutch to tell us to go to this race-track.

Marcello: Well, now wait a minute. Let's back up here a little bit. We're getting too far ahead of the story. How much actual contact did you have with the Japanese while you were on the move around the island?

Owen: That was the only contact that we had with them while we was there--across this river--while firing in support of the Australians and Dutch. Now we went up there. . . we was up there, seems like to me, a night and a day--this one group. I don't know whether any other batteries sent some more because we had two artillery pieces up there. See, each battery had four artillery pieces. Now I don't know about the other batteries--whether they went back up there or whether they were there or what.

Marcello: But you actually didn't have too much contact with the Japanese.

Owen: No. No, we didn't.

Marcello: Okay, somewhere around March 9, 1942, the island capitulated. In other words, orders to surrender came down.

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: What were your reactions when you heard that the American troops--and all the other allied troops for that matter--were surrendering?

Owen: Well, we went to this racetrack.

Marcello: What were your reactions? What did you think?

Owen: Well, we were tearing our guns up and destroying everything we had, including cars. See, the Air Force had a bunch of cars there, and some of our guys had been driving those cars regular, you know--'42 model Chevrolets--brand new ones. We had taken them and drained the oil out of them and run them. We'd time them and see how long they run without oil. Like, I remember some of them run close to thirty minutes and one run a little over thirty minutes. Then we had taken all of our gun sights and throwed them in the well and throwed some hand grenades in on top of them and everything because if they went down there trying to find them, those hand grenades would go off. A lot of them cars. . . we'd take them and pour sugar in the gas tanks and stuff like that--destroying stuff. And we'd taken our machine guns and stuff like that, and we'd tear them apart and throw the parts away.

Marcello: Did you have any apprehensions about being captured by the Japanese and becoming prisoners-of-war?

Owen: Well, a lot of the guys thought they'd get off the island after we got to the racetrack, and they left. But I stayed there just playing poker.

Marcello: Well, now prior to your ever actually coming in contact with any Japanese, what were your thoughts about becoming a prisoner-of-war? For example, did you ever hear the rumors that the

Japanese did not take any prisoners?

Owen: Well, yes, we'd heard it, but, well, it was just one of those things that "If they don't take prisoners, there's nothing we can do about it." A lot of the guys, like I say, was trying to get off the island, and they couldn't get off. So they came back--a few. I figured, "Well, I think we'd be a lot safer here by staying as a group than we would getting off as maybe four or five of us leaving."

Marcello: In other words, the thought of "heading for the hills" and trying to get off the island never really occurred to you.

Owen: No, it didn't me because I was . . . well, it occurred, but I thought, "Well, I think I'll just stay with the group instead of going up in the hills or trying to go down to the coast and trying to get a boat out or see if you could get off the island." It just occurred to me, "Well, I believe I'll stay with the group."

Marcello: Okay, after you surrender, where was your first stop? Where did you go?

Owen: We went to this racetrack.

Marcello: And what did you do when you got there?

Owen: Got drunk.

Marcello: Where'd you get the liquor?

Owen: We were going to drink that rum we got out of this Australian . . . we had . . . behind our truck--the truck I was in--we

had a two-wheel trailer behind it, and we had it nearly full of rum. We had more rum than we did supplies. Because we knew then . . . we already knew that the Japs was, you know, on the island and everything.

Marcello: How long did you stay at the racetrack altogether?

Owen: I just don't recall right off now because it's been so long. But we left there and went up into a tea plantation.

Marcello: In the meantime, had you really ever had any contact with the Japanese yet?

Owen: No. The only . . . well, the officers had. The officers had a meeting with them, I think. They commenced to coming back. Nobody was cooking; we wasn't eating right; and everybody just didn't care. They was buying some bananas and stuff like that --fruit and stuff--off the natives. That's about all they was eating. So they commenced getting us organized, you know, and started the kitchen back up after about a couple of days there--three days, something like that. Then we left there, and the Japs told us, "You go up to this tea plantation." We went up to this tea plantation, and I don't know how many days we stayed there.

Marcello: What did you do while you were there?

Owen: Just lay around and eat and play cards and drink some more of that rum.

Marcello: Did you speculate very much as to what was going to happen to you?

Owen: No. Really and truly, after we found out that (chuckle) they surrendered the island, it had taken about four or five days before all that rum got away from us. We drank all that rum up, really, before we got to thinking. Then by that time, we were down on the road, down close to a railroad tracks, where we had our pup tents and everything throwed up. It was raining, and we was taking our trucks. . . they told us that'd be the last of the trucks, so we had taken sugar and put some sugar in the gas tanks and carburetor and just messed the trucks in general. That's whenever we . . .

Marcello: Okay, well, where did you go, then, from the tea plantation?

Owen: We left there and went to Batavia.

Marcello: Okay, what did you do in Batavia?

Owen: Well, we went to Batavia. . . well, I had a big old. . . where I stepped on a stob. I had a big old gap out of my foot where the stob gouged out a big old chunk out of my foot. So I got quite a few whippings there after we got off this train because I couldn't keep up with walking, you know, on the ball of my foot.

Marcello: Okay, let's just back a minute here now. Again, when did you first meet the Japanese?

Owen: There at the railroad.

Marcello: Okay, when you were coming from the tea plantation.

Owen: Yes, there on the side of this. . . where we was camped on the side of this railroad.

Marcello: Okay, describe what the Japanese looked like in terms of their dress, their clothing, actions, and that sort of thing.

Owen: Well, they looked. . . we called them "apes." They had their head shaved and were slant-eyed, and they had the little old caps on with a little bill. They had these here old wrapped leggings like they had during World War I--our World War I wrapped leggings--and they had these little old brown. . . kind of a . . . well, it wasn't brown. . . it was kind of brownish, too. . . pants--a kind of a boot pants on. They had. . . we couldn't figure it out right then, but some of them had a little bar deal up on their collars--their rank. Some of them had stars in it; some of them had bars, you know; some of them had just a red patch. Their guns with the bayonet on them was taller than they were when you sat it down on the ground. A lot of them was real short, small, and everything. They'd holler at us and first one thing and another, but we knew what they was talking about.

Marcello: Now did they begin to rough you up immediately after they met you here at this railroad?

Owen: No, they didn't. . . I didn't see any of it. Some of them got, you know, got pushed around, but about the only time that they started roughing us up is after we got off this train that night and we couldn't keep up.

Marcello: Okay, now what did you say happened to you?

Owen: I stepped on a stob where they'd cut down a little old sapling, you know, to maybe put their tent up and stuff like that. I stepped on it and gouged a big old chunk out of my heel of my . . . I mean, my. . . underneath my foot. . . about the ball of my foot, and I couldn't walk. I had to walk on my heel, and I couldn't keep up. So they got to hitting me and beating me then because I couldn't keep up.

Marcello: How did they hit you and beat you? Was it fists or gun butts or what?

Owen: Rifle butts. They'd hit you across your back with their gun --you know, barrel of the gun. Or they'd take the rifle butt and hit you. We went into this camp down there--we called it Priok.

Marcello: Tanjong Priok.

Owen: Yes. We went into this camp, and after we got into camp . . . and I never will forget because the next morning we got up--it was April 1st--and that's when we went over behind barbed wire.

Marcello: Okay, now Tanjong Priok. . . you were there before you actually got into Bicycle Camp.

Owen: Yes, we was there about. . . we was there close to a . . . oh, just a little over a month.

Marcello: Okay, describe what Tanjong Priok was like from a physical standpoint.

Owen: Well, we didn't have no. . . we didn't have enough latrine facilities to take care of everybody in this camp, so we had to dig slit trenches out there. After we got into this. . . it had barbed wire. Like I say, it was barbed wire around it and had a kind of a room inside. Then on the outside, it had a concrete slab out there about eight foot, and a lot of guys were sleeping out there on these concrete slabs on each side. Of course, the porch. . . these slabs were just. . . well, I call it a porch. It was covered and a lot of guys put up their mosquito bars and throwed their blanket down and shelter half and slept on that.

It was very. . . the water situation was very poor. Then when they got to feeding us, they'd. . . I never will forget the next day when they went by to get our rice that afternoon. It had worms and everything in it. They'd put it in your mess kit, and you'd look at it and it'd make you sick, so we just got to where we just put our lid on it and waited

until dark. Of course, when we got it, we'd look off the other way, and we'd put our mess kit lid on, and then after dark we'd eat. Then we really didn't know what we was eating --what rice and stuff we got. We stayed there. . .

Marcello: Now was this camp located right in Batavia?

Owen: Yes. It was down close to the docks.

Marcello: Okay, how big a camp was it?

Owen: It was a pretty good-sized camp. I didn't go all over the camp because I was always. . . I was always a pretty good hand to agitate and go on with my buddies and everything, and I just never did mingle too much all during my POW days with too many Australians and English.

Marcello: But there were Australians and English in this camp?

Owen: Yes, there was Australian and English in this camp.

Marcello: Did you go out on any of the work details that left?

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: What sort of work did you do?

Owen: We went out and loaded barges and unloaded barges and doing different things--just anything you wanted to do . . . unloading gas drums. . . just first one thing and another. Most of it was unloading barges of rice.

Marcello: How many of these work parties did you go on? Were you going out every day?

- Owen: Yes, I was going out nearly every day.
- Marcello: How long would they last?
- Owen: Oh, they'd last different times. Sometimes you may go out and work half a day, and then other times you'd go out and work all day.
- Marcello: Were these voluntary or were you assigned to them?
- Owen: Most of the time it was voluntary, and you were assigned to them.
- Marcello: Why did you volunteer for them?
- Owen: To get out and get some exercise. After about four or five days, this gap wasn't really too big of a deal. It just peeled off about, oh, maybe a fourth an inch high and about the size of a half-dollar underneath the ball of my foot. That got healed up and I could get my shoe on, and I went out on these working parties. Then you'd get a little extra stuff out there. Maybe you could buy something from the natives like fruit or something or other. Then they'd let you maybe go over and buy you some bananas or something like that and get a little extra food.
- Marcello: Were the Japanese harassing you on these work parties?
- Owen: Not as much as they did later on. They harassed you and everything if you. . . but we'd do our work, you know. But they got to where later on they did. But they wasn't harassing us near as much then as they were later on.

Marcello: Now were rations already getting low by this time?

Owen: Yes. They were getting pretty low. Of course, we had . . . we'd already had. . . we carried everything that we could carry, and they issued some rations, too, before we got on this train. We had some rations of our own, you know--individually.

Marcello: Did the cooks have very much trouble preparing that rice?

Owen: Yes, they did. For quite a while, they didn't know how to prepare it and everything, really, until we got into Bicycle Camp. Now the English didn't either, and the Australians didn't. Really, they learned how to do it--I guess they did --after we got into Bicycle Camp with the Dutch. Because the Dutch. . . there was a lot of what we called "half-Dutch." Well, they looked like the natives--Javanese--to me. They had a lot of Javanese in their army, and they knew how to prepare that rice and everything.

After we got into. . . well, going back to while we was still there at Priok. . . we knew we was going to have to march back to where we got off that train, and so we started throwing our clothes away. We had a pile of clothes there that you couldn't see over--the whole battalion did--that had been throwed out there. Just before we got ready to march out of there, they brought some Australians in from this camp where we was going to. We didn't know it, but they knew

it and they told us, said, "Yanks, there's a bunch of Yanks over yonder where you're going that haven't got no clothes. Off the USS Houston there's some." So we just went back out there and gathered up a bunch of these clothes. I got some clothes that wouldn't even fit me. But I got some shoes--I think I got two or three pair of shoes--and I got a bunch more clothes and filled my barracks bag back up.

Marcello: How come you had been getting rid of these clothes? You just felt it was too much to carry?

Owen: We didn't want to carry them, so we was discarding them, you know, making our packs--our barracks bag and everything--light and everything. So we went out there and picked up all these clothes and had taken them over there. After we got them over there, well, they kind of. . . it kind of got out of hand to start with, I thought. So they asked us if we'd just bring them up . . . too many people was getting, you know, too many clothes, and some people wasn't getting any. So I had taken mine up there and gave them to the. . . up there at what you call a supply--kind of formed a little supply--and gave them up there and then let them distribute them out to people that didn't have any. Then that way they'd get some.

Marcello: Okay, now you're getting ahead of the story again because we're getting into Bicycle Camp. I don't want to get quite

that far yet. Let's just back up here a minute. What other food were you getting at Tanjong Priok besides rice?

Owen: Well, we got some melons--some kind of melon deal--and we'd get a few vegetables--very few--but it was more or less rice. Like I say, they didn't know how to cook it because it'd come out mushy--kind of like mush or . . . oatmeal is real mushy and soggy--and it was hard to eat. And it had the husk in it, too. In other words, there was dirt and worms and everything else. Really, we had a lot of guys to have dysentery--take down dysentery--there in that camp.

Marcello: Now at this time, were you hungry enough that you still ate the rice with the pebbles and the worms in it?

Owen: Yes, after it got dark where I couldn't see. . . I'd cover mine up. Some of the guys would eat theirs anyway, but I'd eat mine. . . and maybe three or four of us would go together, and we had maybe a little old. . . like a can of. . . like corned beef in these little cans like Spam here in the States. We'd split that up, you know--four or five of us--and put it in our mess kits with this rice and stir it up and eat it that way. But I couldn't eat mine to start out with, but I did a little later on down the line.

Marcello: Now up to this point, you really hadn't lost anybody yet, had you?

Owen: No. No, we hadn't lost anybody. We had some guys awful sick with dysentery. The fact of the business is that we had one guy--a lieutenant--and he was real sick--Lieutenant Smith. He had dysentery, and he was. . . you could . . . every day he was going down. He was losing weight.

Marcello: Now you mention that when you were on the work parties, you had been able to buy things from the natives. Did you have very much money at this time?

Owen: Well, see, when we first got on Java, why, they gave us another. . . well, they gave us. . . I think they gave us another partial pay. Now we still had some of this Australian money, and we transferred it into guilders. They was fixing to pay us just before we was captured. The fact of the business is that they had our payroll money--our officers did. Instead of paying us, they said, "Well, if we pay them and they get captured, they'll lose that money," so they kept that money theirselves and later on used it for different things.

Marcello: Now one of the work parties that went out from Tanjong Priok was unloading spoiled cheese. Do you remember that particular detail?

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: You might describe this.

Owen: Well, we got some of this cheese, and the fact of the business is that the Englishmen said it wasn't spoiled. It was just green and everything. Some of them maggots was on it, and they just cut that outside off of it, and they'd eat it. God, I never tasted nothing like that in my life! Them Englishmen thought, "Man, that's real good!" because the older the cheese is, the better it was to them. I had taken a couple of bites of it, and I spit it out. I just couldn't take it (chuckle). I said, "Hell, I've tasted things. . . nothing like that before in my life." Some cow manure. . . I had to eat some of that one time when I was a kid. A guy got me down and rubbed my face in it, and I got some in my mouth, and I said, "Hell, it didn't taste that bad!"

Marcello: Okay, so you were at Tanjong Priok about a month, and then you moved into Bicycle Camp. Now again, I'd like to have you describe what Bicycle Camp looked like from a physical standpoint--in terms of the buildings there and that sort of thing.

Owen: Well, the buildings in Bicycle Camp was long barracks. They had. . . well, we came in off the street, and we come to the guardhouse here (gesture), and then they had this street--this wide street--right up through it, and then they had these barracks going off at each side of this street. These barracks, I'd say, was about. . . a hundred. . . about. . . no, these

barracks was maybe a hundred yards. . . at least two hundred feet long or maybe longer--maybe a hundred yards long--each barracks. They were something similar to these other barracks, only they was a lot larger barracks, and there was a lot higher ceilings in these barracks. They had stalls in these barracks just like a horse stall, you know. They had a walkway down through the middle, and then they'd have a stall. . . you know, how stalls cross in front of one another. They assigned so many guys to each stall.

Then they had a kitchen. . . we had to go across the street and then go down to the end of this other barracks where the kitchen was to get our food supply. We'd go down to the kitchen and eat for a long time. If I'm not mistaken, they got to where they'd bring it up to us and feed us up there, you know, to keep so many of us from getting down there in the kitchen. There were several hundred in this camp. There were Australians, and there were still a lot of Englishmen in it and the Americans--the artillerymen and the guys off the Houston.

Marcello: Okay, now when you do come into camp, you do meet these survivors off the USS Houston. Describe what they looked like and how you helped them.

Owen: Well, there were a lot of them that had been sick; a lot of them had had dysentery. A lot of them didn't have clothes.

They was walking around and didn't have no clothes or nothing. The ones that had had clothes, they got off the ship with them. None of them had shoes because. . . very few. I don't know if any of them had shoes--some of them might have-- because when they sunk, well, I think then everybody kicked their shoes off. They got real chummy with the Australians, and the Australians would give them what they could.

When we walked in that day, well, the Australians commenced yelling, "Meow! Meow!" going like a cat. These guys off the Houston said. . . I never did see it, but they said they'd take every cat that would come in the camp, they'd catch them, kill them, and eat them. We gave them. . . they had their mess gear. I never will forget that there was a '40 model Ford--American Ford--there in the compound, and they'd taken. . . I don't know how they cut it out, but they'd taken it and cut out a piece of the metal and taken it and bent it up and made a little. . . taken and bent a piece of bamboo and bent a kind of round object to make a handle, you know, around this bamboo. A lot of them had hubcaps--car hubcaps--they was eating out of.

Marcello: These were the people off the Houston?

Owen: Yes, the people off the Houston. Then after we got in, we gave them our clothes--the extra clothes we had and everything--and divided it up.

Marcello: Did you notice that most of the people from the 131st Field Artillery were rather generous in giving things to these people off the Houston and so on?

Owen: Yes. Yes.

Marcello: Okay, now also very shortly after you got into Bicycle Camp, the Japanese tried to get everybody to sign a non-escape pledge, did they not?

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: Describe this incident.

Owen: Well, they called us. . . they fell us out over there. . . made us fall out and line up over there with the officers lined up in front. They had a little parade area right across . . . as you come in off the street and the guardhouse was here (gesture) and they had a little parade area there, and they had us over there. They got us lined up over there, and they then made us . . . they wouldn't sign it. The officers wouldn't sign it, and nobody would sign it. So after that, well, they made us squat down on our knees and rest back on our heels. Several of the guys, they put a piece of bamboo pole underneath their. . . back here underneath their knees (gesture) and made them sit back on that to cut the circulation off. Guys were falling out and everything. If you fell out, they'd come along and beat on you and everything, so finally. . . I don't know what officer it was, but he said,

"Well, sign the damn thing." He says, "Ain't nothing they can do about it." He says, "Sign it!" So everybody signed it then.

Marcello: Okay, describe what the conduct of the Japanese guards and troops was like here at Bicycle Camp. I'm referring now to harassment and things of that nature.

Owen: Well, there at Bicycle Camp, they didn't. . . they came through down around and through the camp now and then but not too often. You always knew when they was coming; you could be prepared for them. But out on the working parties, some of them were real good, and some of them wanted to beat you, slap you around, and stuff like that, but not too many of them because they was living it up, too, and everything was stil going pretty strong in Java then and Batavia then, see.

Marcello: Now in other words, you didn't see too many Japanese when you were actually inside the compound itself.

Owen: Not too many then because I was down in the lower end of this barracks which was more off the street. Now and then they'd come by and we'd be playing volleyball, and they'd watch us play volleyball; and they'd laugh because somebody missed or somebody fell--hit his ball or missed it and fell down. They just really laughed.

Marcello: Now you said that when you went in the service, you weighed about 190 pounds. This, I assume, would have made you one of

the bigger men in your unit. Did the Japanese ever seem to pick more on the bigger men than the smaller men?

Owen: Well, when I was captured, I weighed 253 pounds. Later on down the line in Burma--I mean, on the railroad--it did.

Marcello: How about here at Bicycle Camp?

Owen: No, they didn't. . . they looked at me, you know, because I was so big and everything. They'd just stand off and look at me and say, "Oh, big. . . big!" But later on down the line there, well, it made a whole lot of difference.

Marcello: When they did harass you physically here in Bicycle Camp, what form would the harassment usually take?

Owen: Well, I didn't see too much of it because they had taken a lot of them over to the guardhouse. In the camps, generally whenever they would. . . right at the first, they'd take you to the guardhouse. . . take you over to the guardhouse and make you stand at attention and bash you around. But I never did see too much of Japs beating and stuff like that there in Batavia. But a lot of guys did.

Marcello: What conduct did they expect you to live up to whenever you encountered any of them? I'm referring now to such things as bowing and saluting and things of that nature.

Owen: Oh, they expected you to bow, and they. . . you just bowed your head down like this (gesture) from the neck up. Well,

they didn't want that. They'd stop and show you how to bow and all that stuff. Then if you didn't do that. . . and then the next time, if you didn't bow like they showed you, then they'd start slapping you and beating on you and jabbering that Jap talk to you and everything. But their officers. . . in other words, if you was a sergeant, then anything you wanted anybody to do under you, they had to do it regardless. If you wanted them to stand at attention and he wanted to slap you, well, he could slap his own men--everybody below him.

Marcello: Did you notice that there was a great deal of physical punishment in the Japanese Army itself?

Owen: Yes, it was. Yes.

Marcello: What was the food like at Bicycle Camp?

Owen: Well, there at Bicycle Camp, Major Rogers got to where he got in . . . I don't know how he did it but, of course, our officers was all over there in another building out by . . . well, it was between the building I was in and the other building. It was kind of a house-deal. It had a basement in it. Major Rogers got in with some of the Japs, and I think he . . . of course, I got ahead of myself thinking about Major Rogers and a detail went on ahead, and they went to some school there somewhere or another on Java, and they were there. I think he saw one of these Japs that he had. . . they had a good

Jap with them then, and I think he saw one of them, and they let . . . after we got there in Bicycle Camp, they let him go out and buy food and sweet cream, canned goods, stuff like that. That's what they were doing with our payroll money. That's the reason we ate pretty good there.

Marcello: In other words, they were using company funds to buy this food.

Owen: Yes. Yes, they was using our payroll money to buy this food, and he was buying medicine and different things, too. I don't know what all. There was quite a few of the guys. . . he had taken his detail out--certain detail out--and he took those same guys because they'd know who to see and who to talk to and try to get this medicine and food and stuff. He had just a same bunch going with him all the time.

Marcello: What sort of food were you getting here in Bicycle Camp?

Owen: We was getting rice, and we was getting a few. . . kind of a little old yellow. . . well, I don't know what kind of peas they were, but we were getting some of that. We was getting some vegetables and stuff, and we was getting this sweet cream. We was getting a few eggs. Mr. Rogers would get these eggs and bring them in, and we'd have eggs now and then. We was eating real good compared, you know, as POW's there in Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: Were you beginning to lose weight?

Owen: Yes, but I hadn't lost much because I hadn't had the dysentery and hadn't been sick; but a lot of the guys that had this dysentery, they just lost a . . . they just lost weight.

Marcello: But in your own case, the food was sufficient that you actually weren't losing very much weight.

Owen: Yes, I wasn't losing very much weight.

Marcello: Were you getting any meat?

Owen: Now and then we'd get a little meat--very seldom. What we got was just enough to really season it. Maybe you would get a couple or three chunks of meat maybe about the size of a . . . oh, about the size of a quarter, you know (gesture), about that big around. . . about the size of a quarter--in your food when you'd go to the kitchen. In the mornings, you'd get this. . . you'd have this sweetened cream. They'd dilute it down and, you know, make milk out of it to pour over your rice. But we was eating real good compared on farther on down the line.

Marcello: Describe what the sanitary facilities were like here at this camp.

Owen: Well, they had their regular latrines, because this had been a barracks and everything, and they had, you know, the regular latrines--had running water and everything. You didn't have to boil your water or nothing, and they did make us clean . . . well, I don't know whether the Japs did, but we had a detail going around cleaning these latrines up. I imagine ever who was in charge. . . I don't know who was in charge of that

detail. Our first sergeant came along and told us, and we'd have to clean up, and we'd have to scrub down our . . . you know, scrub down these concrete piles and these porches and stuff--wash them down and clean them up. It was sanitary. It was real good there in Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: What were the shower and bathing facilities like?

Owen: Well, they just had water and the showers. They had some showers--some of them with just a pipe coming out there. The shower head was knocked off, and there was just running water there. You'd just get under it.

Marcello: Could you take daily baths or showers?

Owen: Yes. Yes. And the Japs made us . . . that's where the Japs made us shave our heads. They made us cut all of our hair off and shave our heads on account of lice and stuff, I guess. Because that's the way their head was, and they wanted us like them, I guess, or something. But anyway, that's the first time we ever had to cut all of our hair off and shave our head.

Marcello: Did they issue soap or anything of that sort?

Owen: No. No, they never did. We had soap of our own. And we could buy stuff like that out on these working parties. That's the advantage of going out on the working parties. If you had a little money, you could buy that stuff.

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

Owen: I don't really know. I never was in the hospital (chuckle) there. I didn't really have to go to the hospital, and I just never did go over there.

Marcello: But they did have a camp hospital for the prisoners.

Owen: Yes, they had a camp hospital for the prisoners. You know, those guys had dysentery and everything, and I just didn't care nothing about going over there and maybe getting that dysentery or getting something somebody had, so I just stayed away from it. Really, we didn't have too many of our boys in F Battery in the hospital at that time.

Marcello: I gather that had you been able to stay at Bicycle Camp for the duration of the war, life as a prisoner-of-war might not have been too bad considering everything.

Owen: Well, for a while probably, but later on, I figured, after they run out of supplies and the Japs would sort of, you know, be taking the supplies theirselves and confiscating all this stuff, I imagine it got pretty rough there.

Marcello: Okay, what sort of work were you doing here at Bicycle Camp?

Owen: Oh, we'd go out and we'd . . . some of them still went to Priok in trucks and went down there and worked down in Priok.

Marcello: What did you do personally?

Owen: I went to Priok a time or two, and I'd go to these rubber plantations and roll drums--gas drums--and different things and

just anything. Some of the boys went down there someplace or another and worked in a warehouse where they had a bunch of tires and stuff. I never did get on that detail. Then they'd go out. . . some of them would go out and dig slit trenches out in the Japanese camps--you know, where the Japs were and everything.

Marcello: I gather you must have been loading a lot of things for shipment back to Japan.

Owen: Yes, loading these rice barges and unloading it off of barges. Then they had these cranes, see, that they'd load them on ships, and they'd make us load them off these barges. Then they'd come along and load them in these ships with the cranes and put it in the holds because, you know, we couldn't get down in those holds.

Marcello: Now normally, how long a workday would you be putting in?

Owen: Oh, generally it was eight to ten hours.

Marcello: Was this seven days a week?

Owen: Well, generally there was so many in camp that you didn't have to go every day. In other words, if you wanted to go, well, some of them would pay you to, you know, to go in their place if you wanted to go out and work.

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

Owen: Well, no, we was assigned to them. The first sergeant kept a duty roster--you know, who would go out. He'd go down the

duty roster, and he'd take. . . well, if he had to have ten men to go out that day, well, he'd take the next ten men and go right on down the duty roster.

Marcello: Who supervised these work details?

Owen: They'd generally have a lieutenant. Or there in Priok and when we first went to work on the railroad, they had lieutenants or some commissioned officer.

Marcello: Now were these Japanese or American officers?

Owen: No, I mean in charge of us there'd be an American or Australian or English officer in charge of us.

Marcello: Okay, in other words, the orders would come from the Japanese through your officers and down to your non-commissioned officers and then down to whoever else was left.

Owen: Yes. And then they'd have an Allied officer to go on these working parties in charge of them, see.

Marcello: Would you be accompanied by guards on these work parties?

Owen: Yes, we would.

Marcello: What would the guards usually do while you were working?

Owen: Well, they'd just stand around and maybe talk to the Dutch. Or maybe if a Dutch woman would come along on a bicycle, they'd holler and whistle, you know, and speak some Jap to her and laugh, you know--something like that. . .which it wasn't funny, but they'd always laugh.

Marcello: Normally, did they harass you very much on these work parties while you were here at Bicycle Camp?

Owen: No, not too much. The fact of the business is that on one party there they had one Jap on it that. . . he rode a bicycle. And there was a small person. . . I forget now who it was on it--the small person--but I heard a lot of guys talk about it. He'd put him on behind his bicycle with him and ride on ahead. He'd let him jump off and buy a bunch of stuff, and then whenever we got up there, he'd give it to us; and then he'd take him on his bicycle and ride on ahead and let him buy some more stuff, see. But they wasn't too awful strict and brutal until later on down, you know, in the war.

Marcello: Okay, what sort of recreation facilities were available here at Bicycle Camp?

Owen: Volleyball and, you know, a lot of guys played cards and played chess, and they'd get out and do some calisthenics if you wanted to--they didn't make us. But we had a couple of volleyball nets and volleyballs between the barracks and had it set up. We played a lot of volleyball.

Marcello: When were you able to play?

Owen: Oh, you'd play at different times--in the mornings and in the afternoons, that is, if you wasn't out on working parties. Of course, they didn't have enough working parties for everybody to go out, so there was a lot of guys still in camp.

Marcello: Did anybody ever give much thought of trying to escape?

Owen: No, not our bunch because they'd (chuckle). . .the ones that left when we surrendered there and went to that racetrack, they left and went down on the beach, and there wasn't no place to go. You know, Java's not but about. . .they told me it was about 400 miles wide and about 800 miles long, and you had that area to roam in. If they did catch you, then they'd . . . we'd heard that they'd beat you up and everything after we went behind barbed wire. But they didn't pay no attention to them, they told me, whenever they went down to . . . left the racetrack and went down on the beach. They'd let them go. They didn't try to, you know, capture them or nothing because they figured they couldn't go nowheres anyways. The guys got down there and said all there was down there was rowboats. They said they couldn't see getting into that ocean and out in the straits and stuff in the rowboat, so they come back. Nearly all our boys came back. I think there was two or three that got. . . well, not two or three, but I think it was quite a few that didn't get back. They captured them and had taken them to other camps before they got to the racetrack. I think all of F Battery got back to the racetrack.

Marcello: Now were you still maintaining discipline within your own ranks yet? In other words, were you as enlisted men still obeying

your officers and things of this nature?

Owen: Yes, there in Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: I would assume that this was going to be one of the keys to survival. Discipline would be very important.

Owen: Well, it got to where that it was up until later on down the line. Then it got to where it was more or less "dog eat dog."

Marcello: Okay, in October of 1942--somewhere around October 11, 1942--probably before October 11th--you left Bicycle Camp and were on your way to another camp. Where were they taking you?

Owen: Well, we didn't know where they was taking us. It was 192 or 193 of us, and what was called the "Fitzsimmons Bunch" left there, and we didn't know really where we was going.

Marcello: Did they give you very much prior warning?

Owen: No, just a couple of days, I think it was--if that long. I think it was a couple of days.

Marcello: So you were in this group called the "Fitzsimmons Group?"

Owen: Yes, Fitzsimmons. Later on, the Japs called us--after we got on down the line--they called it "Branch Three."

Marcello: Okay, Fitzsimmons, evidently was the man in charge of the. . . the officer in charge of the party.

Owen: Yes. Yes, he was the captain, and we had three lieutenants with us, too.

Marcello: Was this an unsettling experience, that is, having to pick up and leave after you had gotten into a certain routine here?

Owen: Yes, it was. It was a lot harder on a lot of the guys than it was on me and some of the other guys because nearly all of F Battery--privates and PFC's and one corporal--was in this "Fitzsimmons Bunch," and we was glad to be together, you know. They didn't split us, in other words, so it didn't hurt us like it did a lot of the other boys--leaving your buddies like some guys out of D Battery and some guys out of Headquarters Battery and some of the sailors that went along, too. They was leaving their buddies there, and naturally you'd hate to leave your buddy. But like it was with me and the guys in F Battery, well, we was kind of, you know, proud to get to go and not to be split up. We didn't know where we was going, but we kind of liked the idea of being, you know, together.

Marcello: Okay, did they march you down to the docks?

Owen: Yes, they marched us down . . . they marched us part of the way and then rode us. . . or they rode us and then marched us. I don't know which. I don't recall now. Then we loaded on the ship, and we left there and went to Singapore.

Marcello: Describe what conditions were like aboard that ship. And I think it was called the Dai Nichi Maru, is that correct?

Owen: Yes. It was a ship. We had very close quarters. The fact of the business is that there was so many on this ship that we had to stand up--about half of us would stand up and the other

half would lay down--and you would be standing up over somebody, and maybe he'd be laying between your legs--your legs out. We was right back on the fantail down in this hold, and the shaft of the ship was right there, and it was about waist-high, being it was about four or five foot across. There was a big metal deal there, and that took up a lot of room. You couldn't lay down. You'd lay up on top of it, but you'd roll off. So Lieutenant Stensland formed this deal that half of us would stand up and half of us would lay down. And, you know, when we was all . . . if somebody wanted to lay down in the daytime, well, we, you know, could squat down or sit down, but nobody could lay down.

Marcello: What was the temperature like down in that hold?

Owen: Oh, it was hot. If I ever seen hell, that was it! It was hot and we sweated all the time. They wouldn't let but so many at a time go up on the deck. What they had. . .they had a latrine up on the top deck. They had it right alongside the ship, and it had water running--it had a trough there--and it had water running through it all time. You'd go up and use the latrine and come back down, and they'd just let so many at a time. Somebody was always over there wanting to go up.

Marcello: I would assume it really got bad if people had dysentery down in that hold.

Owen: Yes. Lieutenant Stensland let the sick ones go up, and he kind of formed a deal. Everybody liked him because he was . . . he really wasn't one of our officers. He came to us there in Java. Someone said he had three hundred and some thousand dollars on him. He was supposed to be buying material and supplies and stuff off the islands and stuff.

Marcello: Where did he come from?

Owen: We don't know where (chuckle) he come from.

Marcello: He was not one of the members of the 131st Field Artillery.

Owen: He wasn't. He was trying to buy supplies and get them into some other island and get them in the Philippines. That was before the surrender in the Philippines. They said he had three hundred and some thousand dollars. He come in there . . . well, he told me he had this money, and he wanted to know who the officer was in charge, and we told him Colonel Searle was.

Marcello: Was he British?

Owen: No, he was an American. So he went over there and turned this money over to him--this American money; it was American money, they said. He turned this money over to him, and he wouldn't turn it over until he signed for it. He made them sign for it. So he was a pretty heavy drinker, and he looked about like a big old grizzly bear--the way he walked with his

arms out and bowlegged. But he was a pretty good organizer, and he'd get. . . you know, everybody liked him because he was kind of like one of us. The fact of the business is that there in Java him and one of the privates had a fight. He pulled his shirt off, and they had a fight. He drank pretty heavy, too.

Marcello: Now what was the food like aboard the Dai Nichi Maru?

Owen: Just rice. Rice--that's all we'd get.

Marcello: How often would you get fed?

Owen: Twice a day.

Marcello: And how much would you get?

Owen: It wouldn't be a mess kit full--very small quantity.

Marcello: Where would you take the rice? In other words, did you go up on deck, or was it lowered down in the hold?

Owen: Oh, it was lowered down in the hold to us. It was lowered down in the hold. You'd go up on deck. . . a lot of us. . . we'd go up on deck. . . not everybody but the ones that. . . of course, we had a lot of guys afraid they'd get beat up, and a lot of guys didn't care to go up to get something to eat. But we'd go up there, and they had a bunch of onions--sacks of onions--up there. We finally got one of these sacks of onions opened, and we'd go by and get us an onion. Then we'd come back down, and then we'd peel it, and you can imagine what a hold smells like--little old place down there about . . . oh,

it was about, I'd say, fifty-by-fifty with a hundred and something men in it. So with all them onion peelings and everything (chuckle) down in that hold, if someone turned around to say something to you, their breath would knock you down with onions. Mine did the same thing.

Marcello: How long were you on this ship altogether?

Owen: Well, really, I don't know. We left from there and went to Singapore, and then we unloaded there. The Japs had put us on barges--taken us off the ship and put us on the barge--and then taken us and unloaded us there, and we went to the English garrison there on Singapore and stayed there a few days--about a week.

Marcello: And it was called Changi?

Owen: Changi.

Marcello: And you were only there for about a week.

Owen: We were there. . . not over two weeks were we there.

Marcello: Well, that was unusual, then, because the rest of the troops stayed there much longer than that.

Owen: Yes, they stayed there much longer. Then they loaded us. . . they give us. . .

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

Owen: Oh, we didn't do nothing but lay around and haul supplies. You know, we'd go get supplies over there. The English had

these cars that they'd taken all the beds and everything off of it, and it still had the brakes and running gear. . . well, you know, the running gear and the frame and everything. What they'd do . . . they'd push them uphill and then let them coast downhill, see, with the driver. And you wasn't supposed to ride these cars; you was supposed to walk, then, see. Then when you got down to the bottom of the hill, you was supposed to push them back on up the hill. So we'd jump on and ride down. We couldn't see walking when we could ride. We'd jump on and ride. They tried to stop doing that--the English officers--because the Japs didn't do nothing there in Changi. The English run that. They wanted you to salute and everything.

Marcello: What sort of relationship developed between the English and the Americans here at Changi?

Owen: Well, in our group, they told us we had to salute. We'd bring our hand up and maybe scratch our head, and the officers would salute us, see, and we'd scratch our head, and we wouldn't salute them, or we'd bring our hand up and thumb them. . . with the thumb. Then we'd maybe reach back and scratch our neck, and they'd think we was going to salute them, and they got mad about that. When we got ready to leave there, they told us--I never did know it; I never had read it--but the Scotsmen there played the bagpipes when we left there for us,

see. They said that's an honor to get them to play the bagpipes for you, you know. Because we gave the English a hard time.

Marcello: What sort of supplies were you hauling here at Changi?

Owen: Oh, we was hauling vegetables and rice, and they had some mutton. But it was, you know, rather small stuff.

Marcello: Where were you hauling these things from?

Owen: The warehouse there where they had all that stuff. They had one warehouse there, and they'd haul this stuff out to these different, you know, barracks where people--POW's--were living.

Marcello: Now they had their own garden there at Changi, didn't they?

Owen: Yes. Well, I don't know because we wasn't there very long, but the other guys told us they did. The officers had their chickens, and they had this and that, and they had their own eggs until this last group of Americans came through there. They'd go over there at night and steal their chickens (chuckle). I think that last bunch like to stole them blind.

Marcello: Okay, so where did you go from Changi?

Owen: We went from Changi to Rangoon.

Marcello: How did you get from Changi to Rangoon?

Owen: On a boat.

Marcello: You might describe what this trip was like.

Owen: It was just about like the other, only they wouldn't let you up on deck near as much. I mean, it was just. . . they wouldn't

let. . . the other time, where maybe they'd let six or eight up on deck, they now wouldn't let but one or two. Then we left Rangoon and went to Moulmein, Burma. We got in there at night. I guess that's because of tides, and we sat outside of there for a while in the daytime. Then we went in at night. We loaded off onto barges and went into Moulmein Prison.

Marcello: What was it like?

Owen: It was something else. It was more or less hell.

Marcello: You might describe what the prison was like.

Owen: It had a big high wall around it--I'd say about fifteen-foot concrete wall around it--a brick wall or something. But anyways, it was about a foot wide. It had one well for there, and you could draw it dry in thirty minutes with all these prisoners in there. So we went in that night, and after they got us in, they started to turn us loose. We went over there . . . I went over. . . oh, several of us went over there, and old Mark Summers, a Mexican--one particular I know is over there--and a couple more of my buddies, we got in the building where they had leprosy--leprosy guys, you know. The Japs come over and commenced raising Cane. That's when they started kicking and beating us. They wanted to get us out of there because they knew what it was, see. We didn't know, and we was raising Cane and wouldn't get up. We was jabbering, and

they was jabbering to us, and we was cussing them back. So when we went over there at another place, this Mexican couldn't go to sleep, and he got his guitar up and started playing it, and he come over there and this Mexican kicked old Mark Summers in the head. We stayed there. . .I don't know how long we stayed there before we went on up to the railroad.

Marcello: Was it a matter of days or weeks?

Owen: No, it was just days. Then we got on a train and went on up to the base camp there in the jungle.

Marcello: Was this Thanbyuzayat?

Owen: Thanbyuzayat, yes.

Marcello: Okay, what happened when you got to Thanbyuzayat? First of all, let's back up. What sort of a train trip was it from Moulmein to Thanbyuzayat?

Owen: It was a short trip to Thanbyuzayat, and we got there and they unloaded us off and put us on the parade field, and the old Jap general got up and made a speech and said we was going to build that railroad if he had to kill everyone of us, and they was going to put that railroad through. They had a lot of POW's, and if it killed all of us, he'd just bring some more in until he got that railroad finished. We stayed there that night, and then we marched that next day out to 40 Kilometers.

Marcello: Was this the 40 Kilo Camp?

Owen: 40 Kilo Camp.

Marcello: In other words, you went beyond the 18 Kilo Camp.

Owen: Yes. We went to 40 Kilo Camp, and we went to work there.

Marcello: Okay, describe what the 40 Kilo Camp looked like from a physical standpoint.

Owen: Well, it was just a long building made out of bamboo, and it had, oh, a roof on it made out of the leaves--stuff off the trees. It had a bamboo floor in it about knee-high up off the floor--bamboo poles. They called it a floor. They had a . . . oh, they had a gable roof on it--this building--and it had on one side here back from the edge about three or four foot --or maybe some of them five foot, some of them eight foot--they had a walkway, and then they had this bamboo floor over here made out of bamboo poles. Some of them may be, oh, an inch in diameter and some of them three inches in diameter and some of them a half-inch in diameter, and they was laced together--this bamboo slits and stuff that they'd, you know, slit off of bamboo poles and tie them together.

Marcello: Now was there just one barracks?

Owen: No, it was several. But we had one barracks--the Americans did. We'd get our supplies over there at the kitchen--rice. So the next day they took us on a railroad and laid us off a meter of dirt per man. So we'd worked that day carrying this

dirt up on the railroad, and they had this pole across our shoulders--two baskets on each--with a basket on each end. These baskets, if you walk an ordinary walk, both of them goes down at one time. So the next day--the second day on the railroad--I had a big old knot about the size of a golf-ball up on my shoulder. I told one of the boys I'd always lived on a farm all my life up at Paris, and I said, "I'll tell you one thing--I worked at many a mule with sore shoulders, but I'll never work another one if I ever get back to Texas!" He said, "Why?" I said, "I know how that mule felt now!"

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit more about these work details. So you were building this railroad. What sort of specific work were you doing in the building of this railroad here at the 40 Kilo Camp?

Owen: We was digging dirt up and putting it in these baskets. We had so many. . . we had maybe four or five men digging dirt and shoveling it into these baskets, and then the guys would take it up on the railroad right away and dump it. That's the way they was getting their dirt moved.

Marcello: Now this was all pick-and-shovel work, was it not?

Owen: Yes, it was all pick-and-shovel work. Then the natives--I was telling you a minute ago about these baskets going down together--the natives showed us out there the second day--three

or four of us--how to do it. We kind of had a little trot-- just kind of jig-trot along like the natives would do--and one basket would be going up and the other coming down like this, see (gesture). You didn't have all that weight on your shoulders at the same time. You had about half the weight, really, on your shoulders.

Marcello: Let's just back up here a minute now. When would a typical workday begin here at 40 Kilo Camp?

Owen: Well, you worked until you moved your dirt. If it got dark, then they would let you quit.

Marcello: Well, now you mentioned that when you first started, you were moving one cubic meter of dirt per man.

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: Now most of you moved that amount of work in a fairly short amount of time, did you not?

Owen: Not right off, but we got to where we could move it.

Marcello: Then what did they do?

Owen: Then they increased our load--not at that camp--but they got to where they increased it up to a meter and a half.

Marcello: And they even went beyond that, did they not?

Owen: Yes. After we went into this other camp, they moved it up to fifty meters per twenty men. That's two and a half meters per man that we had to move.

Marcello: Okay, now when would the workday begin?

Owen: Oh, it would begin, you know, after sunup when they could line you up and count you off and see if everybody was able to go out and work. Then they'd bring your food out. The first few days, we'd go over there in the camp because the camp wasn't very far, and we'd go in and eat our rice and what we'd get in vegetables. They had meat along about then, too --cows--and we'd go in and eat and then come back out and work. They didn't work us too long hours in that 40 Kilo Camp, but later on down in that other camps, they got to where they'd work you longer hours.

Marcello: Okay, now exactly what sort of work were you doing in this area? You mentioned that you were moving the dirt, but can you be more specific? Were you making cuts and fills or roadbeds? What were you making here?

Owen: Well, we were making roadbeds there.

Marcello: In other words, you were still not really in the jungle yet at 40 Kilo.

Owen: Well, we was in the jungles, but we was gone out farther where it was more or less kind of a flat area--40 Kilo was. It wasn't too many hills and everything. We wasn't doing no cutting. Of course, we moved back towards Thanbyuzayat, and that's where we did the big cutting through there. But we

were making roadbeds, and we was making some fills, you know, where you'd go to cross a little old swag there--a little old draw. We was filling that in and stuff like that, but it wasn't no really big cuts or nothing.

Marcello: Now who was supervising these work details?

Owen: Well, then Lieutenant Stensland and Jimmy Lattimore, who was a lieutenant, and Dave Heiner. We had three lieutenants.

Marcello: I assume that guards would accompany you on these work details.

Owen: Yes. We had Korean guards.

Marcello: Describe what they were like.

Owen: Well, the Korean guards. . . a lot of them was small like the Japs, but a lot of them was tall. A lot of them was . . .we had one that we called him "Liver Lips," and he was like a nigger here and had big old thick lips. That's the reason we called him "Liver Lips." Then we had one they called the "Little Brown Bomber." He was light-complected like the Japs, and he was a bomber, too.

Marcello: Describe what the "Brown Bomber" was like.

Owen: Well, he'd fly off the handle, and the closest one to him, that's the one he'd start whipping, beating, and bashing around and stuff like that.

Marcello: When would most of these beatings take place--when you were back in camp or when you were out on the railroad?

Owen: Most of the time when we was out working. If we was going to work and coming in from work or out on the work and, you know, something come up and you wasn't doing things like they thought you should, well, they'd start beating on you. Of course, we had Jap engineers out there overseeing the work-- you know, the regular Japs. Then in our camps--we didn't know it then--but generally we had a lieutenant who had maybe gone berserk up on the front lines--gone off his rocker up on the front lines--and they'd bring him back and put him in charge of these camps. They'd have maybe a sergeant or two and a corporal and four or five privates over all these maybe twenty or thirty Koreans.

Marcello: In other words, you were not getting the cream of the Japanese Army running these camps.

Owen: No. See, like I was telling you awhile ago, the Japanese . . . if the lieutenant wanted to, he could whip a sergeant and the sergeant could whip a corporal and the corporal could whip a private. Then the private would whip the Korean, and there since wasn't nothing left, that Korean would whip a POW. So he was going to whip somebody, you can guarantee on that.

Marcello: Now again, what form would the physical punishment take? What would they do?

Owen: While they was in camps there--not in this 40 Kilo Camp but the next camp we went to--they'd . . . the Japs was awful funny. They're scared of fire. They'd make you . . . in one camp they had these little sweetened cream cans, and they'd make you put water in them--or some kind of can--make you put water in them or a piece of bamboo cut off and put water in it if you wanted to smoke. Like if it was in the camp, they had two men to a cup for smoking. If they come along and found three men out there smoking, well, they'd stand up and make you slap one another.

I didn't smoke then and I was sitting out there out behind these buildings. We finally got to where we'd take the back off of these buildings. Then we'd build us a fire and stuff and boil our water and ever what we could steal and cook out there and stuff like that. So we was sitting out there one night with these two guys smoking--I wasn't smoking and didn't smoke--and the Jap came along, and he said I was smoking. So he just goes in there in the barracks and drags a guy out for me to slap. These other two guys are having to slap one another. Now I wouldn't slap . . . it was old "Red" Reichle, and I wouldn't slap "Red" and "Red" wouldn't slap me. So "Red" says, "John, he's gonna whip us!" I said, "I ain't gonna slap you!" So he proceeded to show us how to slap, and

before it was over with, "Red" and I was slapping one another. But he'd done whipped the hell (chuckle) out of both of us.

Marcello: What'd he do to you?

Owen: Oh, he slapped us and beat us with a rifle butt and everything and hit us across the head with his rifle barrel. So Reichle says, "John, get up there! I'm gonna slap you!" So we finally learned how to slap. You wouldn't stand with your neck stiff; you stand up and face ever who's slapping you. On each slap you let your head turn with the slap, and it would pop, see, and he'd think you was really getting slapped. But you wasn't getting slapped like if you'd hold that neck straight--you know, stiff. They'd make you slap one another fifteen minutes--stand there and time you with a watch--or ten minutes or ever what they wanted to. I mean, you slapped, too. If you didn't slap, he'd show you how.

Marcello: Now where did you go from the 40 Kilo Camp?

Owen: We went back to 25 Kilo.

Marcello: How come they sent you back rather than forward?

Owen: I don't know. They had some big cuts down there and had to go across a kind of a . . . oh, it wasn't a big river, but they had some about thirty-foot cuts down there. They had to make thirty or forty-foot cuts down there.

Marcello: Now by this time had the rest of the people caught up with you?

Owen: No, we was back in 25 Kilo working when the rest of the bunch. . . we had been back there awhile before the other bunch. . . we heard that they was in Thanbyuzayat. In this 25 Kilo Camp, we had a barrier. . .it was kind of a valley or slope, and the road went down through this valley. It come through our camp--the main road--just an old dirt road, and ox carts and trucks could use it--Japanese trucks. They had the guardhouse down there, and they had the hospital over on the left side going out, and we was over on the right side. They had two kitchens. They had one kitchen for the hospital and the English over on that side, and then they had a kitchen over on the other side for the Americans and Australians on that side of the camp. That's where a lot of our, you know, bashing and smoking took place. At this one particular time, I had to slap this old boy. . . that's the first time I ever got slapped by another POW, was there.

Marcello: Okay, now I guess we could talk about all of these various kilo camps that you were in, but let's approach it from this angle. In May of 1943, the so-called "Speedo" campaign began. Where were you at that particular time?

Owen: Well, the reason I know where I was at. . . we was. . . "Speedo" really . . . the "Speedo" deal started back there at 25 Kilo. That's when they had started us on two meters of dirt a day.

Lieutenant Stensland was the engineer--that was what he majored in--engineering--there at the 25 Kilo. He told this Jap that if he'd let him run it that he could get the work done quicker, faster, and everything. So the Japs. . . they had come out there, and this Jap lieutenant that was in charge--this engineer--they'd come out there to inspect this railroad, and they just beat the devil out of him because he hadn't gone farther than what he had. So Lieutenant Stensland showed him how he could do it, and it was really easier on us. Lieutenant Stensland moved those stakes back, too. He'd go out there and measure it off himself, see. We got an old four-wheel dolly out there, and we got some track. We filled this dolly up, see. . . and we'd still carry dirt, too, but we had this one four-wheel dolly, and we'd run it off down there and go on across this. . . taking out this cut and take it down and dumping it down in this creek.

We was having to drive piling, too--kind of like they did in the picture "The Bridge on the River Kwai." So the lieutenant told him to put some men up in that schaffold--two or three men up in there. He put one up about a third of the way and one about half and one nearly at the top. These saplings was all different sizes, and they had to go on up and wire them together with wire. You'd take a kind of a

spike with a hook on it, and you'd fold this wire, see. When these wires broke, well, you'd wrap it around there and twist it right quick, see, so that scaffold wouldn't start breaking and falling down. That would save time in driving those pilings. Really and truly, if you had two men up there, one didn't have to do too much work, you know--just watching that business.

You know, I was working on that and this dolly. . . the way you'd stop this dolly--you'd be going downhill, and you had a big long pole under the front axle up there. It's kind of. . . well, like these little old cars on the railroad that the workmen crew use--the little round wheels. You'd take this pole and put it under the front and bring it back in. When you got ready to stop it, you'd press it down on that wheel, and that would slow it down. You wouldn't let it get too fast. Then you'd take it down there and you had a man down there to help you dump it. Then you had two guys, and these two guys had to push it back up the railroad track. Then you had them carrying. . . well, we quit our baskets. He told them to get us some. They'd take our tow-sack and put a rock in each corner and wire a wire in around that rock, and then you would run a pole through those wires and put a man on each end of that pole, see, and you'd carry a lot more dirt than you can in four baskets, see. Them little old baskets

wasn't very big. That way we got to moving more dirt and wouldn't have to make near so many trips.

Marcello: I understand the pile driving was a rather primitive affair, also.

Owen: Yes. I did pretty good on it. That's where I got my second beating. This guy that I was telling you about awhile ago-- Armstrong, who said his feet told him to go and his head told him to stay there--him and a guy named Jackie Clark and myself was up in this derrick. So this regular Jap engineer was in charge of pile driving. You couldn't see away from there about thirty or forty feet unless you tromped that brush and weeds and stuff down. We looked out there and there he was out there playing with himself. We threw a spike out there and hollered, "We see you! We tell shoko!" So about three weeks around there, he brought us rice and fish heads and everything out there. We eat real good. So one day (chuckle) he got mad at us, and he got us down there and just whipped the hell out of all three of us. I mean, he really give a good working over (chuckle), because we asked for it. Because every time we'd see him--"We tell shoko if you don't give us some chow-chow!"

Marcello: What is "shoko?"

Owen: That's an officer.

Marcello: I see.

- Owen: So he finally got tired of giving us all his chow (chuckle), so he whipped the devil out of us.
- Marcello: Okay, now during the building of this railroad, were you per-chance ever in the 100 Kilo Camp?
- Owen: No, we went from the 25 Kilo down to the 18 Kilo about the first of May. That's the reason I said while ago, we went back to the 18 Kilo, where these last bunch of Americans had moved up on ahead. We went back there and what we were doing was unloading these railroad cars and putting them on these diesel trucks and loading them on there--railroad crossties and everything like that.
- Marcello: So your actual work on the railroad itself was almost finished by this time, that is, so far as digging and that sort of thing?
- Owen: No. No, not finished, but for that period of time. We went back and was loading that. One reason I know it was May was because it was my birthday and old "Red" Reichle's birthday, and he was working the kitchen. We got some. . . I stole some dried shark meat out on the working detail out where they was loading it, and I stole some eggs and stuff. I had a five-gallon can of peanut oil that I'd stole. So he was at the kitchen, and we went over there. . . Lieutenant Lattimore was in charge of the kitchen then--an American. We had our own kitchen. It was my birthday on May 10th, and his was May 15th. We cooked this shark

up. . . you had to boil it first, and then you cooked this shark in this peanut oil and fried some rice and everything. After you got this rice fried, we had five eggs, and we broke two of them, and the lieutenant aimed to eat with us so we broke this third one, and it was rotten. We just kept stirring them. We went to the fourth one, and it was good; we broke the fifth one and it was rotten. The lieutenant said (chuckle), "I don't think I want anything to eat." Old "Red" and I eat them eggs and rice and shark meat. We just laughed about it.

Marcello: Now how long were you at this camp altogether?

Owen: We was there about a month. Then we moved on up to the 45 Kilo --went back past 40 Kilo up to 45 Kilo. Then we went back to ' working on the railroad again moving dirt.

Then we went from there to the. . . some of them called it the 60 Kilo, and I called it. . . some of them called it the 62 Kilo. That's where we went. . . the Americans was on up on. . . the other Americans--Colonel Tharp's bunch--was on up at 80 Kilo, I think, or 100 Kilo, on up ahead of us. The rainy season started, so the trucks couldn't get through.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about your activities here at the 62 Kilo Camp --60 or 62 Kilo Camp--where you went back to working on the railroad again. Now what sort of work were you doing here at the 60 or 62 Kilo Camp?

Owen: Well, we was doing some ballast work driving crossties, you know, laying crossties and stuff like that. You know, well, what he'd do is we'd take four men and put two across from one another, and the Jap would stand in the middle between the railroads. He'd put a man over here on the outside driving spikes and a man on the inside facing one of them, see, and the same way on the other side. Then they had two men that'd go along and start your hole with a brace-and-bit and bored about a quarter of an inch. Then you'd tap that spike, and then you had to drive it in in three licks. If you didn't, the Jap standing there between you had a broken sledge hammer handle, and he'd hit you across the back or the head or anywhere he wanted to.

Marcello: Were you driving spikes?

Owen: Driving spikes. Then after that I went to raising crossties up and putting the rock and ballast and stuff under it. Then about the time the rainy season started and washed the bridge out, and the diesels--trucks--that were bringing the rails and supplies and stuff up, couldn't get through. Then we had to make a swinging bridge, and then we had to carry this stuff from those trucks back in there. Then we'd have to carry this across this swinging bridge and load it on to other trucks across the. . . and we was working night and day both. We had a crew working days and a crew working nights.

Marcello: In other words, they were working the prisoners for all they were worth here at this particular camp.

Owen: Yes. Yes.

Marcello: We're in the midst of the "Speedo" campaign now.

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, describe what it was like working in the monsoon season.

Owen: Well, you just stayed wet all the time. And this is where I'm getting back to these guys as large as I am. They'd have two guys carrying a crosstie, and they'd make me carry one by myself. So I always worked around this Armstrong and these other guys, and we was always "cutting up" and going on with one another.

So we was going across this swinging bridge, and a Jap. . . and this water was going over these rocks and stuff underneath, and it wasn't very deep there. I was in the middle of that swinging bridge, and it wasn't but about four foot wide--this bridge. So I looked back one night, and this Jap. . . he wasn't in this camp. He was, you know, going to ride the train up and going on up to another camp. He'd holler, "Speedo! Speedo! Speedo!" The train came and he got up too close to me, and so I just took this crosstie and I looked back, and he come around me and I hit him up alongside of the head, and he went off in that water. I don't know whether he ever got out or . . . I imagine it killed him. But we never did hear no more out of him.

Of course, if it'd been one of our guards, you know, then we'd probably heard something from it. But we didn't, because nobody . . . he was riding going on up farther into another camp.

Marcello: Now for you personally, how long would a workday last here at this camp?

Owen: Well, the workday would last until the other crew came out. We'd work ten or twelve hours. That's the way it got back in 25 Kilo. They'd measure us off fifty meters of dirt for twenty men, and you each stayed out there until you moved it. If you didn't move it that day and that night, then the next morning they'd measure off fifty more. They'd just disregard what you lacked and measure you off fifty more, and you'd start to work then.

Marcello: Now at this particular camp, however, were you mainly driving spikes?

Owen: Well, I was until the rainy season started. Then they had to take us off and put us back to carrying this stuff across the bridge. They even brought cattle up there--drive them up--and we'd have to take them across that bridge. The Japs would want the Americans to do it. So we was, you know, pulling and pushing that old cow across there. So this Korean guard decided that he'd show me how to do it. When he did, he got up against that cow, and, boy, she just messed all over him. Boy, he just beat the living devil out of me (chuckle) because me and old Armstrong laughed at him. It wasn't very funny to him.

Marcello: Now what was the food like here at this particular camp?

Owen: It was just more or less rice. We had some stuff--chunks. . . oh, it kind of looked like melons. We called it melon. You'd just peel it just like, oh, after you'd peel a watermelon and get all your red out of it and get down to the kind of white-looking stuff.

Then we had what you could steal. The Japs was very stupid. There was this one particular place where this Jap was going on up the line. He had a big old basket--looked like about a two-bushel basket--and he had eggs in it. What he'd do. . .they'd put a layer of eggs and then put this husk off of rice around it to keep them from breaking, and then he'd put in some more eggs. When he got up there--it was at night--he would. . . I told these two brothers I was bunking with. . .in other words, if I got something they got it. Their names were Clifford and Onis Brimhall. I told Onis, "Come on up here." We went up there, and this Jap was standing up watching the POW's work, see. He turned around and looked. . . on top of this basket he had three eggs laying up there, and he turned around to see if those three eggs was there, and he'd then turn and watch the POW's. When he turned around to watch them, just as quick as he turned his head, I'd get the egg and I'd hand it to Onis. I got about ten or twelve eggs there that night that way--just anything you could steal.

Then while carrying this stuff across the railroad, we had one Jap there one night. . . we was wet and sleepy and we'd worked all that afternoon and all that night, and about three or four o'clock in the morning and this Jap got to hollering and beating an old boy up there. He come back and hollered at me and old Armstrong and "Corky" Clay. They had these crossties on these dollies. The way you do it--they lay so many--they'd lay on these four-wheel dollies and have another one down here (gesture) and they'd have two inside rails. They'd hook them both together--these dollies, see. On one back here (gesture) they'd put half enough crossties and one the other they'd put another half to lay their amount of rails that they had on these two dollies. He was standing up there, and I reached down there. . . and they had enough spikes in baskets to drive all them crossties down. I picked up a spike and throwed it at that Jap. When it went by his head it was real "whish," like that, and he quieted down then. Old "Corky" Clay said, "I guess that shut him up!" He said, "You're crazy to throw that at him!" I said, "I don't care. I'm at the point where I just don't care!"

Marcello: Well, how were you supplementing your food here? In other words, were you beginning to eat dogs and cats and things of that nature?

Owen: Dogs, cats--anything. If you'd catch a dog and skin him, you could sell him for thirty-five dollars, or alive for twenty-five

dollars. A can of peanut oil . . . canteen cupful of peanut oil would sell for fifteen dollars, and a canteen would sell for twenty-five dollars.

Marcello: Now you say these things would sell for these amounts of money. Who were you selling them to, and who had the money to pay for them?

Owen: Well, see, we had a working party, and guys would sell stuff to natives and stuff and other POW's and Englishmen and anybody who wanted to buy it. That's why I say. . . nearly all the Americans, we buddied. Maybe four or five people would buddy together, or three people, like me and the Brimhall's.

Marcello: But where would you get the money to pay for these things?

Owen: Well, see, they paid you five cents a day--five and ten cents a day--and if you was a sergeant, they'd pay you fifteen, I think it was. I think the officers got a quarter a day of that old invasion money, and it wasn't any good or anything.

Marcello: Did you ever have very many opportunities to trade with the natives?

Owen: Yes, in the jungles you did. You just would go out in the jungles and you would see one out there. People would go out in the jungles and. . . somebody would go out through the jungles--slip off--and they didn't care if you went out and traded with the natives. They couldn't keep you from it because you could get out there and they couldn't find you. Then we'd trade with them.

Like I say, I had peanut oil because I'd stole me two five-gallon cans up and down the railroad, and I had peanut oil all the time.

Marcello: Did the supply trucks ever have much trouble coming up to this camp with the monsoons having started and everything?

Owen: Well, the POW's working on the railroad was worked at keeping the rocks under the crossties and rails--ballast, we call it. They was keeping that up down below and also on the other side. There at one particular time, we had one good meal where this river kind of made a "U." We had to cross it in one place there. We was kind of in this "U," and across this river there the natives had a couple of ox carts. They hobbled the oxen, and they was grazing out there. That night we went over there and got their oxen and killed them. Before daylight, we already had them cooked, ate, and everything--no signs that we'd had a meal--nothing. We went right on and took a meal that morning--a little rice--just like. . . you know, they was cooking rice. . . just like nothing every happened. The natives come over there to the Japs, and the Japs come over there and checked our kitchen and showed them that we was preparing a regular meal just like we always did and everything. We'd already got up about 3:30 or four o'clock that morning and had us a big meal and everything. They'd killed four steers over there because that's not much meat for. . . maybe 2,500 or 3,000 or 4,000 people in the camp, see.

Marcello: I was going to ask you how many people were in this camp here.

Owen: Well, it varied in different camps. Generally, it was about anywhere from--average camp--I'd say about 2,000. Then after they got the bridge back in, we went to work, then, loading. They made that 62 Kilo a headquarters camp. See, you've got your trains coming up there and unloading them trains and then load them back on these dollies, and then we got to loading rails. One night a train came in, and I went over and. . . what I was doing, I was turning the power plant by hand, you know, make lights so you could see. Another boy was supposed to rotate --he'd turn it awhile and I'd turn it awhile. I told him to turn it while I went over there to see what I could steal. I went over there and got me some sugar and different things and some canned stuff. I stole some canned stuff the Japs had in this boxcar. I got that.

So he went over there, and he got caught. They beat the devil out of him and then made him stand at attention over there all night long where we called it the depot--made him stand at attention. Then a Jap come over there and beat me up because he'd gone and made me turn that deal all night by myself. Finally, the guys brought me a kind of little old rope over there, and I tied it around our handle. . . I was tying it. . . trying to tie it. I fixed it where I could put loops, and I stuck my foot in it, and I was turning my foot, see. You'd get tired turning that thing about four or five hours like that.

Marcello: Now how was your weight holding out by the time that you got to the 62 Kilo Camp?

Owen: I was down to about 160 pounds then.

Marcello: So you'd lost almost 100 pounds?

Owen: Yes, I lost a little over 100 pounds.

Marcello: What was the lowest that you weighed?

Owen: That's the lowest. I stayed pretty close to that after. . .

Marcello: What were the sanitary facilities and the bathing facilities like here at the 62 Kilo Camp?

Owen: Well, we could go down to this river and take a bath anytime we wanted to, but the sanitary . . . the latrines and stuff was just the slit trench like we dug in the service, you know, out in the field--when we were out in the field and having a field day or something and just dig a slit trench. They'd be about, oh, three foot across and bamboo poles across there, you know, maybe four or five bamboo poles where you put your foot on it; and then another one over here would be four or five poles, you know, so you could stand on it.

Marcello: How bad were flies here?

Owen: Flies was always bad in all of our camps. They were real bad. They'd generally try to dig those latrines maybe, oh, 100 feet or 150, 200 feet, just according. . . away from the camp, you know.

Marcello: How was your clothing holding out here?

Owen: Well, only thing I had by the time I got to 62 Kilo, I had three G-strings and one pair of britches. I didn't have no shirt or coat or nothing because the Japs, you know. . . those Dutch. . . they had them old green Dutch coats and they got off of Java, see. They was taken off of Java, and they gave some of them clothes. I didn't have no shoes. I think I went two . . . I had it figured out that I went two years, five months, and three days barefooted. My shoes was gone. Then the Japs give some of them some of the old wore-out shoes that fit their little feet. I couldn't get my foot in them.

Marcello: Now by this time, are the troops all suffering from the dietary deficiencies and dysentery and tropical ulcers and things of that nature?

Owen: Yes. The "Fitzsimmons Bunch" didn't suffer as much as the other boys because, like I was saying while ago, we kind of looked after one another to, you know. . . well, it was kind of a buddy team deal. In other words, if one of the Brimhall boys got sick, well, I'd give him. . . if I got anything extra or stole anything, I'd give it to him to kind of get him back up on his feet. He'd do me the same way. We kind of looked after one another. If we all of us got down sick, maybe another buddy deal over here would take care of us. Nights when we'd go out on working parties there

and somebody was sick, well, he boiled water all day, you know, in big old. . . they called them "bully buckets."

The way we'd make our buckets--we'd get a steel drum, and we'd take it and beat it out flat. Then we'd make it round, make it kind of a loop this way and a loop this way (gestures) and put them together and beat them together. We'd take a cold chisel--anything we could steal from the Japs--and kind of prong the bottom piece out to fit on the bottom. Then we'd take it and put it on a rock or a pole or something and beat it around. Then we'd take it and put the bottom together and beat it around this round part, see. Then after we got through doing that, we'd take it and take some rice in it and a little water and boil it and then let it burn in there--just burn--see, and it'd seal up them cracks and stuff. That way. . . we'd make a skillet that way to, you know, fry extra stuff we'd get. They'd give us the rice, and then we'd take that rice and take it and fry it, and it gave it a little bit better taste, really.

Then we'd buy some of these old long dried red peppers from the natives. We'd take those peppers and put them in some peanut oil and fry them, you know, make you kind of a mixture out of them. You take. . . back in those days when you wasn't getting nothing but rice from the Japs, you would take a spoonful of that and put it in a mess kit or hubcap or ever what . . . generally

a mess kit wasn't enough. By then everybody had them a big mess kit made, or hubcap or something or other. You'd put a spoonful of that--nothing but hot peppers and pepper seeds--in a mess kit of that and you'd take that first bite, you'd keep on. . . as long as you was eating your mouth wouldn't burn. When you got through eating, you'd grab that canteen, and you'd take it and just drink a little at a time and cool your mouth off until your mouth. . . because I tell you what--you got that first bite, and it would really. . . it really . . . you wouldn't stop eating.

Marcello: I would assume that food was always on your mind.

Owen: Yes. You would lay there and dream about it and everything and all that. I could see me at home eating fried chicken--my mother cooking me a big meal and everything.

Marcello: Did you ever suffer from tropical ulcers?

Owen: No, I was lucky. I was lucky.

Marcello: What were they like? Describe how you could treat them?

Owen: Well, we were very fortunate--the "Fitzsimmons Bunch." We had a doctor with us that was named. . . well, when we went from Java, we didn't have a doctor. The doctor stayed with the large group, so the "Fitzsimmons Bunch" didn't have a doctor. When we was at the 40 Kilo, our boys commenced getting sick, and we didn't have a doctor, so they. . . the Dutch had a lot of doctors, so they asked for a volunteer doctor to go to the camp and treat the

Americans. So we had one--Dr. Hekking--and he volunteered and we were very lucky. He had practiced over in Java and Sumatra and all over there after he got his doctorate degree. That's where he practiced--over in there. He treated those diseases and tropical ulcers and everything. He was the only one I know of and I heard that cured anybody that had smallpox. The way he did that--he put them under a mosquito bar and he'd let these maggots eat this flesh.

Marcello: You mean not smallpox but tropical ulcers.

Owen: No, smallpox--these sores.

Marcello: He used maggots for those?

Owen: Yes, he let them eat that dead flesh, and then he'd bathe them in warm, salty water. Then you'd hear them screaming and hollering when they put that salty water in them sores and stuff.

Then up in the jungles farther--these tropical ulcers--you'd get a little old scratch or something on your leg. . . it looked like a little old place about like your thumbnail--a sore. He'd get like a little teaspoon; he had a spoon like that. He'd sharpen it real sharp--had it just razor-sharp--and they'd take a, you know, stone and sharpen it real good, and he'd start digging down in there. I laid across quite a few of the guys and tried to hold them down, and he'd dig all that dead flesh out of there. After you'd get down in there, it'd be as big around as a silver dollar or maybe as big around as an apple underneath there--the dead flesh down there. He'd go down and make a big, large cut maybe

plumb into the bone. Then he'd take maybe. . . like John Owen . . . and he'd put three maggots in there, see, if I'd had one . . . or four maggots, just according to how big it was. He'd wrap it up then, see, with some material. Generally, we got it off of a mosquito bar--bottom of a mosquito bars. He'd wrap that up, and he'd leave them in there, say, two or three days, one day or what he thought. Then he'd have you come back, and he'd fish around there until he got all them maggots out of there. Then he'd wash it out and clean it all up and everything. Then he'd pack it full of tea leaves that he got over at the kitchen that they'd already used--used tea leaves. He'd pack the tea in there, see. Then he'd wrap it back up, and he'd tell you to just pour warm tea over it. We got all the tea we wanted, you know, there. He'd tell you to just pour that warm tea over it and keep it soaked, you know, and everything. He saved many a guy.

Marcello: You mentioned smallpox awhile ago. Was there a very serious outbreak of smallpox?

Owen: No, not in our camp. I remember. . . I think we had about two or three, and those was Englishmen. That's when we left our doctor back behind, and he finally came on back up with us later on. He was. . . he more or less doctored Americans, but he would doctor the other people, too. The English and Australian doctors and the Dutch doctors. . . what Dutch doctors there were. . . they

had a few Dutch doctors in our camp we was in, but he was the "ramrod" of the whole thing because he knew more about tropical disease and everything.

Marcello: What remedies did they have for dysentery?

Owen: Just let it run its course. They didn't have nothing. We didn't have no medicine. The only thing we'd get now and then in the form of medicine is quinine, and it was liquid. Now and then we'd steal some sulfanilamide pills. When we'd do that, well, everybody tried to keep those for theirself. Me and a Chinaman--Eddie Fung--stole some. We gave Dr. Hekking some of them. We stole some up farther on the line about the first of, oh, '43. We stole a bunch of quinine pills--sugar-coated quinine pills--and some vitamins, the doctor said.

Marcello: Now I guess everybody had malaria.

Owen: Yes. See, you'd go out and have mamaria, and as long as you're shaking and everything, they'd let you lay down out there. But whenever you got through shaking that chill out, well, you had to go back to work.

Marcello: Now when you were here at the 62 Kilo Camp, is this where the attrition rate really picked up? Is this where you started losing people?

Owen: Yes. In our camp, we didn't lose. . . most of our boys that we lost in our camp is the guys on the first part of the railroad

that went back to Thanbyuzayat. They got well down there, and then they hung around there and got jobs down there. They got them a job down there maybe working in the kitchen or maybe. . . then whenever they come back to us, maybe we was moving two and a half meters of dirt per man, and where we gradually come up on two and a half meters--from a meter to two and a half meters--well, we was used to it. When that old boy who come back out there and had to go work in that rainy season and everything and wasn't used to it, then that's where they started dying.

Marcello: Did you ever see people simply give up and die?

Owen: Yes. Yes.

Marcello: Describe what this would be like. How could you tell when somebody had lost the will to live?

Owen: Well, you'd bring them rice and, you know, bring them something to eat, which was rice or what they had--melons--and they wouldn't eat. They'd take it and pour it down between their bamboo slats underneath the floor. First thing you know, there'd be a pile of rice under there, oh, a foot high where they'd poured that food, and they wasn't eating. They'd just give up.

Marcello: Was there anything you could do for these people to try and rally them?

Owen: Oh, just razz them and tell them to go on. . . maybe at the time find one who was married and tell them you'd go back home and live

with his wife and help her spend that \$10,000 and all that stuff and just try to make him mad, you know, to get him irritated and make him mad where he'd go back to eating, you know--start eating again--and stuff like that.

Marcello: Up until this time, that is, by the time that you get to the 62 Kilo Camp, were you able to receive any news from the outside world? Or were you able to send any cards or anything?

Owen: Well, I think I sent three cards from the jungle. That's all I sent--three cards.

Marcello: What were those cards like that you were able to send out?

Owen: Well, "I am well," "I am sick," "I am in the hospital," and that's it.

Marcello: And, of course, if you didn't say, "I am well," the card probably didn't get out.

Owen: Well, naturally, you would send that card, "I am well, " because if you didn't, your mother would worry.

Marcello: Did you ever receive any mail?

Owen: Not through the jungles. I received some just right after they dropped the bomb. Then we started getting mail--letters and stuff.

Marcello: Okay, when did you finally get off that railroad work?

Owen: Well, we went from the 60 to 80 Kilo and then we went from 80 Kilo to 100 Kilo. Some of them called it 112 Kilo, and some of them called it 114 Kilo.

Marcello: They were pretty bad camps, too, weren't they?

Owen: Yes, and they was big camps. This one particular camp. . . you come down the railroad, and over on the left was the camp where they had cholera. One camp. . . I don't know whether it was this camp or one on back a little farther where they said that there was a pit out there where they burned them. They couldn't bury them fast enough and said there was 800 that died in one camp and 600 in another.

Marcello: These were mostly all British, weren't they?

Owen: Yes. In one camp it was mostly all Scottish. We was on the left. . . we was on the right off down about 200 yards off the railroad down there in the trees--jungle.

That's where I got my beating from old "Liver Lips." I went up. . . me and two more boys was up there working. . . well, we had a working party, but I was working around on the side of the barracks, and these two other old boys were working. . one of them was working inside. I reached through the wall--the bamboo there--and stole three cans of canned goods, and they stole some curry powder. So we went to eat at the camp, and they came down there while we was down there. Me and the two Brimhall's and another old boy there that had dysentery ate this canned goods up. I throwed them in the latrine out there. One of them wasn't plumb under; you could see it.

So they come in there and wanted to know who did it and started beating on them, and I told them I did. No, I told them. . . they knew I was working there. And then Buddy Maher . . . Buddy didn't know nothing about it. So they had taken us up there and they made us stay up there at attention all afternoon nearly and beat on us and busted his eardrum. I didn't know where the curry powder was, so I couldn't tell them, "Well, we got it all." So that afternoon they told me to come back that night, so I went in and talked to these two boys that got the curry powder. I said, "They told me if I didn't get that curry powder and bring it back, that they was going to take me into the Kempeis (secret police) the next morning." And I said, "Where is it?" I told them that if they'd come up with it that they wouldn't do nothing. I'd already been punished for it. So they said they didn't want to go up there.

So they told me where it was, and I went up there and told them that I got it. I went out there and got the curry powder where they had it hid, and Lieutenant Lattimore was with me. So they started beating on me because I lied. They wanted to know about Buddy, and I told them he didn't know nothing about it, so they let him go. Old "Liver Lips" . . . they wasn't satisfied. When they started beating you in along about those days until they beat you unconscious, then they'd kick you in

the head and mouth and groin or anywhere, see. The lieutenant told me, he said, "Fall!" Before they got me plumb down, I fell down and covered my head up and fell on my stomach. That's when they started kicking, and he beat me about thirty minutes with a rifle butt.

Marcello: How badly were you injured?

Owen: I had a tail bone injured, and I've got a soft spot on the top of my head. The next day they said they'd let me know whether they was going to take me to the Kempei--that's down at Thanbyu-zayat.

Marcello: Now the Kempei were the secret police, right?

Owen: Yes. Yes. So they wanted somebody to help take the food out the next morning, so I helped Lieutenant Lattimore. . . I couldn't see because they beat me up in the forehead and everything.

Marcello: Your eyes were virtually closed?

Owen: Yes. Lieutenant Lattimore walked in front, and I walked behind and helped him carry the chow out to the guys working on the railroad. He just went back up there with me, and they told me, well, they weren't going to turn me over to the Kempei. If they'd caught me with anymore after that, they'd kill me--shoot me.

Then right after that, well, then that's when we went. . . that's where I stole that. . . just before then, me and that

Chinaman stole them sulanilamide pills. They had some seaweed . . . looked like seaweed, but it looked like. . . they called it seaweed, but it's real salty--a salty brine--and it looked like kind of spinach. We stole a can of that stuff, and we gave the doctor the majority of that for the hospital, and I think we give him fifty sulfanilamide pills and a bottle of a hundred quinine pills.

Marcello: How long were you laid up as a result of having been beaten here this time by the guard, "Liver Lips?"

Owen: Then I had taken down with the dysentery, then, and malaria fever. Then way back down the line, I'd stole me two tow sacks. What I'd do--I'd cut a hole in the bottom of each tow sack and run me a bamboo pole through there. Then I'd cut a "V" out of the bamboo pole and spread these poles apart. Then I'd get me some wire and wire them up off the bunk. Every once in awhile I'd take them down and air them out to try to get some of the lice out of them, and bugs. That's what I was sleeping on. I had the dysentery so bad that I just pulled the two tow sacks apart, and I just lay and would have a bowel movement right there in bed. Then this place came up on my tailbone, and it had swollen up about the size of a silver dollar and about the size of a . . . oh, I guess about like a . . . bigger than a lemon. . . and it busted. Dr. Hekking wouldn't cut on it or nothing because

he had no anesthetic or nothing. He said it'd be best to let it bust on its own, and then it'd probably heal a lot better. After it busted, he cleaned it up. It wasn't too long after that . . . I was out about twenty days with malaria fever because I had two or three attacks of malaria fever, and then I was having them about every eight days.

Marcello: Who determined whether or not you were sick enough to stay off the work detail?

Owen: Well, the doctor was for a long time there. Then it got to where they'd line us up. . . when they first started there at 25 Kilo, they'd line us up there on the parade field, and they'd decide who would go and who wouldn't go--the Japs would theirself. He tried to talk to them, but they wouldn't listen to him a lot of times. A lot of times if they could hobble out on the railroad and sit down and beat on those rocks and break those rocks, well, they'd let them do that. But you usually worked; they'd get it out of you.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were laid up here for about twenty days. I gather, then, that simply it was a matter of time healing whatever injuries and wounds and so on you had.

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: You just had to wait it out, in other words.

Owen: Right. See, that was about the last camp in Thailand. . . between the Burma and Thailand border.

Marcello: But I gather you were not at the 80 or 100 Kilo Camp too long, were you? Weren't you there. . .

Owen: I wasn't at the 100 Kilo at all. I was at 80 Kilo. But we skipped from 80 Kilo up to this 112 or 114 Kilo. Then after we left there, we went on in to Thailand.

Marcello: How long were you at the 80 Kilo Camp?

Owen: Oh, I just don't have an idea.

Marcello: Was it a matter of weeks or months?

Owen: I'd say we was there at every one of these camps that I was in . . . we was there anywhere. . . at least a month at all of them.

Marcello: Well, ultimately, they had established a hospital camp there at 80 Kilo Camp, hadn't they?

Owen: Yes. I went back to 80 Kilo from 112 Kilo.

Marcello: Now where were you laid up?

Owen: I was laid up at 112 Kilo.

Marcello: Okay.

Owen: But before I went back to the . . . before I was laid up, I went back to 80 Kilo--Robert N. Gregg and I did--and we was taken back for toothaches. I told them I had a toothache, and I had had a toothache now and then and thought I'd go back. So I got back down there, and, shoot, I told them my tooth wasn't hurting me. We was going down there. . . Robert and me in this boxcar . . . we rode the boxcar--train--back down there. We had an

Englishman in there, and he was picking those lice off and mashing them and then eating them. Old "Robert N." said, "What's he doing, 'Big John?'" I said, "Oh, he's just getting his meat ration," (chuckle) and old "Robert N." got sick. Then we got down there, and then I told them that my tooth quit hurting me; it wasn't bothering me; I didn't want to have nothing done to it. So they sent me back. I didn't stay down there but one night.

Marcello: Well, evidently, most people that went down to the 80 Kilo Camp, or who were sent down to the 80 Kilo Camp, weren't expected to live, were they?

Owen: Yes. Unless it was somebody like me and "Robert N." that went down there for a tooth. But nearly all of our boys. . . like I was saying awhile ago, all of our boys that went back to those camps--even back to Thanbyuzayat--didn't come out. They died. Even the other group, too--a lot of them--majority of them--stayed there in Thanbyuzayat or went back.

Marcello: Were you able to hold your own after you had been recuperating for twenty days?

Owen: Well, what helped me so much. . . we had a boy that we called "Smiley" Long in our outfit. After I got beat up and everything, he had a can of sweetened cream that he brought over and gave to me.

Marcello: How did you substitute for toothpaste, toothbrushes, and things of that nature?

Owen: We didn't. We just, you know. . . maybe you'd take you a rag or something or other and put it on your finger and brush your teeth like that (gesture) once in awhile, but we didn't do that everyday. It got to where it was just like 'tomorrow's another day and that's it'--you'd usually have to go out and work. Then after we got up able--I was still awful weak and everything--got up able, we went on into Thailand.

Marcello: At this particular time, do you talk very much about being liberated?

Owen: When?

Marcello: While you're working on the railroad, does talk about liberation ever come up?

Owen: Oh, we'd talk about our family back home and our brothers and sisters and things. Gosh, you'd know just as much about one another--their home and their family--as they did theirselves.

Marcello: But are you talking about the day when you're going to be set free? Does this enter your mind?

Owen: Well, you got to where you just didn't think about it because you just didn't know. Until we got on down in 1944, then we got a radio in our camp then.

Marcello: We'll talk about that probably a little bit later on. Okay, so when do you finally move out of the jungle?

Owen: We moved out of the jungles in January of '43.

Marcello: And where did you go?

Owen: We went to Thailand, and I forget now what camp it was there we went to because I didn't stay there very long--about two or three weeks.

Marcello: Now it wasn't Kanchanaburi, was it?

Owen: No, it's another one over on the . . . there was a big parade field.

Marcello: Tamarkan?

Owen: Yes, Tamarkan. That was it. Because the other big group of Americans was over there at . . .

Marcello: Kanchanaburi?

Owen: Yes, over there by the river--right on the bank of the river. So we stayed there about three or four weeks.

Marcello: What did you do during that period?

Owen: We'd go over to the river, and we'd go get supplies. I worked there in the camp as a MP. They had a big high fence there--two big high fences--and they had a ditch down through it with water in it. I worked there to keep people from throwing stuff. . . I was supposed to be keeping POW's from throwing stuff from one camp to the other--notes and stuff, see. Then after that, well, I went . . . they asked . . . they came down there and, "This and this and this one's going. Get your stuff ready." So the next day we went over to the camp over there on the river.

Marcello: Over to Kanchanburi?

Owen: Yes, Kanchanaburi. And we got with a bunch over there. There was 190--something of us and Captain Fowler, and we went to Saigon. We didn't know where we was going.

Marcello: Now when was it that you went to Saigon?

Owen: It was in . . . if I'm not mistaken, in February.

Marcello: Of 1944?

Owen: Yes, '44. It was '44. We went out of the jungles in January of '44 instead of '43. I said '43 while ago. We went out in '44. We went to these camps and stayed there about three or four weeks.

Marcello: How did they identify your group? Did your group have a particular identification?

Owen: They had little old bamboo--little old pieces of wood--that had Japanese wrote on it and everything. They had our number--our branch--like Branch 3 and Branch 5. Tharp's bunch was Branch 5; Fitzsimmons' group--the one we was in--was Branch 3. There through the jungles there, they wouldn't even let us talk to them guys that came by. We'd see some of them, and they wouldn't even let us talk to them.

Marcello: Okay, so you only stayed at Tamarkan for a couple of weeks. Was this mainly rest and recuperation?

Owen: Yes. I don't know what it was, but we stayed there about three weeks.

Marcello: Okay, and then you went up to Kanchanaburi.

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: How long were you there?

Owen: We stayed there two nights.

Marcello: I see. And then you were shipped to Saigon.

Owen: We grouped with some of those boys. They put us in the camp with this Branch 5 bunch because Branch 3 was still over here where we was at--where we left from. They put us in there with Branch 5. Captain Fowler then. . . they grouped us up--the 190--something--and Captain Fowler had taken charge. They loaded us in some railroad boxcars--little old boxcars about twenty-five foot long. They put fifty men and three Japs in that boxcar. The Japs had to have enough room to lay down. We had another one of them deals where we had our stuff hanging up. You could all sit down, but nobody could lay down. We had to stand up. They'd stop and feed us, and then we'd get right back on and take off again.

Marcello: What sort of gear were you carrying at this time?

Owen: Well, I was carrying, like I say, my skillet and a bucket I'd made to boil my water and stuff in and my. . . I still had my shelter half and one blanket and a pair of shorts--G-strings--and my ditty bag. That's all I had.

Marcello: Had you pretty well recuperated from your injuries by this time?

Owen: Yes. By this time one of the Brimhall's was working in the Jap kitchen over there on this first camp we went to after we come out of Thailand, and he brought me some stuff out of the Jap kitchen for me to eat and everything.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do when you got to Saigon?

Owen: Well, we got to Saigon and they had taken us and put us on this river--a big, large river. It was about. . . oh, it was about 300 yards wide. Before you get into Saigon, it makes a turn to the right. They put us in this camp. There was 2,800 of us in this camp, and we had barracks in this camp--wooden barracks. Some of them was made out of atap. They'd put us in there and they'd. . . some of them was two-deck, you know, about as high as you could sit. Then they'd go up about, oh, three or four foot and have another--these main barracks. These atap barracks, they'd have three decks over in them. It was very small. They had a trough out between each one of these main buildings, you know, barracks buildings. It was about. . . oh, it was about three foot high and about ten foot long and about four or five foot wide and had running water coming in it. They just run over, see, and run out. Then around it. . . they had a concrete walk around it about three foot wide and a little trough, and it'd drain on down and drain away. We'd go out there and dip our water out and take our baths out there. Then we'd get our drinking water--catch it as it was coming out of the pipe.

Marcello: What sort of work were you doing here at Saigon?

Owen: Well, we was unloading ships, and we was just working out in the . . . rolling gas drums. We was working out at the barracks and working out at the airport.

Marcello: You were able to steal some things here, were you not?

Owen: Yes, we stole a lot of stuff there. Really, the Japs were very . . . if you hid anything, they'd find it. If you didn't hide anything, well, they couldn't find it. Like down on the dock, we stole some sweetened cream down there, and the Japs knew we had it so they shook us down. If they hadn't been shaking us down, they'd have found it. They had a platform there about . . . oh, about shoulder-high, and he just turned around and laid it on that platform and went ahead and shook us down. So when he come back, the sweetened cream was gone--a little old can of sweetened cream. It was four cans of it, I think. The old boy had taken and stood on it--barefooted--and we'd hold our hands up about shoulder-high, and you wouldn't ever look this way (gesture)--right or left--to give anybody away; you'd look straight forward. You wouldn't blink an eye. When he went by, you didn't follow him to your right or left. He never did see that sweetened cream. We were marched into camp, and the old boy handed it to him. He said, "No! Presento! Presento!" Then the Korean guards . . . that was the regular Japanese people that come in with the

working parties, see. They had to bring their own guards in. In fact, if it's sailors or if it's the army guys or air force guys, they'd have to come in and bring their own guards to guard us.

That's where. . . there in Saigon, we had an Englishman there that was real good on radio. He told us that if we'd steal a radio and bring it in, he'd fix us a radio so we'd know what was going on. So we started stealing parts of the radio, and he'd tell us what to get. We'd steal one part and then steal another part, then he'd describe it to us what it. . . the English wouldn't do it, and the Australians wouldn't do it. He said, "You Americans steal me a radio." So in about a month and a half we had him a radio. They put about half of us on this working detail where they had all. . . they taken all the radios away from the Frenchmen there, see, so they had them all stored out there. We was working out there where these radios were, building air raid shelters around there, see--dirt and stuff. So we got to stealing parts and bringing them in, and they made us a radio. They listened to it once a week--he would--and then he'd give out the information. Like the one American sailor in charge of our camp, he give it to him. Then he'd give to one Australian, and then he'd give it to one Englishman, and he'd give it to one Dutchman; and they would put it out to where they thought it needed to be,

you know, where the information needed to go. You never could tell--somebody was liable to give it out to the wrong person, and the wrong person would run to the Japs.

Then we worked at the oil refinery out there. Well, it wasn't an oil refinery. . .

Marcello: Okay, let's just back up here a minute. We're kind of rambling a little bit. Let me ask this question with regard to the radio. What sort of punishment were you liable to receive if the Japanese found you had the radio?

Owen: Kill you. They beat a couple of Australian officers to death back down in the jungles. They had one with bamboo pipe. The way they did this--they had that over there at the kitchen. This guy had it over at the kitchen and had the English mess gear. He just laid it up there on a shelf there where they kept all their mess kits--all the guys that worked in the kitchen. They kept it polished, you know, and cleaned--looking like it's regular with all the rest of them. That's where he had it--in that English mess kit.

Marcello: What sort of news were you receiving from the outside world as a result of having this radio here at Saigon?

Owen: About the Japs--that they was losing ground and everything--and what the Americans had captured and everything. The day they dropped that atomic bomb--that first atomic bomb--we was walking

from the airport out there. It was about, oh, five miles out to the airport. We was coming back down through Saigon. . . we had to come right through downtown Saigon marching because our camp was out toward the ocean, and the airport was on the other side of Saigon. The French was riding along on a bicycle and said, "The war's going to be over with!" They said, "They dropped a big bomb," you know, things like that. We'd piece it together when we got in, and we'd all get our heads together. Maybe I'd catch a little of it, and a guy on up yonder would catch a little of it. So that night they listened to the radio, and we knew about it then.

Marcello: Now I gather, then, that you were at Saigon almost right up until the end of the war.

Owen: I was in that vicinity. We went from Saigon up to Da Lat, and we worked there in Da Lat building tunnels underneath their big homes there. These homes was up on a hill and the valley was down below. We'd go behind these houses and dig tunnels up underneath them houses and brace them with wood and stuff. They had timber and stuff to brace them with from house to house. They had it just high enough where a person 5'9" or six feet tall would have to bend his head down to walk under. The Japs would walk under there.

Then we left there, then, and there was some more Japs that came in and got us and had taken over. We hadn't ever seen them

before. They loaded us on a train and had taken us on farther up. . . I forget. . . Hoa Binh. . . up in there somewhere or another. We had to stop one day and stay in a tunnel all day. We were traveling at night. . . and so we didn't have nothing to eat--nothing to cook or nothing. They was supposed to feed us, and they had to stop in this tunnel. In this tunnel it was dark, so we stole the Japs' rice and were outside this tunnel cooking it. Hell, they didn't even have no cigarettes or nothing. They stole their cigarettes. . . I stole some rice. We got up there in that Jap car and stole the rice, stole their cigarettes, and they was bumming cigarettes from Americans (chuckle)--they done stole it.

Marcello: Going back to Saigon again, you mentioned that you were working on the docks. I would assume that you were also able to get all sorts of material here with which to trade to the natives.

Owen: Well, the way we'd get material. . . we didn't get too much off the dock. Of course, we got some, but the majority of the material we got to trade with the natives out at the airport--that's where we did all our trading--we'd go out here to a new camp where a bunch of Japs would come in from the Philippines. They'd clean it up and get it ready for them and everything, you know, clean out the underbrush and stuff around these camps, clean up the latrines, you know, and getting the place all cleaned up for them.

These Jap mosquito bars. . . they slept about eight or ten under this Jap mosquito bar. They had a piece of material about. . . oh, I'd say about fifteen inches wide around the bottom of it. They'd have it hanging there on the line, and we'd tear that. . . oh, you can just imagine. . . it's about twelve or fourteen foot long and you could go around. . . and six foot wide. . . and you could go all the way around that thing about forty-something feet of material. Then we'd take it and bury it, see. We wouldn't take it in with us that day. Then about a week or two later, you'd get back on that detail and go back out there and get your material and wrap around you or take it. . . and we had false bottoms in our canteens. Everybody had them big old English canteens, and we'd stuff it in them English canteens and bring it in and take it out to the airport and sell it to the natives.

Marcello: I was hoping that you would bring up the subject of the cloth off the bottom of those mosquito nets because evidently they were highly sought by the natives.

Owen: Yes. They'd take it and make sarongs out of it.

Marcello: What would you be wanting from them? Obviously food.

Owen: Yes. We'd take it and buy food. You'd buy bluets (?); you'd buy bananas; you'd buy different things. A lot of guys wouldn't eat bluets, but they was pretty good to me.

Marcello: What are they?

Owen: Bluets (?)

Marcello: What are bluets (?)?

Owen: You take an egg, and you put in it. . . well, in the Philippines they put it in hot sand or something or other, but there they'd put it in cow manure or something like that and let it ferment just before it got into a chicken. It'd already be formed to a chicken, but before the feathers would start on it, see, they'd take it and boil it then. Then you'd break that end of it up and drink that juice off just like chicken noodle soup. Then you'd take it and peel it and eat that. You could buy bluets (?) for a quarter. A lot of people just couldn't stand the idea of eating that thing. It was good. Once you ate one of them, there wasn't nothing to it; but eating that first one was something else.

Marcello: Now did you mention that in addition to working at the docks, you also worked out at the airport there at Saigon?

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: What sort of work were you doing out there?

Owen: Spreading gravel and building shelters. They'd take those planes and drive them up there and turn them around and then take and push them back in them big high mounds of dirt.

We was out there one day. . . and it was twenty guys working out there--eighteen Australians or Englishmen, one--I don't know

which--and two Americans working out there. That's when the war was getting pretty hot; the Americans was making them "eat their lunch." They come in that night. . . those two boys who were spreading gravel over there. . . they was bringing ox carts in there and dumping the gravel and caliche and stuff up and making, you know, runways up to these air raid shelters for these planes. They come in that night. . .the two Americans had an "X" across their back where they whipped them with a bullwhip, you know. They bent over shoveling that caliche and stuff, and he'd come along and hit them across the back. Then he'd go on, and after awhile he'd come back and catch them like that again, and he'd hit them across the other way, see, and make an "X" across both of them. There wasn't another one of them guys. . . Americans was the only ones that got whipped.

Marcello: And it was because of those American bombers that came over?

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about the air raids because I assume that you experienced several of them here at Saigon. Let's talk about the first one.

Owen: Well, we was at the airdrome during the first one. The twin-fuselage fighter that. . .

Marcello: The P-38.

Owen: The P-38 came over. They came in and strafed that day and everything out at the airport. Gosh, the Jap that was there in charge

of us, he'd been to the Philippines, see. He kind of said, "Come on!" and motioned to us to come on. We run and we run and we run way off over there, and he kept yelling at us to hurry up. And we said, "To hell with you! We ain't going. . . we run far enough." We was tired! We was over there in trees and everything. So he came back and he said. . . in other words, they had one P-38 for every Jap. Boy, he was scared of those things!

Then the next one I was in was the oil refinery between the ocean. . . we was about ten miles in from the ocean.

Marcello: You were working in all those neat places that were prime targets for those bombers, too, weren't you? The docks, the airport, and an oil refinery.

Owen: Yes. Nearly all that bunch in Saigon was (chuckle) good targets. But we was out there. They had a barge out there that was sunk--loaded down with gas. I was about seven kilometers out there and wasn't too far out there. . . I think we was about fifteen or twenty kilometers from the ocean down to Saigon--maybe a little farther. But we was about halfway in between at this oil refinery, and we was out there. They had. . . I guess they had about 2,000 of us out there working. They'd haul us out there in trucks. What we was doing--they was starting these big oil tanks. The ones that was full--they was taking us and making us build a . . . taking mud and put around it. There was rice paddies out around

us, and we was right on the bank of this river. And out between the main road. . . you'd come down this main road and go about a mile in there on a little bitty road to this oil refinery where they stored oil--oil storage place. We was out there working, and once you got the top layer of dirt off, you was just in mud and water. That tide would come in, and you'd have to get down there and get that mud and throw it in that sack and carry it up there to dump it. It was about twenty feet wide at the bottom, and then it was about four or five feet wide--thick--at the top, see--you went around there.

So one day. . . we all had G-strings on, and they was wet and everything. One day here come these bombers over. They had one little road out of there just about wide enough for a car to drive down. You couldn't pass; one of them had to pull over. You take about 2,500 POW's in there trying to get out of there . . . that alarm went off, and we could hear them planes. We couldn't see them; we could hear them. We had all taken off running to get away from them oil tanks.

I tell you what--it was the funniest thing you ever saw. I just had to sit down and laugh. I just couldn't run. They was running across them rice paddies--rice water, see, in them rice paddies--and that G-string that had done come loose between their legs. They just straightened out out there. Boy, they was

digging; they was getting away from them oil tanks! I laughed until I hurt. Them old boys was running across there naked and everything--it was real funny--and the Japs were running right along with them (chuckle).

Marcello: What did the air raids do for your morale?

Owen: Oh, it. . . we just . . .well, we couldn't laugh then, but we'd laugh at things like that because if you laughed about the planes or said anything about the Japs. . . because by that time they could speak enough English, and they knew what you was saying. We could speak enough Jap that we knew what they was saying.

Marcello: Did the attitude of the Japanese change any as a result of the air raids?

Owen: Oh, they got to where they'd beat up on the Americans a lot more, you know, like I was saying, out there on the docks and stuff. Then another time. . . see, our camp from the river there in Saigon. . . our camp was about, I'd say, 100 foot from the concrete bank where the river was to the warehouse. The warehouse was about 100 yards long. Then they had about another maybe 100 yards where the railroad tracks run in there. Then the street in our camp. . . and then out behind our camp we had air raid shelters out there.

They come over one day. Those Marine dive bombers came over, and they stayed in there all day. They was gone in just

a little while, and they come back. We went in and got our rice to eat. They'd already cooked the rice for the noon meal. They'd get up at night and cook all that rice for that day, you know--for the morning and noon meal.

So we went in to get our rice and got it all ready to serve, and, God, here they come again. Everybody made a run for that back gate out there. I grabbed me a bucket of that rice--a wooden bucket--about a two-gallon bucket. I grabbed me a bucket of that, and we had rice in our shelter out there then. But they come in . . . come right over our trenches. Then when they'd get ready to drop that bomb, they'd kind of go up and sling that bomb out of there on them ships out there. One old boy. . . when he come over, looked like he was having trouble. You could see his sunglasses, you know--air force glasses, sunglasses, pilot glasses--and you could see his coveralls--you know, those jumpsuits, you know, they had. You could tell the color of them and everything. Man, they was right up there about forty foot from you. He went up and he was trying to get this bomb out--it hung--and he went up, and he was coming to this little slough. . . well, little sampans could go up this little river over there, which was about thirty feet wide. There was some antiaircraft guns over there. He throwed that bomb out, and it went right down--right down--on one of them guns and right down on it. Of course, he wasn't

trying to do it. He was trying to flip it sideways and every ways getting that bomb out of there. He finally got it loose and threwed it out there.

Marcello: Now I would assume that by the time that you got to Saigon and were at Saigon, the attrition rate virtually ceased altogether. In other words, you didn't lose too many men at this point. Is that correct?

Owen: No. No, I don't think the "Fitzsimmons Bunch" never did lose many men. Then we didn't lose too many. . . now when we went up to Hoa Binh and on up through there and worked on that twenty-one span railroad up through there. . . when we got ready to come back, they brought half the Americans back, and half of them stayed up there.

Marcello: Now what were you doing when you were up in that area? Were you mainly repairing railroads?

Owen: Working on that bridge, you know. What they'd do is that they'd bring the train up here and you'd unload it. Then we was having to put it on the barge--I mean, this pontoon deal--and the natives would take them big old wooden sticks and punch it across to the other side. They had horses and mules and cavalry and everything. God, we never had seen none of that stuff like that. . . cloth buckets to carry water like you feed the horses out of. We'd steal that and we'd steal that leather goods and stuff. When

they got it back across on the other side, they had to come back across and try to shake us down to find their gear. They didn't have nothing to harness their horses up.

Marcello: How long were you up there working on that railroad?

Owen: We was up there about a month, and then we came back. We got about halfway back, and we hadn't walked. . . we maybe walked about, oh, twenty miles, and then we may ride fifty, and we may walk ten, you know. The bridge was blowed out, because the Americans blowed it out. When we left up there, they give us . . . we had to carry all of our supplies and everything. Say, like a sack of rice that weighed 220 pounds, they'd divide it to four people.

So coming back, we had to stop and cook. We had our "Y-Johns," this little old round deal about. . . oh, it's about thirty inches across and it's very shallow--kind of a bowl-type deal made of cast iron--and you cooked in that. So it got to where a lot of guys wanted to know how to divvy up the rice, so I told the old boy in charge. . . we didn't have a lieutenant with us then; they'd done taken all of our officers. . . and Captain Fowler. . . they sent him back to Thailand. But I told the old boy in charge, I said, "Now I ain't going for this! I'm still carrying my same amount of rice, and we've been gone two days." I said, "Everytime we cook, let's divvy that rice up again." Then

I was carrying another old boy's gear--Billy Biffle--because that old boy had appendicitis--an Australian--and we was having to carry him back. Six guys was carrying him, and I was carrying Billy's ditty bag and stuff, you know, because he was carrying that Australian, and I was carrying that rice, too, and my ditty bag and stuff.

This guy I told you about, "Goat" Laird, never got whipped by a Jap--never got whipped. So a bunch from Jacksboro. . .we was all back there--Robert N. Gregg, Soloman. . . there was about eight or ten of us back there. Old "Goat" had a "Y-John" over his head carrying it, see. "Goat" said, "I'm going to the front!" I said, "Oh, 'Goat,' stay back here with us." He stayed back there with us. (Chuckle) Finally, old "Goat" got to lagging way behind, and the Jap back there with him had a torch, you know, lit for light. This Jap got mad at him and whipped old "Goat." Old "Goat" come back and said to me, "I'll tell you what! You sons-of-bitches stay back here if you want to! I'm going to the front because I ain't getting no whipping no more!"

This old boy I was talking about, Armstrong--"Armadillo" we called him--he was going along there and he was carrying one of them "Y-Johns." He carried it about three or four days, and it was cracked. I said, "R.G., why don't you throw that thing down and you won't have to carry it. They won't make you carry

that thing." "Do you reckon so, Big John?" So finally he had taken. . . they saved everything. It wasn't no good, but they would save it. He threwed it down, and that Jap beat the living hell out of him and made him pick up every piece of it and put in a tow sack and carry it. There was a piece that started sticking him, jabbing him, and he'd start cursing me. Oh, he'd get mad!

Marcello: Let's talk about the events leading up to your ultimate liberation. Where were you and what were you doing when you heard about the fact that the war was over?

Owen: Well, we were in Saigon. We got back to Saigon--this group--but the other group was still up there up north. We was working out at the airport, and we was having to walk back and forth. At first, when we got to Saigon, they'd take us out to all these places to work in trucks, but we was having to walk then to work and everything. Then we was going out to this rubber plantation rolling gas drums--still rolling gas drums. So then we'd have to go out there and work on these bomb shelters for the Japs. The Japs had taken over our bomb shelters--our air raid shelters--out there. We had to go out there and work on that. Really and truly, we was walking about as much as we was working. By the time we walked out there to the airdome and by the time we walked back, you're walking anywhere from ten to twelve miles a day. Well, by then you was, you know, you was doing a lot of walking.

Marcello: Had your weight picked up, or were you still at around 160 pounds?

Owen: No, my weight had picked up. Well, I went down to 140 pounds.
I was up about then to about 160 pounds.

Then when the war was over with, they came in--the Americans did--and dropped the pamphlets and told us to stay in camp and not to get out because the natives were rioting and so on.

Marcello: How did you get the news that the war was over? Was this announced by the Japanese?

Owen: Oh, they come over in a plane announcing it.

Marcello: But the Japanese never said anything to you?

Owen: The Japs finally called this American sailor--chief petty officer --over there, and they got together and told him. Our regular guards commenced leaving, and we was getting new guards and everything. Then they had taken us out of there. . .

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

Owen: Well, we was all happy and everything. They started bringing us mail in then. We started getting mail. See, they had this mail there all the time, and they wouldn't give it to us.

Marcello: Was this the first mail that you'd received?

Owen: Yes.

Marcello: How old were some of the letters?

Owen: Oh, gosh, I don't remember now, but some of them went way back there. My mother got a lot of mail back, you know. But it was a year or two years old.

Marshall: Did you celebrate in any way?

Owen: Well, I didn't, except after we was in this camp there. . .around this camp there they had these bamboo poles just stuck in the ground--about a foot in the ground--just about anywhere from twenty to thirty foot high, according to how long the poles are. They moved us out of there and moved us into a regular French barracks--three-story deal.

Marcello: But now your regular guards disappeared? They were gone.

Owen: Yes, our regular guards disappeared, and we more or less got kind of what I'd call front line troops, you know, in there then to guard us and everything. So we went. . . they transferred us up to this . . . over towards on the other side of town between the town and the airport to this French barracks. We'd been out there working. They transferred us over there, and then they commenced to feeding us and bringing us better food in--meat and everything.

Marcello: But you were still under Japanese guard; you were restricted to camp.

Owen: Yes, they told us to stay under the Japanese. When they told us to stay in camp, well, we'd go over there and climb the fence and go to town. I went to town once.

Marcello: Wasn't this rather risky?

Owen: Yes, it was. When the Japs surrendered, they turned all their equipment over to the Vietnamese. Then the white French and the

Vietnamese started fighting then. In town at night, you'd hear shots and firing in town. They told us to stay in camp. I had a big old heavy carbuncle back here on my hip at about my waist-line, so they put me in the hospital. The English doctor went and just cut the whole thing--went down in there and cut around and then had taken a kind of an L-knife and just cut the whole chunk out of there. So I was. . . then he brought in a gallon of rum in a deal, and another old boy got that--won it. We had a drawing and he won it, so him and I drank that gallon of rum. I was walking the bannister up there--showing him how to walk that bannister up on that second floor. We had a wrought iron bannister about waist-high around, and I was going to show him how to walk that bannister. It's a wonder I hadn't fell and broke my neck after going through what all I'd been through (chuckle).

Marcello: By this time, do you get a little bit impatient as to wondering when you're finally going to be taken out of there?

Owen: Well, yes. But they flew the Americans in, and, see, Fitzsimmons was in Thailand. Instead of Fitzsimmons going on into Calcutta, India, he said, "No, I'd like to have permission to go to Saigon and get my boys." So he come in then. God, he looked good! He had an American leather jacket--flight jacket--on, American flag on it, a .45 strapped on him.

He got in and he told us what all was going to happen. He told them down there at Thailand, he said, "I know what will

happen." He said, "They'll get up there, and the English always have. . . the highest ranking officer has the authority to say what goes on, what to do, and what to don't do." He said, "I'm going up there and get my boys and fly them out of there first. Then when they get out, if they have any room, then we'll fly . . . " See, they wanted to fly so many Americans out and so many. . . according to how many was in there, see. In other words, since there were more Americans, there would have been about four or five Americans going out, maybe, in one plane and about twenty-five or thirty English would go out on the same plane.

So he come in there, and he said, "Everybody that's sick is going on the first plane." So I was sick, and they come down there and told me. I went over there and got my little bag of stuff that I wanted to take with me. My mess kit--I wanted to keep it; and I got my other stuff--what I wanted to keep. They had taken us out to the airport, and they said, "Well, we got room for one more." Old Marvin Tilghman, one of our sergeants, was driving a truck; he was a motor sergeant before we got captured, and he drove a truck out there. He said, "Well, we got room for one more." He said, "Can I go?" They said, "Yes," and he just left that truck there--got on that plane and left.

Marcello: Did you take your mess kit along with you?

Owen: Yes, I had taken my mess kit.

Marcello: You did?

Owen: Yes, I had taken it. I still got it. Then we went from there to Rangoon and from Rangoon to Calcutta.

Marcello: How did they proceed to feed you?

Owen: Oh, they fed us real good after we got in this French barracks. Then we got on that plane. . . I think there was twenty-eight of us on that C-47 that day. We got on there, and this old boy. . . he had lieutenant colonel's bars, and he got on the plane. Of course, we thought he was a colonel. He got on the plane, and he pulled them off, and he said, "Boys, I'm just a plain-ass sergeant." And he was. That's what he was--a sergeant. He said, "We just put this rank on so that. . . they wanted somebody to come in here to have some rank that'd outdo them Englishmen and everything." He said, "They told me just put these bars on."

Marcello: What food were you craving the most?

Owen: Well, I was craving. . . I was fixing to tell you. . . we got on this plane, and this crew had a case of C-rations--breakfast and dinner--two boxes of dinner and a case of breakfast. The twenty-eight of us ate all three cases up nearly before we got to Calcutta (chuckle).

When we got to Calcutta, they gave us partial pay, and we went to town. No, first, they gave us. . . yes, they gave us

partial pay and didn't give us no clothes. Now the first night, it was about thirty or forty of us in town in our pajamas. So the MP's would get us and bring us back to camp, and we'd go right back.

Marcello: I would assume that by this time you weren't ready to take orders from anybody.

Owen: No, we didn't take orders from nobody.

Marcello: You'd taken orders long enough.

Owen: Yes. So we'd. . . the officer of the day of this camp. . . he had another regular camp over across the street over there and had all these POW's in this camp and nurses over there. This officer of the day come over there to see these nurses. The first night he drove a jeep over there. Hell, we just went out and got his jeep. . . we had this money, and we got his jeep and went into town in this jeep. So the next night he come over there in the jeep, and he had taken the steering wheel off, see, and had taken it with him. We found a pair of vice-grip pliers in that jeep, and we just putted on up the hill and drove it with them vice-grip pliers--not very fast, but we was driving it. So the next night he come over there on a bicycle, and we got his bicycle. All they could do was just catch you in town doing something you shouldn't, and they'd just take you back to camp. We'd just go out and get in the taxi--we never would go to the gate--and get in the taxi and go right back to town.

Marcello: When you finally got back to the States, how much trouble did you have adjusting to that sort of life again?

Owen: Oh, I had a lot of trouble; you know, like sleeping in a bed. I'd sleep on the floor. I had a lot of trouble sleeping in a bed. Everytime we stopped somewhere, we'd draw \$150 or \$200 partial pay. When I got out, I had all that money coming. I finally got out in February; I think I had \$1,800 coming.

Marcello: This is February of 1946?

Owen: Yes. I had \$1,800 coming. When we got out. . . well, when we got back to . . . well, we left Calcutta and went to Casablanca and come on back to New York and went around Staton Island. They had a . . . see, you're not supposed to bring anything to drink on that base there. So the nurse there up on the bottom floor . . . we was up on the top floor, and on the bottom floor they had a bunch of pregnant WAC's. The nurse in charge of these WAC's and stuff, she was a POW in the Philippines. She'd already gone back to duty. They come over there and raised Cain. She told me, "You let me handle them boys." She said, "You're fixing to get in some trouble." She come up there and talked to us. . . talking that Jap to us. . . and we'd. . . about half-English and half-Jap. Every night we'd come in there, we'd go down there and sit in her office and talk to her.

Marcello: As you look back on your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as being the key to your survival?

Owen: Well, morale and the buddy form of the position--helping one another. That's the reason I say the "Fitzsimmons Bunch" didn't lose near as many men. I don't know how many we lost, but not too many. That's the reason of it, I think--in being a real close-knitted bunch. Today we are more or less like the brothers.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Owen, I want to thank you very much.

Owen: I think just as much of them boys as I do my own brother (chuckle).

Marcello: I want to thank you very much for taking time to talk to me. You've said a lot of very interesting and, I think, very important things. I'm sure that scholars are going to find this valuable when they use it to write about the experiences of prisoners-of-war during World War II.

Owen: Well, there's stuff you forget. When I walk out of here, a lot of stuff will come back to me. That one thing you was talking about--eating. I'd like to say this--when we got there in Calcutta, we went to town after we got our clothes and went to the Red Cross building. We sat down and ordered us two cokes and two hamburgers. She brought that out, and we told her to bring us another ten cokes and another ten hamburgers. We sat there and ate a dozen hamburgers apiece--four of us. Then later on, while we was there, we was riding this rickshaw and we went down to what was called "The American Kitchen." We ordered a fried chicken apiece--me and another old boy. We called him "Shanghai Lil." He was up at Peking before the war broke out; he was over

there at the embassy in Peking. He saw what was coming and asked to be transferred to the seagoing Marines. Him and I went in and ordered us a fried chicken apiece. Over there in Calcutta, the blocks over there was about like four city blocks here--one block. We started walking around, and we got about nearly half-way around, and we got back in the rickshaw and went back around and ordered us another fried chicken apiece.

Marcello: Okay, well, I think that's probably a good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for having participated.