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Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Terms of Use: open

Approved: Douglas F. Knight
(Signature)

Date: March 12, 1978

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Oral History Collection

Douglas Knight

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas Date: March 12, 1978

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Douglas Knight for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on March 12, 1978, in Dallas, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Knight in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Mr. Knight was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, better known as the "Lost Battalion." He and his comrades were captured in March of 1942 on the island of Java and subsequently spent the rest of the war in various prisoner-of-war camps throughout the Far East.

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

Mr. Knight: I was born June 17, 1921, on a ranch southwest of Alliance, Nebraska.

Marcello: How did you manage to get to Texas, which, I assume, is where you ultimately joined the Texas National Guard?

Knight: When I was about a year-and-a-half old, my parents moved back to Missouri, the place that they came from--around Saint Joseph. In 1927, we went to Amarillo, Texas, and I was reared there and went through school. I had quit high school and joined the National Guard in Plainview, Texas, and this was November 13, 1940.

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

Knight: Well, that was just more or less . . . well, I've always wanted to. Actually, what I tried to do . . . I tried to get in the Navy, and I didn't weigh enough. Then I went to the Air Corps, and they turned me down; I went to the Army, and they turned me down. I went to the Texas National Guard in Amarillo; they turned me down because I didn't weigh enough either. From there, I went to Canyon, Texas; they turned me down.

About this time, a friend of mine that I knew that lived in Plainview found out that I was trying to get into the Texas National Guard. He, in turn, brought me to Plainview and "pulled a few strings" and got me into the National Guard. The National Guard was mobilized, and that's how come I come to be in the Army.

Marcello: Now is it not true that the National Guard at that time was

in many ways considered to be a social organization? There were some good times to be had by joining the National Guard in addition to getting a little bit of extra money.

Knight: This is true. But at the time that I went into the National Guard, there was talk of the National Guard mobilizing, and I wanted to volunteer.

Marcello: How closely were you keeping abreast with current events and world affairs at that time?

Knight: Very little. The main thing that was attractive to me was that all down through my family history on my father's side . . . from the Civil War we have had one or two generations in every war that has been fought by the United States. I guess that is one of the reasons why I went into it.

Marcello: Now identify the unit in full that you joined in Plainview when you got into the National Guard.

Knight: I joined Battery A, 1st Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, 36th Division. From there I was transferred to regimental headquarters as clerk of the chaplain's office. I was made a corporal. The main reason why I didn't work out there is because I was tied up on weekends, and naturally I couldn't do . . . social activities was very limited. So I asked to be relieved, and from there I was transferred into the medical department or Medical Corps, so I became a member of the medical detachment of the 131st Field Artillery.

Marcello: Now are you still in the 1st Battalion at this time?

Knight: As a medical detachment, no. That included the 1st and 2nd Battalions.

Marcello: Now did all this take place at Plainview?

Knight: No, this all took place in Brownwood, Texas, at Camp Bowie.

Marcello: Now when was it that the Texas National Guard was federalized?

Knight: November 23, 1940.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being federalized? What was the reaction among you and your buddies at that time?

Knight: I think everybody was looking forward to it.

Marcello: Why was that?

Knight: The biggest majority of them figured there would be some type of a war, but they didn't know what. This would give them a chance to try out what they'd been trained for in the National Guard.

Marcello: Now after you were federalized, is this when you went to Camp Bowie?

Knight: No, the date that we were federalized, like I said, was the 23rd of November. We stayed at Plainview, because Camp Bowie wasn't ready for us until January 16th.

Marcello: Of 1941?

Knight: 1941.

Marcello: What happened when you got to Camp Bowie? What sort of activities did you undergo there?

Knight: The part that we were stationed at wasn't completed, so we had to complete it ourselves. It was raining; it was muddy; there was holes big enough for a fellow to fall into. In fact, I've seen some guys go out of sight where they'd step off in a great big hole. We lived in tents--the top part or tents; the lower part was a frame of two-by-fours and screen wire with wooden floors in it with a gas heater in the center.

Marcello: What sort of training did the unit undergo here? Or maybe I should say, what sort of training did you personally undergo here?

Knight: We had what is known as sixteen weeks of basic training. Even though the biggest majority of the members of the National Guard had been trained for quite a period of time, we still went through a basic training, which included forced marches, close order drill, so forth and so on like that.

Marcello: Now was it at this time that you were put into the medical detachment or became a part of the Medical Corps as such?

Knight: Yes. After we got down to Brownwood, I went to the chaplain's office, and then from there I was transferred to the Medical Corps.

Marcello: Now when you were transferred into the Medical Corps, did you become a corpsmen as such, or were you still performing your clerical duties?

Knight: No, I became a corpsman and started training as such.

Marcello: What sort of training did you undergo there at Camp Bowie to become a corpsman?

Knight: We learned first aid, doing minor first aid treatments of cuts and wounds and how to handle wounded men; taking care of the sick, stomach aches, and everything like this, and recommended them to go back to base hospital; knowing how to tag people so that they'd be able to be identified when they did get to go back to the hospital.

Marcello: As you look back upon that training, do you think it was excellent? Good? Fair? Poor? How would you rate that training?

Knight: With the experience I had as a POW, it was excellent. Without that training, I don't know what I would have done.

Marcello: I'm sure this is something that we'll talk about a little bit later on when we get you up into the jungles and so on. Now it was also during this time that the 2nd Battalion was detached from the 36th Division, isn't that correct?

Knight: Yes. When we made Louisiana maneuvers in August, 1941 . . . after those maneuvers, we came back to Camp Bowie in October of '41, and from there on November 11, 1941, we left Camp Bowie to our port of embarkation at San Francisco, California. At that time, we were detached from . . . the 2nd Battalion was detached from the 131st Field Artillery.

Marcello: Now also in the meantime, is it not true that your ranks were

somewhat filled with people from other units? I think this occurred when you were at Camp Bowie.

Knight: Yes, up until the time that we left or were detached, we weren't at full strength, so our orders was to come up to full strength as a battalion. So therefore, the 1st Battalion was asked if they had any volunteers that would go over to the 2nd Battalion. Also, the medical detachment asked for volunteers to fill the quota of what it needed for a battalion's authorization of corpsmen.

Marcello: Is it not also true that the married men were given the option of whether or not they wanted to remain in the unit?

Knight: Yes. In fact, they was more or less, as much as I can remember, encouraged to stay, because at that time nobody knew what was going to happen. In fact, we didn't even know where we were going. The only thing we had was the code name PLUM, wherever that was at.

Marcello: What was the scuttlebutt or rumors going around at that time as to what PLUM represented? What were the rumors?

Knight: Well, one of the biggest rumors with the people--and at that time, again, everybody began to watch the international situation--and the rumor went around that PLUM or the "P" was for Philippine Islands.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you went by train to San Francisco, which was your port of embarkation. What was the name of the

ship that you boarded there at San Fransicso?

Knight: USS Republic.

Marcello: What sort of a ship was it? Describe the trip that you ultimately took in the Republic.

Knight: The USS Republic was a passenger liner before World War II. It was converted to a troop transport in New York City.

Marcello: I know a lot of the guys got seasick. Did you?

Knight: No, I didn't get seasick. I was lucky that it didn't affect me. They had that boat completely full. Even some of the guys had to sleep on the outside, out on deck, because they had so many people on it.

Marcello: You had a short stop in the Hawaiian Islands, did you not?

Knight: Yes, we supposedly stopped there for a weekend, but we only stayed there a little less than twelve hours.

Marcello: Did you manage to get any liberty while you were in Honolulu?

Knight: I was lucky enough to get the first four hours of liberty.

Marcello: What'd you do?

Knight: I went to the pineapple place and drank pineapple juice and then walked the streets of Hawaii.

Marcello: At the time that you were there in Honolulu, did you notice there to be any state of emergency or tenseness or anything of that nature?

Knight: Yes, I felt it, even though at the time it didn't dawn on me what it was. But it seemed peculiar that everything was the

way we found it. All your planes was in a line just like they were going to a dress rehearsal; all the battleships was at their moorings in Pearl Harbor; and people were going along just like there weren't any tensions whatsoever. When we left there, it seemed kind of peculiar to me that we went due south out of Honolulu, which is the wrong direction to go to the Philippine Islands.

Marcello: Now you mentioned awhile ago that the planes and so on were lined up in the nice, neat rows and that the battleships were all in their moorings and so on. Did you personally have a chance to observe this?

Knight: We could see things when we was coming into port. We saw Hickam Field and the planes. We could only see the tops of the battleships at a distance from where we were at.

Marcello: Okay, so you leave Honolulu and, as you mentioned just a moment ago, you were under the impression that the ship was moving south rather than toward the Philippines. Was the Republic part of a convoy? Was there more than one ship that was sailing at this time?

Knight: Yes, but we didn't come into this convoy until we was quite a bit south of Honolulu.

Marcello: Up until that time, you were sailing alone?

Knight: Up until the time that we left the States and went into the port in Honolulu. When we left there after midnight that

Saturday night, we still wasn't hooked up to the convoy. It was sometime during that night or early in the morning. I don't know which because it was during that time when everybody was asleep, or at least I was.

Marcello: Okay, now allegedly, you were on your way to the Philippines. Of course, after you had left Honolulu on December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Describe where you were and what you were doing and what your reaction was when you first learned about the attack at Pearl Harbor.

Knight: We were one ship of, I believe, about a four or five-ship convoy. The only protection we had was a yacht converted over to a Naval vessel, and we could only do nine knots. We were along the equator; in fact, we were just following it and going west. As much as I remember, we hadn't even came to the International Dateline yet. I was out on deck laying out in the sun when it came over the loudspeaker that war had been declared. Everybody was completely shocked; we didn't believe what we heard. This is the first indication we had that anything had ever happened.

Marcello: Now one of your comrades aboard that ship was a Japanese-American. Of course, I'm referring to Frank Fujita. Did he come in for any amount of teasing or anything of that nature as a result of the Japanese attack?

Knight: To my knowledge, no. I knew him, but I wasn't around the area

where he was at or I don't remember being near him, so I don't know. As much as I know, they didn't tease him. Maybe some of them did, but I think everybody took it pretty seriously.

Marcello: I assume, however, that none of you really knew the full extent of the damage that had been done at Pearl Harbor.

Knight: No, we didn't.

Marcello: At that particular time, what was your attitude toward the Japanese. Now up until this point, I assume that most of you had perhaps never seen a Japanese except for those you may have run into there in that very short stay in Honolulu.

Knight: Actually, I got the impression . . . or the impression I have right now is that I don't think anybody, especially enlisted personnel, got the full impact of what actually was happening or what was ahead of us. Maybe some of the officers had a general idea, but even some of those, I don't think, knew.

Marcello: What type of a war were you and your buddies predicting in terms of duration? In other words, did you think it would be a relatively short war? A long one?

Knight: Here again, I don't think anybody realized. The only thing that was concerning us was that we knew that we weren't prepared as far as equipment was concerned.

Marcello: But did you feel . . . I don't want to put words in your mouth, but at that particular time, you had not seen any

Japanese. Did you feel that you could pretty well handle them?

Knight: Well, yes, because at that time we had the impression that we was one of the best units in the United States. We proved ourself in the Louisiana maneuvers, and we was under the impression--or I was--that we were picked because we were considered as one of the best units for a field artillery unit in the United States.

Marcello: Now refresh my memory. When did you say you were born?

Knight: June 17, 1921.

Marcello: Therefore, you were about twenty, twenty-one years of age.

Knight: No, I was about eighteen.

Marcello: Well, if you were born in 1921 and the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor in 1941, you were around nineteen or twenty probably.

Knight: Yes, I was around nineteen. That's probably what it was.

Marcello: Was this the general or the average age of the people in the battalion? You'd have to estimate that, of course.

Knight: No, they were at least two or three years older than I was. I was one of the youngest.

Marcello: But still all of you were relatively young men that were in that unit.

Knight: Oh, yes, we were all young and looking for excitement.

Marcello: Okay, so as we now know, the Republic was diverted to Brisbane, Australia. As I recall, you arrived there around December 21,

1941.

Knight: That's correct.

Marcello: What did you do when you got to Brisbane?

Knight: They took us off the ship and took us to a racetrack where we set up billets, and I believe we had tents. Well, anyhow, this place where we was kept was at this racetrack.

Marcello: And I think it was Ascot Racetrack, was it not?

Knight: Ascot Racetrack, right.

Marcello: What did you do? Did you do anything after you got to Brisbane? I'm referring now to military training and things of that nature.

Knight: No. We hadn't been paid for six months, and we was all bitching about getting some pay.

Marcello: Did you get paid there at Brisbane?

Knight: Eventually we did. But up until that time, there wasn't much that we'd do. They let us go on leave; we'd go into Brisbane and walk the streets. Thanks to the Australians, they would come out of their beer pubs and bring us in and would give us beer. Because for some reason or other, it got around that we were broke, and they more or less took us right underneath their arm to show us a good time.

Marcello: I gather that the Americans got a very, very welcome reception from the Australians.

Knight: At that time, yes. They was really glad to see us. Because

one of the reasons is that most of their boys was over in North Africa. They'd almost stripped the country bare of their young boys. We was about the first Americans or any allied troops that come into their country at that time.

Marcello: Were you one of the fortunate ones that got to spend Christmas dinner in the home of one of the Australians?

Knight: Yes, I did.

Marcello: Do you recall that Christmas dinner?

Knight: Yes. O.C. Webster from Amarillo and I were walking into town this Christmas morning, I believe it was, if I remember right. We liked to got run over, because the Australians drive on the wrong . . . left side of the road. So this gentleman come along and almost hit us and stopped and asked us where we were going. We told him we didn't know; we were just out taking a walk. He asked if we wouldn't mind waiting on him; he'd like to show us around Brisbane, which we did. He went to the hospital; his wife was in the hospital. I think she was sick, but for what reasons, I don't remember right now. But we stayed out in the car while he went in. He wasn't gone over about thirty minutes when he came back out and asked us to come into the hospital, that his wife wanted to see a couple of Americans, which we did, and we had a very pleasant time.

From there he took us around and showed us Brisbane, stopped by his summer cottage or his summer home--and this

was Sunday--and he had some beer in the ice box, which we drank a bottle or two. At the same time that we were doing this, he made a phone call.

We left there, and while we were going into Brisbane, he asked us if we wouldn't mind having a cold tea with him. He had talked to his mother and that she had invited us. Anyplace that we had a chance to eat, we took advantage of. He said there was one thing he wanted to ask us before we left. He said that he didn't know what our religious preference was, but his brother was a Catholic priest and would that make any difference, and we told him, "No."

We arrived at his mother's home, and if I remember right, his brother, a sister of his, and his mother and he and O.C. and I was the only ones there. They liked to talked the legs off of us because we still had a Texas brogue, and they hadn't heard anybody that talked like that. They asked us if we still had Indians here, if we still had gun fights and cowboys on the streets. We bragged a little bit.

We sat down to their cold tea dinner, and I've never seen a meal in my life . . . it was cold tea. It sure didn't . . . I was surprised. They had three types of meat, all kinds of vegetables; I've never seen a layout of food like that in my life! We ate just as much as we could.

One of the things that sticks in my mind is that they

had a pudding, which I don't remember how it tastes like but I know it was good because I ate a great big helping. As I was eating it, I bit down on something hard. I was afraid to say something about it, so I kept it underneath my tongue. But it finally got to the point where I finally had to take it out, and I believe it was a florin, a piece of money. Everybody was "tickled to death," because that was supposed to have been a sign of good luck. If I remember right, even O.C. found one in his helping, and he and I were the only two that got a coin in their helping of pudding.

Marcello: As it turned out, that coin didn't exactly represent good luck (chuckle).

Knight: Yes and no. No, because we was taken prisoner-of-war; yes, because we got back alive.

Marcello: Well, that's very true. I know a lot of the Texas boys had trouble adjusting to mutton in Australia. Did you have any problems along those lines?

Knight: Yes. You could smell the stuff farther than you could see it. But when you're hungry . . . this is where the first experience we had of eating something we didn't like because we was hungry.

Marcello: Now you actually didn't stay in Australia too long. I think it was somewhere in January of 1942 that you left. What ship did you pick up in Brisbane?

Knight: It was a Dutch ship. I don't remember the name of it right now.

Marcello: The Bloemfontein, was it not?

Knight: Yes, I believe it was, since you mention it now.

Marcello: Describe the trip on the Bloemfontein.

Knight: We just had only our one battalion on it. It was a very fast ship. It was a little bit more of an enjoyable trip than the USS Republic was, if I remember right. We stayed within the Great Barrier Reef, between that and shore. I was, and probably a few other of the guys was, scared after we found out what the Great Barrier Reef was, if we were going to run aground or not. There we went to the Thursday Islands, and we docked for a little while at Darwin, Australia, on January 5th.

Marcello: Now on this trip, you were, of course, ultimately heading for Surabaja, Java.

Knight: That's correct.

Marcello: Did you have any submarine scares or anything of that nature on this journey?

Knight: Yes, because as far as we knew, there was Japanese all around us, but as far as I knew we weren't sure. But if there were, we thought we saw conning towers. Now they could have been American; they could have been Japanese. I don't know. But anyhow, we were scared to death.

Marcello: Okay, so you ultimately land in Surabaja, Java. You didn't

stay there very long. In fact, you just landed there and went on, is that correct?

Knight: Yes, that is correct. We were just there long enough to get loaded up in the trucks, I believe it was, and we went into Malang, Java.

Marcello: Now according to my records, it was January 11, 1942, when you landed in Java?

Knight: Right.

Marcello: And as you mentioned, you went to Malang.

Knight: Right.

Marcello: Now was Malang the Dutch air base or the Dutch airfield?

Knight: The Dutch airfield was outside of Malang.

Marcello: At Singosari.

Knight: At Singosari. We got at Singosari on January 13th. We arrived in Malang the 12th of January.

Marcello: Describe what the base was like--Singosari. I'm referring now to the physical layout of the place.

Knight: It laid in a nice, level part of a valley, I guess you'd call it. The quarters was good, excellent--for that type of climate. The airfield was a dirt runway airfield. They had hangars that for that part of the country, I'd say, was good. As far as the layout is concerned, it was a regular airfield camp. We found nothing wrong with it.

Marcello: Now very shortly after you arrived there, is it not true that

remnants from the 6th, 7th, and 19th Bomb Groups from the Philippines came to Singosari?

Knight: They were there when we arrived.

Marcello: I see. Now what function did the 2nd Battalion perform after it got to Singosari?

Knight: We became a ground crew for the remnants of the 19th Bomb Group.

Marcello: What sort of news were they bringing in from the Philippines, which, of course, is where they came from?

Knight: They told us exactly what had happened--that the Japanese came in and strafed their airfield. They lost two-thirds, at least that much, of their airplanes, and the Japs just tore hell out of all of them. One fellow that I can remember, a pilot, for days was complaining about being grounded. Some of us asked him why, and he said, "I got my ass shot off." We thought he was kidding. He dropped his pants, and sure enough, he had half of it shot off. That's why he was grounded--to wait for that to heal up so he could sit down.

Marcello: Now up until this time, even though a state of war existed between the United States and Japan, you hadn't really seen any hostile troops, so to speak.

Knight: No.

Marcello: How much thought were you giving to the Japanese?

Knight: It didn't take us long to realize what was actually going on.

The B-17's would go out on missions; they'd do their own reconnaissance and do their own bombing, and they even were strafing or machine-gunning positions of the Japanese. These bombers would come back just shot all full of holes. They'd have holes big enough in the wings that you could crawl through. They'd come back with dead machine-gunners and this type of thing. We realized that something is really going on, because we could see what the results was.

Marcello: I think on some occasions 2nd Battalion personnel actually took part on these raids, did they not? Strictly voluntarily, of course.

Knight: Well, in a short order, after what was left of the machine-gunners, the bomb crews got short of men, and they asked volunteers for machine-gunners on this mission, which the boys from the battalion volunteered.

Marcello: What sort of function were you personally performing here at Singosari? Were you still taking care of your medical duties and so on?

Knight: Yes. The only main duties that we were doing . . . since no artillery function was going on, although we was using .75-calibers for antiaircraft use . . . I might add here that the Japanese reported that the Americans had a new type of antiaircraft gun. The only thing it was was a French .75-caliber stood up on its end.

Marcello: In other words, you dug pits for those French .75's so that they could be elevated.

Knight: Right. We dug pits six to eight and twelve foot deep to get the split tails down enough so that we could get the barrel up high enough. We done some damage, too.

I was working in the treatment room. Most of us, when they'd have roll call or sick call, worked in the pharmacy and treatment room.

Marcello: Now in February of 1942, on February 5th, to be exact, the first of the Japanese air raids occurred. Describe this occurrence.

Knight: They'd usually come over around noon about the time we were eating. They never missed, it seemed like. It seemed like they had somebody around looking on us, because they'd hit us about noon.

Marcello: Now is this when the first air raid occurred--at noon?

Knight: As I remember, yes. They came in over real low, and they dropped personnel bombs on us.

Marcello: Were these high-level bombers that came in?

Knight: No, as much as I can remember, they was more or less dive-bombers.

Marcello: Well, describe this activity.

Knight: Well, they'd come in and by the time the air raid alarm would sound, they'd be dropping bombs on us. I don't know how they

managed to do that, but they did. They came in on treetop level. They would bomb what planes that was on the runways, and they would drop bombs on the barracks. They didn't do any damage to speak of, but it was just more harassment than anything else. They would get down so low that we could even see the pilots. They'd wave at us, the pilots would.

Marcello: About how many raids were there altogether?

Knight: It seemed like they hit us everyday for as long as we was there.

Marcello: What was it like coming under those air raids?

Knight: Well, it got so after the first one came that we'd head out to the rice fields and hide out there until they got so that they was bombing and strafing out there. These personnel bombs had shrapnel in them, and we could hear this shrapnel knock the rice down on our backs. We'd hear it go "twish, twish, twish."

We were scared. Everytime we'd come back, we didn't know if we'd find our barracks in one piece or not. One bomb hit the medics' sleeping area and kind of mangled it up. But other than that, I'd say they weren't too bad. But it was more harassments than anything else.

Marcello: What sort of resistance did the base put up?

Knight: They would shoot or fire off these .75's. I think they knocked down two or three planes. But we managed to keep them up at a

higher altitude. A short fuse . . . even though a .75's fuse was a lot shorter than an antiaircraft projectile, but still it was long enough that we kept them up two or three thousand feet instead of right down on the ground.

They took .50-caliber machine guns out of what damaged B-17's we had, and we put them on the back of trucks and jeeps and fired them especially at the fighter pilots when they'd come down.

Marcello: Did they do very much damage to the airplanes that were there at Singosari?

Knight: As far as I can remember, there might have been a half a dozen they'd hit. They hit a few.

Marcello: How many B-17's did you have there altogether? You'd probably have to estimate this, of course.

Knight: We didn't have over . . . actually, there was some in flying condition that made sorties; there couldn't have been over a half a dozen or eight. There weren't too many.

Marcello: Now on February 27, 1942, the bomb groups left Australia. What sort of a reaction did this cause among the people that had to stay behind? In other words, what did this do for morale?

Knight: Actually, I don't think it affected the morale. We all knew that we had a chance . . . or I'll put it this way. We all knew that the commanding officer of this group--bombardment

group--wanted us to go back with them to Darwin, I believe, and act as ground crew for them, because we'd made a great believer out of him. But when that was turned down by our commanding officer and we found that we had orders to stay there at all costs, we had a pretty good idea that the "handwriting was on the wall," and we took it accordingly. We had a job to do. If that was the job, I got the feeling that everybody felt like that that's what we should do.

Marcello: But at this time, did you have the impression that help was on its way and that you would be evacuated from the island? Did you actually realize the hopelessness of your position there at that time?

Knight: At that time, no. We thought we might have a way out. At that time that they left, we didn't have any idea . . . if I remember right, I don't remember of even knowing that there was any U.S. Naval ships around in that area.

Marcello: And, of course, still, even at this point, you had not realized the extent of the damage that had been done at Pearl Harbor.

Knight: No.

Marcello: Now sometime around this period, you leave Singosari, isn't that correct? Do you recall when that was?

Knight: Yes, we left there, and we went to Bandung.

Marcello: Okay, what was the purpose of leaving Singosari and going to Bandung?

Knight: As much as I remember, the Dutch ordered us there, because . . . as far as I can remember, my impression was that the Japanese had landed in the northern part of Java. They ordered us--that was more or less the front--to do what we could to help.

Marcello: Is it not true that they seemed to be continually moving you around from place to place in order to give the Japanese the impression there were more of you than were actually there? Have you ever heard this?

Knight: Yes. One night . . . the reason why I remember this is that I was driving an ambulance at the time. All night long, we made a great big circle--and I don't even remember the name of the town--but we went around that town all night long. We had a feeling, or it was the feeling, that the Japanese had spies in that town, and they said that there were a lot more Americans on that island than there actually was.

Marcello: Now even in the process of this moving around, you really didn't have too many direct contacts with the Japanese, did you?

Knight: No, we didn't have any except for one time.

Marcello: Describe that one particular time.

Knight: I wasn't on the front or where the .75's were. I was more or less in the rear echelon with the ambulances waiting for whatever orders we received. But they had dug in along a river at

a bridge that had been blown out, and these .75's was dug in at that point. They sat there for a week, I believe it was, and watched these Japanese build a bridge. The minute that they had it built and started moving across it, the .75's opened up and just shot the hell out of them.

Marcello: But as you mention, you weren't exactly on the front lines when this occurred.

Knight: No, I only heard from fellows that came back from the .75's.

Marcello: When did the surrender occur?

Knight: March 8, 1942.

Marcello: Describe this incident. What was you reaction when you heard that the Americans were surrendering?

Knight: We were looking for it, but still, we were shocked. We knew that we were more or less fighting a delaying action from the time of what I just explained, because we was running every night going back to the middle part of the island with the idea in mind of trying to get back to Surabaja. I think that's where we was trying to go, but we never did make it. Everything was confused; we weren't getting any orders from the Dutch; the English, what was there, was helter-skelter. In the daytime, when we were undercover, I seen truck after truck and Englishman after Englishman get bombed by the Japanese; they wouldn't even get off the road. There wasn't no place for them to go. We was lucky enough to get under a rubber tree planta-

tion. I think it was the impression of everyone that it was just a matter of time, because the Japanese had planes everywhere.

Marcello: How did you get the word of the surrender?

Knight: Colonel Tharp got us all together and told us that the Dutch had capitulated and that we were free to do anything that we felt like we should do. If we felt like that we could escape, we was free to do so.

Marcello: Did the thought of heading for the hills ever occur to you?

Knight: No, I didn't and I don't think none of the rest of the medics did. At least to my knowledge, none of them even made an attempt. There might have been one or two. But our doctor, Doctor Lumpkin, had trained us so well that we felt that we had a job to do even though we was captured--that our job had just begun.

Marcello: I've heard it said also that the natives were not loyal to anybody on the island.

Knight: No, because the Japs had got to them and put a bounty on anybody's head that was not Japanese or--let's put it this way--that showed resistance against the Japanese empire. We had those to worry about plus the Japanese. So that was another reason that deterred a lot of us from trying to escape.

Marcello: Had you ever heard the rumor that the Japanese did not take

any prisoners?

Knight: Yes, we heard that rumor.

Marcello: What sort of an unsettling effect did that have upon you?

Knight: We were scared, but I think everybody was prepared to face it.

Marcello: What did you do with your weapons and your supplies and so on and so forth as a result of the surrender order?

Knight: We destroyed everything we possibly could without endangering our own lives because the orders that I heard that we received that we was supposed to turn everything over intact and in working order.

Marcello: I assume that you obviously would not have wanted to have destroyed the medical supplies.

Knight: No, they weren't destroyed, because we had a pretty good idea that we was going to need those.

Marcello: Describe your initial contact with the Japanese. Now up until this time, you'd really never seen any Japanese soldiers, so describe your initial contact with them.

Knight: We didn't actually see any Japanese until we got to the Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: Okay, now let's back up here again. The surrender occurs on March 8, 1942. Now you really don't get into the Bicycle Camp until May of 1942, isn't that correct?

Knight: No, we got into Batavia on March 31st, and that's the first

time we ever came in contact with any type of Japanese.

Marcello: You actually don't get into Bicycle Camp until May of '42.

Knight: It was something like that, yes.

Marcello: Okay, so it's sometime in March, then, when you have your initial contact with the Japanese. What did they look like and what sort of actions did they take against the Americans and so on?

Knight: Well, actually, I didn't actually come into direct contact with any of them, because I was in camp doing medical duties. Most of the work parties that left there came in contact with them at the gate, you know, as they went out. Now the Japanese didn't, if I remember right, circulate in that camp very much or very, very often.

Marcello: Okay, now let's back up again. The surrender occurs on March 8, 1942, and from there you ultimately go into Batavia.

Knight: Yes. As far as the place that we were at, we were at another racetrack.

Marcello: Garoet, isn't that correct?

Knight: Garoet. From there we went to a tea plantation. We stayed there until we received orders to go into Batavia.

Marcello: Okay, now what sort of a compound were you housed in there at Batavia?

Knight: We was throwed in with English, Australians, Javanese--soldiers from the Javanese army. There were Navy personnel. This is

where we first come in contact with Navy people.

Marcello: Well, now this doesn't occur, however, until you get into Bicycle Camp, does it? Isn't it in Bicycle Camp where you first come in contact with the survivors off the Houston?

Knight: Yes, you're right.

Marcello: Okay, but there is this stretch before you get to Bicycle Camp where you were actually housed someplace in Batavia. Were you working on the docks here at this time, or what were you doing? Do you recall?

Knight: Okay, okay, yes. All right. We were thrown in this place in Batavia. We worked on the docks. This had one time been stables or something. The work parties worked with barrels of gasoline and oil and this type of thing.

Marcello: It was kind of clean-up work, was it not? Hadn't there been damage and so on done around the docks and so on?

Knight: It was clean-up work, and also they was salvaging everything they could possibly get to put on their supply ships to carry on their march south.

Marcello: What sort of work were you personally doing during this stage?

Knight: I was doing medical work. I was working in the treatment room.

Marcello: Now I would assume that at this point everybody was still in pretty good shape yet, were they not?

Knight: When we went into that place, we was in good shape; but when we left, we started breaking down.

Marcello: What sort of rations were you receiving here in Batavia while you were working on the docks?

Knight: The rice we were getting was very, very bad--very bad. It had worms and everything else in it. The commanding officer was using what money he had to buy stuff on the outside--anything we could get ahold of.

Marcello: Now at first did you resist or refuse to eat the rice that had the worms and so on in it?

Knight: Yes, we did. In fact, you couldn't even stand to eat them. We finally got so that we'd go in a dark corner and eat them.

Marcello: I'd heard some other people mention that; that is, that you'd find some dark place to eat that rice.

Knight: That way you wouldn't know if you ate the worms. Plus, the worms had protein in them, and it done us more good than harm.

Marcello: Now did the Japanese harass you very much while you were working here on the Batavia docks?

Knight: Not too much, they didn't.

Marcello: But now you actually didn't go out on any of the work parties as such.

Knight: No, I did not. I was fortunate that I didn't have to.

Marcello: What'd these Japanese look like from a physical standpoint? Were they very impressive as soldiers?

Knight: No, they didn't impress me any. The only thing that impressed me is that this one camp that we was at . . . there was another

Japanese camp right next to us. On a morning, they'd get those poor privates out, and before they'd let them eat, they'd beat the hell out of them and discipline them. They could eat only by the numbers, if you want to call it that, and that's when we first got the real impression of what the Japanese Army was really like. We could see there that--or I could see there--that they only had one line of leadership. After that leadership was gone, them poor privates didn't know what to do. That was very obvious.

Marcello: But you did observe that physical punishment was a way of life in the Japanese Army.

Knight: Right, and that's the reason that we got the impression real quick that we were going to be treated the same way.

Marcello: But while you were here in Batavia, there really wasn't too much physical harassment and so on.

Knight: No, because they didn't come into the camp. I don't think that too many of our work parties even was harassed at that time.

Marcello: I guess the Japanese were fairly well-occupied organizing things and consolidating their position and so on and so forth here.

Knight: Yes, but this was their first line of defense, and it seemed like their first line of defense soldiers was a little bit better educated. They had seen their first Americans, too, so therefore I don't feel like there was too much hatred against

us as we had against them. It was all too new to all of us.

Marcello: Did the Japanese seem to be rather curious about Americans and things of this nature? Do they ask a lot of questions and so on?

Knight: If they did, I didn't know about it, because I wasn't in contact with them at that time.

Marcello: What sort of casualties were you receiving here at the aid station in Batavia?

Knight: We was picking up a little bit of dysentery and a little bit of beriberi, it turned out later to be, and some boils and this type of sickness.

Marcello: Were your medical supplies adequate to cope with the situation?

Knight: At that time, yes. We had enough sulfa drugs. One of the worst things that we had in that camp was the dirt; it was filthy. It was so filthy that you could almost call it syphilis dirt--not the disease syphilis--but using it as they called that type of a dirt. There was a lot of ringworms in it. Some of the guys would go barefooted, and in that part of Java the ringworms bore into the bottoms of their feet. This gave a lot of trouble.

Marcello: Now why would guys be going barefoot at this stage? I would assume that most of you still had shoes and so on.

Knight: We did, but not knowing the type of dirt it was or what was involved in--it was new to us--they'd come in hot and sweaty,

and they'd take off their clothes and wash up and take off their shoes and run around barefooted just like any American kid would do.

Marcello: I assume you didn't stay here but a couple of months. Is that correct?

Knight: That's all, yes.

Marcello: What were your quarters like here? You mentioned that they were filty, of course.

Knight: They were just like horse stalls. We built our own bunks out of anything we could find. There was no ceilings to it. There was lizards around, and they'd squawk all night long.

Marcello: What were your shower and bathing facilities like here?

Knight: If I remember right, there weren't none. Now I don't remember seeing any. I know I didn't take a bath the whole time I was there--only what little you could wash with a wash rag or something like that.

Marcello: Now at this stage, have you been thrown in with other nationalities? Or were there strictly Americans at this camp here at Batavia?

Knight: There were strictly Americans.

Marcello: Okay, now in May of 1942, you go into Bicycle Camp.

Knight: Yes.

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

Knight: Well, Bicycle Camp was a Dutch military barracks. It was a pretty good size. For that type of climate and everything and the way that they built their houses . . . they didn't have windows; they were all open air. You almost had to build them like that; otherwise you couldn't stand a regular house. But for that type . . . they were made out of concrete, and they were good permanent barracks. But so many of us was throwed in there that we was practically living on top of each other. We was thrown in with Americans, Dutch, Javanese--there were more Javanese than there were Dutch; there was very few Dutch--Australians, and the survivors of the Houston. I think there were even some merchant marine sailors throwed in there, too, that got caught, that the Germans had captured.

Marcello: This was a pretty big camp, in other words.

Knight: If I remember right, there was from 3,000 to 5,000 people in that. I don't know if I'm off, but there was a heck of a lot of them.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that this is when you made your first contact with the survivors off the Houston. Describe what they looked like.

Knight: They looked like they'd been through a good battle. They didn't have any clothes to speak of. What they'd picked up after . . . they had Japanese uniforms, part of them, or anything else they could find. Some of them were shot up pretty

bad; some of them survived, and it was amazing how good they did look. They were hungry. At that particular time when we first saw them, the time of being a POW hadn't made its mark on them real good yet . . . as long as it did everybody else.

Marcello: Did you share your clothing and so on with the Houston survivors? I'm referring now to the 2nd Battalion.

Knight: No, I didn't. Maybe some of the guys did, because we had more clothes than we knew what to do with. We had a whole bunch of winter uniforms. Why we was issued them, God will only know. They was able to go out and buy them. With what money that the battalion had, Colonel Tharp bought supplies; he bought food, which we was able to do. The Japanese let us do it until it all run out. So as far as the food was concerned, we was eating pretty good.

This is where a lot of beriberi started to show up. I caught it at Bicycle Camp. Amoebic dysentery started to show up real good, because . . . I caught amoebic dysentery, I think, from bananas, and I think a lot of the others got it . . . in other words, from eating fresh fruit.

Marcello: How long did the company funds hold out?

Knight: As far as I know, they held out until we left there. We was able to buy something, maybe not as much as we did at the start, but as much as I can remember, it held out fairly good.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what did your meals consist of there at Bicycle Camp?

Knight: Just about what we was used to eating. We got back to American meals. There was rice furnished to us, but I don't remember eating too much of it. But we were able to buy and purchase about the same thing that we ate while we was at this airfield.

Marcello: Were you getting three meals a day here at Bicycle Camp?

Knight: Yes. They were being cooked and prepared pretty good, too.

Marcello: Did you get very much meat?

Knight: As much as I can remember, yes.

Marcello: How about the quality of the rice the Japanese were providing.

Knight: It improved. It was better than what we got at the other place.

Marcello: What were your observations concerning the weight of the men? Were people beginning to lose weight by this time, or was everybody more or less holding their own?

Knight: They were holding their own at this time. The work details wasn't severe; they was able to cope with them. They was able to mix with the natives and pick up stuff if they wanted to. There was always a tremendous black market--I guess that's what you would call it--at that time. The Javanese would even come to the gates of the prison camp and was able to sell stuff to us. Here again, the guards of the Japanese Army wasn't too critical with us.

Marcello: I assume that you're still working in the sickbay or whatever

it was called here at Bicycle Camp.

Knight: Yes, I'm still working in that area.

Marcello: Describe what the medical facilities are like here.

Knight: Well, it was more or less like a field station. In other words, we still had our field station intact at this time, and we were still working like we were normally.

Marcello: Now was this a strictly American field station, or were there other nationalities here?

Knight: We kept our own.

Marcello: How many doctors did you have?

Knight: We had one.

Marcello: Just Dr. Lumpkin?

Knight: Dr. Lumpkin.

Marcello: How many medics were there?

Knight: What was it . . . eight or nine, eight or ten, or something like that.

Marcello: Were there adequate medical supplies here?

Knight: Yes. In other words, we was able to work with what we had.

Marcello: Did the Japanese provide any medical supplies at all?

Knight: Well, we got some; I don't know if they provided them or . . . they were available, or made them available--let's put it that way. We was able to go out and buy it, I guess. I don't think they actually gave us anything, but we was able to buy it.

Marcello: Did the Japanese more or less stay away from the sickbay area?

Knight: Yes. In other words, there in Bicycle Camp, they weren't even allowed inside the camp. Maybe they'd take a swing just for a general inspection, but that's about the only time you'd ever see them. They didn't do any harassment or anything, or they didn't even oversee any of us.

Marcello: I gather that orders came from the Japanese to your own officers, and then they in turn were expected to pass them on to the enlisted personnel.

Knight: We had to govern ourselves, yes. The commanding officer of every unit was held responsible for his individual men. There were orders given down to him, but as far as going down to the enlisted personnel, we functioned just about like we normally would.

Marcello: Am I to assume, therefore, that discipline was still being maintained, even though you were prisoners-of-war?

Knight: Yes, definitely.

Marcello: This was important, was it not?

Knight: Very important, very important.

Marcello: I would assume that as you look back upon your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, the fact that you did maintain discipline for the most part was one of the things that pulled you through.

Knight: It was. It was the individual discipline plus the group discipline. Discipline would come . . . well, the Articles of War, what we knew of them, enabled us to do this.

Marcello: Now at one particular stage here at Bicycle Camp, did the Japanese not force everybody to sign a non-escape pledge?

Knight: They tried to.

Marcello: Describe this incident.

Knight: If I remember right, as much as I can remember right now, we refused. In fact, I think we refused it a number of times . . . or I did . . . until our officers told us that we were forced to sign this under force, and that it wouldn't be held against us. So, therefore, we went ahead and signed it.

Marcello: And, of course, I assume there weren't too many thoughts of escaping, anyway. There was really no place to go, was there?

Knight: There just wasn't no place to go. If you did, you'd stand out like a sore thumb because your eyes weren't slanted.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever warn you as to the consequences of escape and re-capture?

Knight: Oh, yes. They kept us aware of that at all times.

Marcello: What was the punishment?

Knight: Death.

Marcello: Did you think they were bluffing?

Knight: No, we didn't think they were bluffing.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago, however, that there really wasn't

a whole lot of physical harassment in this camp.

Knight: Right, there weren't. There was more harassment among our own men than there was from the Japanese.

Marcello: In what way?

Knight: Homosexuals and this type of thing. I never did go to shower and take a bath, because it was unsafe.

Marcello: That's interesting. I've never heard anybody mention this before, but there were cases of homosexuality in the camp there at Bicycle Camp?

Knight: Definitely. It was the English and Australians that was doing it.

Marcello: But you really didn't see any cases of this among the members of the 2nd Battalion.

Knight: No. In other words, we were told to stay away from them. But it was definitely there. In fact, there wasn't too much integrating among nationalities. You stayed more or less to your own outfit.

Marcello: What were the shower and bathing facilities like here at Bicycle Camp?

Knight: They were excellent--good water, plenty of water and soap, just like a regular GI shower.

Marcello: Did you have more or less ready access to these facilities?

Knight: Yes. They were more or less in the center of this great, big, huge compound, and everybody merged to those to . . . that's

where most of your toilets were, also.

Marcello: The shower and toilet facilities were international in character, so to speak.

Knight: Yes, they were.

Marcello: You mention the toilet facilities. Evidently the Dutch toilet facilities were a little bit different from those to which the Americans had been accustomed.

Knight: Well, if you looked for one like we have here in America, you wouldn't find it; if you looked for toilet paper, you didn't find it. You used water and washed yourself, and you squatted like you do on a split trench, only it was just a hole. It was porcelain and tile and everything, and you could flush it, but it was just level to the ground. Then when you got through, you'd go over and squat and wash yourself. When you got to the door, you'd disinfect your hands. Well, there's reasons for that, because the hot climate . . . this was the only sanitary way to control disease.

Marcello: Now I would assume that as a medic you have very little training in coping with the tropical diseases that you were to encounter in this area of the world.

Knight: Yes. We hadn't actually come in contact to any of them.

Marcello: Could you learn a lot from the Dutch?

Knight: Yes, we learned a lot from the Dutch. In fact, they're the only ones that we could actually go to and learn from. While

we were in this airfield, we'd send a lot of our men into the hospital, and a lot of corpsmen would go in with them and help treat them.

Marcello: Now by this airfield, you're referring to the one back at Singosari.

Knight: Right. So we picked up a lot of what type of diseases was going on. We had pro stations in this town, and our own men, including myself, manned these pro stations, and we'd come in contact that way. Now getting back to the Bicycle Camp, I was unlucky, fortunate, or whatever you want to call it, because there was a lot of English and Australians had V.D., syphilis. They had isolated them into a area by theirselves. Most of them were advanced cases. Like I said, I was lucky or unlucky, because I was the one that had to treat them--nobody else. I was the only one that was allowed to go into that area.

Marcello: How'd you treat syphilis at that time? Penicillin had not been in use then, was it?

Knight: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Oh, it was?

Knight: Yes. Sulfanilamide had been introduced; it was comparatively new. There was one other type . . . let's see, I believe that was the only sulfa drugs that I had at that time. That was the only thing that I found out that would do any good at all for them, which didn't do too much because they was too eaten

up.

Now that was a nightmare. I would go in; they would have everything set up for me. I would treat them or take care of any other ailments. If there was anything that I couldn't handle, I'd do as much as I could. When I'd go back that night, I'd check with Dr. Lumpkin; he'd instruct me; I'd go back the next day and take care of what was ailing these fellows.

Marcello: Approximately how many of them were there?

Knight: There was at least forty or fifty of them. When I got through, they cleaned up my mess; I went through a series of disinfecting myself; and lucky enough, I didn't catch anything out of it, thanks to their own cleanliness themselves with helping me. So this is where I really got acquainted with advanced medicine, and I was doing a lot of stuff that a doctor would do that I was forced to learn the hard way and do it, too.

Marcello: Now awhile ago you mentioned that each nationality maintained their own medical facilities. How come that in this particular case you had to take care of the Englishmen and the Australians?

Knight: That's a good question. I don't know. The only thing I know is that Dr. Lumpkin came to me and told me I'd do it.

Marcello: Were you getting very many cases of dysentery and beriberi and pellagra and that sort of thing here at Bicycle Camp?

Knight: It started showing up, yes.

Marcello: All of these are mainly dietary deficiencies. Well, of course, dysentery isn't, but the beriberi and the pellagra come from dietary deficiencies, do they not?

Knight: Right. The food that we were getting was ample, but it wasn't the right type of food that we was used to.

Marcello: So what could you do for beriberi and pellagra cases and things of that sort?

Knight: Actually, there wasn't much we could do. In fact, it hadn't got to the stage that we knew that definitely that's what we had. I didn't know definitely I had it until later on, and I don't think the rest of them did, either.

Marcello: But you did contract it here at Bicycle Camp?

Knight: This is where it started, yes. That's where I've been able to trace it back to; that's the only place I could think of where I could have picked it up. Because I was beginning to have trouble with my legs at that time, and I was beginning to have swelling at that time. There wasn't too much stuff that we had on hand that would take care of it.

Marcello: And this was beriberi.

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: Now there is a wet and a dry beriberi, is there not?

Knight: Right.

Marcello: You would have probably had the wet beriberi?

Knight: Most of us had wet beriberi. There is also beriberi of the

heart. But the biggest majority of them that I know, that I have contacted and tried to treat, had wet beriberi.

Marcello: What exactly is wet beriberi?

Knight: It's where the body doesn't throw off the water, and it usually turns into what we call edema or swelling of parts of the body that have the least resistance. It can be in the leg; it can be in the hand; it can be in the feet or any part of the body.

Marcello: How did you treat it there at Bicycle Camp?

Knight: I didn't treat it at all.

Marcello: What did you do in your spare time here at Bicycle Camp? In other words, what sort of recreational activities did you engage in?

Knight: I didn't do too much. I think some of the guys played ball or this type of thing. But on the whole, there wasn't too much activity as I remember, because I didn't do hardly anything. I worked mostly in the treatment room and that type of thing. The time that we were off, we more or less laid around and rested.

Marcello: At this stage, how far are you looking ahead? Are you at the point where you're looking one day ahead? A week ahead? A month ahead?

Knight: Well, actually, I think I was, and some of the other fellows was, hoping that it'd be over in a short period of time. Here

again, we didn't actually know the whole impact of what had taken place.

Marcello: But were you thinking of a war lasting in terms of months rather than years at this point?

Knight: Right. But after . . . oh, it's hard to say now how long it was, but we finally got so that we knew it was going to last a long time. How long, we didn't have any idea.

Marcello: While you're at Bicycle Camp, were you receiving any news from the outside?

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: Describe how you received that news.

Knight: We had one fellow that was . . . he was an electrician. I believe at that point or that place, he had a portable radio, and he turned it into a short wave radio. He was able to get enough parts and everything to make a short wave radio, which we got San Fransicso, I believe. Or anyhow, we was getting newscasts, and we were picking up news from the outside. Some of the guys was picking up news from the outside, also.

Marcello: I assume all this had to be done secretly.

Knight: Oh, yes. Definitely.

Marcello: How was the word passed around?

Knight: It wasn't passed around. It was only given to the people that didn't show any expression. In other words, if you had a "pan face" and could keep it that way, they would feed it to

you. If not, they wouldn't feed it to you.

Marcello: Did you ever personally see the radio?

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: How was it kept, or where was it hidden and things of that sort?

Knight: He kept moving it all the time. In Bicycle Camp, there wasn't much worry about it. He kept it . . . I don't know exactly where he kept it, because there was only about one or two who knew where it was at all the time. Normally, it was in between a wall someplace. But I was fed information all the time on it.

Marcello: Now is it at this stage where most of you are beginning to have a certain amount of disgust for the English? Maybe I'm trying to put words in your mouth here. My impression is that most of the Americans didn't take too kindly toward the English.

Knight: This is true, but I didn't at this stage of the game. We were away from them; we didn't have too much . . . or I didn't have too much to do with them. But I did later on.

Marcello: When was it that you left Bicycle Camp?

Knight: It must have been around the first of October sometime.

Marcello: Of 1942.

Knight: Yes. We arrived in Singapore on the 16th, October the 16th of '42.

Marcello: Was this a rather unsettling experience when you found that you had to leave Bicycle Camp? In other words, I would assume that by this time you had gotten into some sort of a routine, and now all of a sudden you have to pick up and move.

Knight: We was under the impression, or I was, that this was just a temporary thing, because the Japanese had come around with a questionnaire asking what type of work you did. You had to fill this out and everything and turn it back in.

Marcello: Did you all fill it out properly?

Knight: No. I filled mine out and told them I was a welder. What got me to do this, I don't know to this day, but something told me to just put down that I was a welder. A lot of the ones put down students and whatever. This fellow that had the radio, he put himself down as electrician, which he was in private life. They picked . . . there were twenty-four, I believe it is, if I remember right, or close to that. In our group, there were some Navy men and then some from the 2nd Battalion. They pulled us away or told us to get ready and leave and put us on board ship. We didn't know if we were going to see the rest of the battalion or not.

Marcello: In other words, you were part of this twenty-odd group that was separated?

Knight: Yes. I was the only medical man among the group.

Marcello: Now had a great many of the other people lied about their civilian occupations and military occupations and so on?

Knight: I assume they did, like me. Some of them, I guess, told the truth. I guess the only reason why I did was because my dad was a welder, and I did help him a lot and I knew a little bit about it. But as far as being able to weld, I couldn't do too much of it. But some of them, I think, lied about it; some of them didn't. Some of them told them they were a student when they might have been something else--might have been a electrician or something like that.

Marcello: Well, now as a result, did you leave with the rest of the group, or did you leave before them?

Knight: We left before them. We was put in a ship with Javanese, with English, and with Australians. We was all thrown together; we was in one of the hell ships. It was an old liberty ship from World War I that the Japanese got from the United States. The hold, I think, was filled with some type of an odor. I'm not sure exactly . . . I don't know exactly what it was. On top of that, they crammed all of us--about 300 of us--in two holds. We had so many darned men in the hold that I was in that you couldn't lay down. We had to take a shift of laying down and sleeping.

Marcello: I would assume that ventilation was very, very bad.

Knight: We didn't have any ventilation. They had the hatch covered up.

The only thing we had was just a stairway going down. They'd only let us out of there when we had to go to the bathroom.

Marcello: Were you in the dark down there?

Knight: Yes. Then we left there, and they took us to Singapore.

Marcello: How long did this trip take?

Knight: It must have taken about ten days, as far as I know. I don't show here on my records, but I show that we arrived there October 16th. It must have been . . . well, it couldn't have taken over ten days.

Marcello: Describe what that ten-day journey was like.

Knight: Well, it was hell. They fed us rotten meat. We was fed rotten meat all the way to Japan. But it was rotten meat, bad rice, and very little rice. Now this is where dysentery really began to show up, because the guys wouldn't start eating. Although, from there into Singapore it wasn't too bad because we wasn't there long enough.

Marcello: Now was this rice and other food lowered down to you in the hold, or did you come up on deck to eat?

Knight: No, they let us come up on deck to get it. We were allowed up on deck a couple of times, I guess, a day and take exercise and calesthenics. They was great for calesthenics.

Marcello: I would assume that since dysentery was starting to break out by this time that it must have stunk to "high-heaven" down in that hold.

Knight: Yes, it did. Again, it wasn't too prevalent at that particular time, because we hadn't had time to really get bad. When we got into Singapore, we run into the rest of our outfit. We found out that they followed us in another ship. All of us was throwed in again at Singapore.

Marcello: But now you mentioned that you actually left before the rest of the outfit, but they got there before you?

Knight: Yes. Now how that come about, I don't know. But anyhow, that's what happened.

Marcello: Did anybody go berserk on this trip, I mean, just crack up?

Knight: Not this portion of it, no. Here again, we were still in pretty good shape and in a pretty good frame of mind.

Marcello: What sort of drinking water did the Japanese provide on this ten-day journey?

Knight: About normal. We got adequate water. We didn't get all we needed, but we got adequate. The weather wasn't bad.

Marcello: Okay, so you get to Singapore, and you're reunited with the rest of the 2nd Battalion. Describe what the camp was like in Singapore. Now is this when you got to Changi?

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: And this is Changi Prison Camp as opposed to the Changi Jail, is that correct? You were in another British army camp at first.

Knight: Yes, we were in another British army camp. It was actually

their barracks of the coastal defense where they had all the big guns that they couldn't turn around . . . couldn't use. Now this is where we really came--or I felt like--we really came into reality on what was actually going on.

Marcello: Why was that?

Knight: Because the British told us what had happened and what the Japanese was really doing. It's just one of the times when the English did all right, as far as I'm concerned. They . . . well, more or less like the radio part of it, they let us know that it was impossible to try to sneak a radio on board ship and take it with us--that there'd been too many of the guys that tried this and then got themselves shot. They also let us know that . . . I believe if I remember right, the convoy that left before we left had been sunk or one of the prison ships had been sunk. By this time, it was known definite that we were going to Japan proper and that there was a lot of American submarines in the Sea of China, and they was taking their toll even at this early point of the war.

Marcello: What'd you think about the idea of going to Japan?

Knight: Well, I had mixed emotions. The only thing that I was worried about was if I was going to get there or not, because of the stories that the English told us that our chances of getting there was very, very slim. And the ship we were going to be on, we didn't know if we were going to make it or not in its

condition and everything. So at this point, we began to see reality as it really was.

Marcello: Now the British were actaully running this camp here at Changi, were they not?

Knight: Yes, they were.

Marcello: Did that create any difficulties?

Knight: No, because I didn't stay there; my group didn't stay there long enough.

Marcello: About how long were you at Changi altogether?

Knight: Well, I don't think we were there over a week at the most.

Marcello: What did you do during that period that you were there? Did you do anything?

Knight: We didn't do anything. The only thing I can remember about Singapore is that when they brought us in off the ship into the prison camp, they had bodies of natives hanging by their neck all over the place. They had stoled or done something against the Japanese, and this is the way that they scared the rest of the population to make sure that they'd do what they were told to do.

Marcello: What sort of an impression did this make upon you?

Knight: It was a gruesome thing. It's the first time that we've ever seen any atrocities like this first-hand. I guess the shock affected me more than anything in the world.

Marcello: Had these bodies been hanging there for some time?

Knight: Yes, they had been.

Marcello: I would assume that in that climate they were probably pretty ripe.

Knight: Yes. I understand they let them there until they completely fell apart, or that's what they told us; I don't know how true it was.

Marcello: Is there anything else eventful that happened during that one-week stay here at Changi?

Knight: No, that's just about all.

Marcello: Now how many Americans did you say there were in this particular group that you were now with?

Knight: There was twenty-four or twenty-eight--I forget. It was something in that neighborhood.

Marcello: Now was Frank Fujita a part of this group? I know that he eventually was one of those that went back to Japan, and I was wondering if he were a part of this group.

Knight: No, I don't think he was. If he's the one I think it is, I think he went to Borneo or up in there. Then they sent a couple of groups out of there, and I think he was one of the first groups that went to Japan out from there. I'm not sure.

Marcello: Okay, so where do you go then after this one-week stay in Singapore?

Knight: They put us back on this ship, and we started up the China Sea, and we was riding a hurricane.

Marcello: Describe that particular episode of your journey.

Knight: That plus the dysentery and the guys getting sick and the seasickness, we had guys dying pretty regular. They had just given up.

Marcello: Now were you crowded in these holds once again?

Knight: Again, we was crowded just as bad as I explained before.

Marcello: Was this the same ship or a different ship?

Knight: This is a different ship.

Marcello: Do you recall the name of it?

Knight: No. If I even heard it, I wouldn't know. We were riding the tail-end of this hurricane, and the waves is anywhere from seventy-five to a hundred feet high. I remember them coming over the top of the mast and just completely covering up the ship. One instance, you'd have to look right straight down to see the water; the next time, you'd have to look straight up to see the sky.

I remember they had privies just like outhouses, but they was hanging on the fantail of the ship. I saw two of them washed off, and there was some of our guys in it. This is the last we seen of them.

During this time, it sprung a leak--I don't know how many leaks--so they went into Saigon, and we stayed there three or four days to patch those leaks up before we could go on. I think we got into Saigon around November 4th of 1942.

Marcello: Did you stay onboard the ship even after you got to Saigon?

Knight: Yes, they anchored out in the middle of the river and about five miles down from Saigon proper, and that water stunk like "high-heaven!" It was just . . . it was so dirty and everything, and it was thick, it looked like.

Marcello: Let's get back to that sea voyage again from Singapore to Saigon. You mention you were down in the hold of this ship; there was dysentery, seasickness, who knows what else. Describe what conditions were like down in the hold of that ship.

Knight: Well, it was dark.

Marcello: Were the hatches put on again?

Knight: The hatch was never let . . . well, that's the only way . . . the water'd been coming in on us. The way it was, we had enough water that came in on us, anyhow, from the open doors, what little opening we did have for air.

Marcello: So it was dark, damp.

Knight: Damp, and the guys are shitting all over themselves and everybody else around them.

Marcello: No ventilation, of course.

Knight: No ventilation. It got to the point where practically nobody could get any sleep.

Marcello: What happened when somebody would die? Like you mentioned awhile ago, you did lose some people here in the hold.

Knight: They'd cart them out and shove them over the side of the ship.

Marcello: Did you lose any Americans in this voyage?

Knight: To tell you the truth, I don't remember. It was so bad that your mind just ceased to function. Here was the first time that we had to actually do everything we could do just to exist.

Marcello: Now at this stage, I would assume that you live from day-to-day. "Thank God, I made it through another day," in other words.

Knight: Yes. It was beginning to come to this. We were just hoping that the ship would stay afloat, because none of us had went through any type of storms like this. This is where the meals got unbearable.

Marcello: In what way?

Knight: They would feed us food and what . . . well, they didn't have any refrigeration on the ship; if they did, it broke down. They was feeding us beef that had gone rotten and was so rotten it was green. It was just falling off in pieces, and it was a slick, slimy type of thing.

Marcello: Did you have rice, too?

Knight: What little rice there was. It wasn't white rice; it was just brown rice. Here again, it had everything under the sun in it.

Marcello: Now you were being fed up on deck again, I gather.

Knight: No, it was brought down in the hold.

Marcello: Who distributed the rice once it was brought down in the hold?

Knight: Whoever . . .

Marcello: I would assume you would have had to have some sort of a system.

Knight: Now here again, we was under discipline, and still the officers had control. As far as I know, they'd always had control.

Marcello: But there are still only twenty-some-odd Americans here.

Knight: Well, there was some lot of Dutch and English and Australians throwed in with us.

Marcello: And discipline was being maintained among them, also.

Knight: Right. They had their officers also. To survive, you almost had to stay together; otherwise, you'd have fights and everything else.

Marcello: Were there any American officers in your group?

Knight: We had one.

Marcello: Who was that?

Knight: Captain Ziegler.

Marcello: Were you all more or less staying together as a group, that is, the Americans?

Knight: We tried to as much as possible.

Marcello: Was it very unsettling to have been separated from the rest of the unit way back there in Bicycle Camp and then again in Singapore?

Knight: Well, actually, no. Because I think--with myself and I know that I got a pretty good idea with the rest of them--we had come with the idea that this was going to be and there wasn't nothing we could do about it, so we just had to make the best of it as possible. I can say that the mental attitude of all the guys . . . you couldn't ask for anything better. They were--all of them--was more or less capable of handling themselves correctly. The only bad thing about it was that some of them, I found out, gave up. Once they gave up, it was just a matter of time before they died.

Marcello: We'll, of course, talk about this a little bit later on. When you're down there in the hold of that ship and you're on your way to Singapore to Saigon, what do you talk about? Obviously, you have nothing but time on your hands.

Knight: Well, actually, we didn't have much time to talk, because the ship is rolling and tossing and turning, and we could hear the screws, the propellers, that would come out of the water, and it sounded like the whole dadgummed ship is going to fall apart. Then all of a sudden, it would go into the water, and you could just feel that bolt just twist and crack and moan. I think this is what caused it to start leaking.

Marcello: How long did that hurricane last?

Knight: I don't know. It was still going when we got into the mouth of the river to go up to Saigon.

Marcello: I'm sure a boy from Plainview, Texas, had never seen anything like that before.

Knight: No. We were scared. We didn't know how fortunate we were, though.

Marcello: Okay, so you get to Saigon, and you're only there for four or five days, like you mentioned.

Knight: Just long enough to get those whatever . . . where the leaks were, to get them repaired.

Marcello: Were you still basically kept down in the hold of the ship?

Knight: Yes, definitely. We wouldn't even . . . I think we only was let out once or twice a day while we were there and only a short period of time. Anytime a boat would come by or a little ship or something, they'd make us get back down in the hold.

Marcello: What was your own condition at this point?

Knight: I was holding my own at this particular point. I was able to function like I should have functioned. I was doing what aid treatment that I could do at this time, because I was the only one.

Marcello: I assume you had very little in the way of medical supplies.

Knight: I only had a small supply of medical stuff.

Marcello: How was your own beriberi coming along?

Knight: I was still having it. It was bothering me, but at this time, I wasn't paying any attention to it.

Marcello: When you say it was bothering you, what do you mean? Is it painful?

Knight: Yes, it was painful, and it was hard for me to walk.

Marcello: Is it the type thing where, if you touch these spots, there is excruciating pain, or how does that work?

Knight: No, my shins between my ankle and my knee swelled up. It was the tightness and the ache that was giving me a lot of trouble.

Marcello: It's a throbbing-type pain, shall we say?

Knight: No, it's not a throbbing. It's just kind of like a dozen ice picks in your . . . and actually, your feet are numb; your leg is numb, actually; and your knees will buckle under you every now and then--this type of thing.

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

Knight: From there we went to Formosa . . . Taiwan.

Marcello: When did you arrive in Taiwan?

Knight: November 16, 1942.

Marcello: How long a trip was this, therefore, from Saigon to Taiwan?

Knight: It must have been about, oh . . . from the time we arrived in Saigon until we arrived in Formosa, it was about twelve days, so it must have been about another week or eight days. Here again, we just went from the mainland over to Formosa; that's not too far.

Marcello: Describe this particular leg of your journey.

Knight: It was rough, also. It was still rough. They were still having

the aftermath of the storm that we had followed up. It was rough enough that the submarines couldn't operate.

Marcello: Were you part of a convoy, or was this one lone ship?

Knight: No, we was all by our little lonesome self.

Marcello: Did the food improve any?

Knight: Nope. In fact, it got worse.

Marcello: How could it get worse?

Knight: Well, it did.

Marcello: Did you lose more people on this particular part of the journey?

Knight: We were losing people constantly, yes, because there was still seasickness, and they'd give up. They had dysentery so bad that they was going thirty and forty and fifty times a day. When you get to going that bad, it's just a matter before your stomach collapses and you die.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned on several occasions now of people actually giving up. Describe this. In other words, how could you tell when somebody had given up?

Knight: They just get lifeless; they just refuse to eat; they refuse to talk. They get in a real deep depression, and that's the end of it.

Marcello: Is there any way you could snap them out of it?

Knight: No. Some of them we have . . . or later on, I learned how to cope with it, but at this time I didn't. It was something new that I didn't know how to cope with it. There's no way to con-

trol it, because this giving up was mostly because of just dysentery. The dysentery killed them more or less, and there wasn't nothing you could do about it. We didn't have anything to treat it with.

Marcello: What sort of an attitude did those who continued to struggle have toward those that had given up? Was it an attitude of contempt? Pity? Understanding?

Knight: That, I don't know, because I feel like that every individual had enough problems trying to keep themselves going and keeping their own heads screwed on straight. They didn't have time to worry about the other guy. It got to the point where it was "dog-eat-dog," in other words. You was looking after your own individual self, and "to hell with the other guy." This is the only way that you could do and survive.

Marcello: Do you find maybe two or three or four people banding together in little cliques in a situation like this?

Knight: This is when it first developed; they began to do it. Surprisingly, this was when I first began to notice that character and personality began to change in an individual.

Marcello: I'm sure that in a situation like this it does bring out the very best and the very worst in people.

Knight: Right. This became more prevalent as time went on. The guys that under normal conditions were what you would call "top gold" would be--why, I don't know--would be the ones

that would be the bastards under these conditions. They got to the point where there's no telling how low they would stoop to get something or to get an "in" to something. This is where it really began to start.

Marcello: Now you saw this taking place on the voyage from Saigon to Formosa?

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: What were some of the things that these individuals would do?

Knight: Well, the first thing that showed up at that point, if a guy over here was dying, they wouldn't have anything to do with him. Plus, where you should maybe take some of your food and try to save a guy, they wouldn't do it. They would eat it all themselves. This is the first indication that I noticed that this situation was beginning to happen.

Marcello: How are you holding out in terms of your clothing and so on? What do you have by this time?

Knight: We had practically everything that we were issued. We was trying to carry everything. Before we'd left the States, they'd given us an issue of summer clothing; they'd given us an issue of winter clothing. We still had all of it or as much of it as we could possibly carry.

Marcello: I guess as you look back on your experience as a prisoner-of-war, had you been able to stay in Bicycle Camp, things might not have been too bad. Now not that being a prisoner-of-war

under any circumstances is good, but comparing and contrasting all the places that you had been, Bicycle Camp wasn't too bad.

Knight: Well, no, it wasn't too bad--right. Let's put it this way. Battery E stayed in Java the whole time of the war, and I think, if you want to put it this way, they fared a lot better than the fellows that went to Burma. Now the ones of us that went to Japan fared better than the ones that went to Burma. The reasons for that is that the ones in Java didn't have to do so much running around as we did. I think their living conditions might have been--if you want to call it this--better; their food might have been a little bit better, here again, if you want to call it that. Our conditions in Japan . . . the only thing that kept us going was the change of season. We had hot and cold, so therefore there was a lot of diseases that was contracted in the tropics that we didn't have to worry about, such as tropical ulcers and malaria and this type of thing.

Marcello: What happened when you got to Formosa?

Knight: We stayed there a day or two. I think the only thing they did there was just to get water or refit the ship and refuel. Then we went on to Moji, Japan. We arrived there on November 27th of '42.

Marcello: Okay, if you arrived in Moji, Japan, in November of 1942, I assume that it was the Japanese winter, also?

Knight: It wasn't cold there yet, because Moji is in the southern part of Japan.

Marcello: So what happens when you get to Moji?

Knight: They put us on a train and packed us in as much as, you know, they could, on a train, all except, I think, two guys. The rest of us, including the Javanese and the English--all of us; the whole ship--we went the whole distance of that main island to Shimonoseki, Japan.

Marcello: Well, now what sort of a train was this? Were you put in box-cars, or were you in regular passenger cars?

Knight: No, it was a regular passenger train.

Marcello: Were you allowed to view the countryside as you traversed the island?

Knight: Oh, yes. They didn't make us . . . in fact, they showed us off more or less. Every town we'd come in, we would stop and people'd congregate around and look at us.

Marcello: Were you harassed at all during this trip?

Knight: No, we were not.

Marcello: I guess the Japanese are still winning the war at this stage, or at least they think they are.

Knight: As far as they were concerned, they were winning the war, and seeing us confirmed it.

Marcello: And the bombing of the islands hadn't occurred yet and so on and so forth?

Knight: No, no. Here again, everything was going the Japanese's way. This was still the early parts of the war.

Marcello: What impressed you about Japan as you were traversing the island from Moji to Shimonoseki?

Knight: Oh, I enjoyed the countryside. We went to Tokyo, and we saw Mount Fujiyama and those you've always heard about. They was as pretty as they say they were.

One interesting thing is that they made us drink hot water the whole period of time. Here again, we had our problems of dysentery, because we had only one little bathroom or commode for the whole thing; and everybody was trying to get in there all at one time, so that created a problem.

Marcello: Did you have dysentery?

Knight: I was beginning to pick it up. It was beginning to get active on me at that . . . not too much, but it was beginning to bother me.

Marcello: What would you say was the attitude of these Japanese civilians toward the prisoners? Was it one of curiosity?

Knight: I would say it was, yes. I think more or less they were just . . . yes, there was curiosity just to see American prisoners. Here again, I think they was making a show of what has happened mainly to get better work out of the Japanese and get more of the older generation more or less to be more congenial to the war effort, in other words.

Marcello: What happens now when you get to Shimonoseki?

Knight: They put us in trucks and took us . . . now wait a minute. Oh, okay. On this trip from Shimonoseki, we went to Kobe, Tokyo, up to Ohosi--that was an iron mine. They had a barracks there that they housed us in.

Marcello: Is this where you ultimately ended up then--at this iron mine?

Knight: By myself, for about six months. The rest of the twenty-eight--the biggest part of that party--stayed there.

Marcello: In Shimonoseki?

Knight: Right.

Marcello: But you simply went to Shimonoseki and then went into this iron mine.

Knight: No, not from Shimonoseki. To Ohosi. That was Hakodate Camp Number Two, which was a place where they had a iron mine; they mined iron. They had a crushing plant there.

Marcello: But now here again, you went from Moji to Shimonoseki . . . or didn't you ever actually go to Shimonoseki? I'm not clear on that.

Knight: Yes, we went to Shimonoseki, right.

Marcello: Then from there you went to the iron mine.

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: But the rest of the people stayed at Shimonoseki.

Knight: No, they went to the iron mine.

Marcello: Along with you?

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: Okay. So how many of you are there at the iron mine, that is, among the Americans?

Knight: This was only the Americans now. The twenty-eight of us was the only ones that went to that particular point.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you ultimately ended up at this iron mine at Hakodate Number Two.

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what this particular camp looked like from a physical layout.

Knight: It was in a narrow canyon, and there was a barracks something similar to an Army barracks, wooden barracks, that you find here in the United States--a two-story barracks with each room having about eight people in them. At one end of the barracks was a great, big benjo place, and the food was brought to us, if I remember right.

Marcello: What sort of sleeping quarters did you have?

Knight: We slept on Japanese mats, and they furnished the covers.

Marcello: In other words, right on the floor?

Knight: Right on the floor.

Marcello: What sort of covers did they furnish you?

Knight: Blankets. I had a couple of Army blankets, and everybody else had at least one Army blanket. They furnished some blankets, also.

Marcello: You mentioned that there were only some twenty-some prisoners at this iron mine.

Knight: Yes. There was just the original Americans that left out of Bicycle Camp that went to Japan, and we ended up all together in that one place.

Marcello: Were there any other prisoners there besides the Americans?

Knight: No, we were the only ones.

Marcello: Were you working with Japanese civilians?

Knight: We were working with Japanese civilians. Now here's where your electricians came into play, and the rest of the group worked in the iron mines mining iron ore.

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

Knight: Here's where I came down very sick with beriberi. In fact, I couldn't even take care of myself. I was bedridden for the biggest part of that winter.

Marcello: Did they have hospital facilities here?

Knight: No. If they did, they didn't . . . well, I know they did, but they didn't offer it to us. We had a lot of the fellows that was sick like I was that couldn't take care of themselves.

Marcello: So what did you do during this six-month period then?

Knight: Well, when I got . . . actually, what happened was that some of the guys got hold of me. I wouldn't eat my fish rations; I didn't like fish; I couldn't stand to eat them. A couple of the guys got together and took all of their rations and my

rations and got me down and made me eat all of it. They began to do that quite often, and surprisingly I would begin to come back. I would begin to get enough protein that I was building up strength that I finally warded off the dysentery.

Marcello: But the beriberi still stayed with you?

Knight: The beriberi still stayed with me, and it stayed with me until I got back to the States. But it finally got to the point where it was inactive.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what was the food like here at Hakodate Number Two?

Knight: It wasn't too bad. The guards wasn't too bad. The food was inadequate, but it was some of the best that we had gotten up to that point.

Marcello: What sort of food were you receiving other than the fish, which you mentioned just awhile ago?

Knight: Well, whatever was grown around that area and that had ever come ripe. Like, when sweet potatoes came into harvest, that's all we got, was sweet potatoes; and Irish potatoes, what little there were; what they called . . . great big overgrown radishes--this type of thing. Once in awhile, we'd get whale meat and whale blubber. For that type, it wasn't too bad; it was edible. Here again, the guys seemed to be not going down-hill, only the ones that really had just got a good dish of amoebic dysentery; that was the biggest problem we had there.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you're up in the northern part of this island. What's the climate like there in the wintertime?

Knight: Wintertime's cold. It snowed. But still, the guys still had to go to work in it.

Marcello: Was there any sort of heating in the barracks?

Knight: Yes. We got enough heat. At that particular point, it seemed like that we got enough heat to keep us halfway warm.

Marcello: How did they heat the barracks?

Knight: With coal, little ol' bitty pot-bellied stoves. I think there was . . . they heated the hall, actually, was what it was. They heated the hall; there was two on each end, if I remember right. The stove was, oh, about two feet high or something like that and about a foot in diameter, the belly part of it.

Marcello: Were you able to keep warm in the wintertime?

Knight: Yes. We didn't suffer too bad. It was cold, yes, but we didn't suffer too bad. We was able to cope with it. Here again, we still had the biggest part of our strength. The ones that didn't have dysentery too bad was able to get along pretty good.

Marcello: Now since most of the people, that is, since most of the prisoners-of-war were working in the mines and you were unable to, were you expected to do and perform certain chores around the barracks themselves? I assume this is where you were most of the time.

Knight: If I was capable, yes. The officers didn't do anything, naturally. They weren't forced to, and the Japanese wouldn't let them do anything. One of the duties I got was benjo-hauling.

Marcello: Now by benjo, we're referring to the latrine.

Knight: Latrine. The Japanese kept human wastage for fertilizer. All their houses had concrete . . . just like septic tanks, in other words. When they got full, they would dip this out and carry it down to a centralized, great big tank and collect it there. From there, they'd use it for farm purposes or for fertilizer. The ones that didn't work in the mine or the ones that was halfway sick had to carry this stuff down to the main tank.

Naturally, we was on the side of a hill, and it was a pretty steep walk down the hill, and you had to carry it for about a half a mile or a little bit more. You was using a "yo-yo pole" with two five-gallon gasoline cans on each end of the pole. In the summertime, it wasn't bad, but in the wintertime, we were on the shady side of the mountain, and the ice never did melt. Trying to get that down that icy mountain with two cans of benjo gunk was quite a fare. Invariably, you would fall. It was a race between you or the crap to catch up with you.

Marcello: Would the Japanese guards be accompanying you on these trips?

Knight: No. They knew we weren't going anywhere. There'd be one up

at the top where we was dipping it out of, and there might be one down at the bottom, and you wouldn't see them.

Marcello: How often would you have to do this?

Knight: At least once a week. There'd usually be about five or six of them.

Marcello: I'm sure you guys were probably the butt of all sorts of wise-cracks and so on back in the barracks.

Knight: Oh, yes. We got so that we could side-track that stuff pretty good.

Marcello: When you say side-track it, what do you mean--just kind of get rid of some of it?

Knight: Get out of the way of it. Sometimes we wouldn't. The more you spilled, the slicker it got. It got awful. The rest of the guys, especially this electrician that I mentioned long ago in Singapore that had this radio, had the radio there in the barracks. Nobody knew at the time when he left Singapore, but he took that radio all apart and threw all the parts away that he knew he could replace. We smuggled that thing into that camp.

Marcello: What part did you have?

Knight: I didn't have anything. At this time, I didn't know that it existed. In fact, there was only about two or three of them who knew, because the parts were among about three of the fellows and that's the only ones that knew about it.

Marcello: What sort of reception could you get there in that camp? I'm referring now to radio reception, of course.

Knight: Surprisingly, we could get very good reception. We got San Francisco. I turned out to be one of the lucky ones to be involved with it. I was up on a bed listening to it, getting the news during the day since I was there. The radio was in between the wall, and the speaker was underneath of the pillow--what we was using for a pillow.

I looked up and here was the guard standing right beside of me. He asked me what I was doing, and I told him I was sick. I was afraid to death that he was going to hear, but he didn't. I finally told him I had a disease that was contagious, and he stayed around for awhile and then left.

Marcello: What would have been the punishment had he discovered the radio?

Knight: I would have been shot . . . along with probably half of the rest of the barracks, too.

Marcello: Were you the only one in the barracks at that time?

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: So in other words, there would have been nobody in there to warn you of guards coming or anything of that nature.

Knight: No. It was very seldom they came through the day. That's why I was checking and getting the news. But he left and I just went on just like nothing happened.

Marcello: What effect did the receiving of the radio news have upon the morale of the prisoners?

Knight: Here again, we only give it to the people that didn't have any reaction to it. It helped us; it kept us going, in other words. We had an idea of what was going on. In other words, the news we were getting was a little bit behind, but we had to do a little bit of reading between the lines to come up with exactly what was going on. But it helped us. Also, this news we was able to spread amongst various camps.

Marcello: How did this occur?

Knight: They would transfer the fellows from one place to the next, and we'd feed information to these various people. Then they'd take it. It might be way behind, but still it was accomplished this way.

Marcello: How did the POW's fare that were working down in the mines?

Knight: Up until I left there, they was faring all right. In other words, they wasn't pushing them too hard.

Marcello: Were they putting in a seven-day workweek, or just exactly how did the workweek operate?

Knight: No, they was putting in a . . . I believe it was a six-day workweek. We had one day of leisure time. One of the main things what was happening there, they had--what was it--two great big transformers that was running this crushing plant. For some reason, one of them was always burning out. Our guys'd get up

and pour water in the oil tank of these transformers and knock them out, and it'd take them maybe a week or two weeks of four weeks to put it back into operation. So they had approximately half the crushing plant out of operation all the time.

Marcello: During that period, then, these people would not have to work?

Knight: They wouldn't have to work as hard. The Japanese never did get wind of what was actually happening. They just figured that their equipment was wearing out or inferior.

Marcello: Now you mentioned awhile ago that you were actually sleeping on mats on the floor?

Knight: Well, that's the way the Japanese sleep.

Marcello: And that's the way that you were sleeping in these barracks.

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: How great a problem were bedbugs, lice, and other vermin?

Knight: Surprisingly, in Japan we didn't have any. That's one of the things we was fortunate enough. The change of weather and climate eliminated the biggest part of them.

Marcello: What do you do for toothpaste, razor blades, and other personal toilet articles?

Knight: They would furnish . . . surprisingly, the Japanese are very clean. They'd make us go take a shower at least two times a week . . . not a shower but a bath two times a week with these great big water tanks, as you know. We'd pour hot water

over us and soap down real good and then rinse off and get in the tub and then rinse off in cold water. Now here's where they let us keep ourselves clean, and that helped out a lot. We got a kind of haphazard toothpaste--the best that they could get. Here again, we didn't have too good . . . or I didn't--I'd keep my teeth clean.

Marcello: Did you have a toothbrush?

Knight: I don't think I did. I might have, but I don't remember one.

Marcello: Did they provide razor blades for shaving?

Knight: Yes. They weren't good ones, but a lot of us had American razor blades that we kept using over and over and over and over. It was surprisingly how long that they'd last.

Marcello: How did you resharpen those blades?

Knight: Through leather and this type of thing and rock--limestone--this type of thing, and we got a few razor blades from the Japanese. They'd furnish these type of knickknacks to us.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever pull sneak inspections of the barracks?

Knight: Oh, they was constantly doing that.

Marcello: What were they looking for?

Knight: Anything. Actually, they were scared of the Americans. They was always looking for radios. They always felt like that we had a radio. We couldn't have even a Japanese newspaper, and we smuggled them in. They're smart; they had an idea we were doing it, and they was constantly looking for them, and they

never could find them. We had one guy that learned how to read Japanese, and we'd get a lot of news that way. They had a feeling that the Japanese people was smuggling things for us; they might have been smuggling food to us, which they were. This type of stuff they were looking for all the time. We was stealing coal to burn.

Marcello: In other words, the Japanese only gave you a certain ration of coal?

Knight: Yes. Maybe they gave us a kilo of coal, and we'd be burning that kilo of coal for five hours. They couldn't figure out how we could keep that stove going for five hours on one kilo of coal. So this is the type . . . they knew we was doing these things, and this is why they were pulling these sneak inspections on us all the time.

Marcello: You mentioned a few things in your last explanation that we need to pursue a little further, I think. For instance, you mentioned that the Japanese civilians were providing some extra food. How did this occur, and why would they do it?

Knight: The older generation was sympathetic with us. Now this just wasn't at the iron mine; but this was in all the prison camps that I was in after the iron mine. But you worked with the civilian personnel; you was throwed with them. In fact, you had what they called a <u>hancho</u> or a foreman over you that was a civilian. The guard didn't do this. So therefore, the

guards weren't around all the time, and these people could slip food to you or various things to you that would help you out. Like I said, they were sympathetic; they was in the same boat that we were, although their treatment wasn't as bad as ours. The only ones that we had to watch very close here--I did--was the teenagers--sixteen, seventeen, eighteen-year-old kids--because that's all they knew, was banzai and being a soldier. They'd started teaching them this as soon as they were to go to school. They were the dangerous ones; it wasn't the older people.

Marcello: They were dangerous in what way?

Knight: We didn't know what their reaction toward us would be. Naturally, they're anti-American; we was Americans and we was their enemies and we was a prisoner. We wasn't sure what they would try to pull on us irregardless of what they were told they couldn't do. Sometimes they might do anything to you; we didn't know.

Marcello: How did you go about stealing the coal?

Knight: We'd put it in our pockets or put a string around it or a piece of rope or something and hang it between our legs, down our pants legs.

Marcello: How did you get close to the coal to steal it? Was it unguarded?

Knight: Yes, in most cases it was if you had a chance to get around to it. It was a lot easier in the other prison camps where I was at.

Marcello: Did you ever get any chance to strike up any friendships with any of the guards, or did they remain rather aloof at all times?

Knight: I was able to. Me and another kid had a black market in the last prison camp I was in. One of our contacts was one of the guards.

Marcello: Okay, I guess we'll pick that up in some of the other questions later on in the interview. Now you mentioned that you stayed here at Hakodate for about six months.

Knight: This Number Two camp about six months.

Marcello: Okay, where do you go from there?

Knight: They took four of us and took us over to the island Hokkaido.

Marcello: That's the northernmost island, is that correct?

Knight: That's the northernmost island--the headquarters Hakodate camp at Hokkaido. That was a shipyard. Everybody worked in the shipyard at that point.

Marcello: Now Hakodate Number Two was located on Honshu?

Knight: Right.

Marcello: And then you went from Honshu across to Hokkaido.

Knight: Yes, on a ferry.

Marcello: This is where the headquarters camp of Hakodate was located.

Knight: Right. In other words, Hakodate camp had three camps--that one I was in; they had one up in the northern part of the island of Hokkaido; and the main headquarters camp at that

port.

Marcello: Now were you moved to Hokkaido with the rest of the American POW's?

Knight: No, there was only four of us that went over there.

Marcello: What was their purpose in sending the four of you over there?

Knight: We were welders.

Marcello: I was going to ask you if the Japanese ever found out whether or not you were or were not a welder. Was this the test?

Knight: This was the test.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens when you get over to Hokkaido?

Knight: This was in the spring.

Marcello: Of 1944?

Knight: I left there on May 11th and went over to Hakodate, Japan--that's the headquarters camp--and I got there May 12th.

Marcello: Of 1944?

Knight: 1943. They wouldn't recognize me as being the medical aid man, because we didn't have any American officers over there. There was only two Americans here. With us four, that made us six Americans. The rest of them was English and Javanese. This is where I learned to hate an Englishman.

Marcello: Okay, well, let's talk about your experiences as a welder, because I assume that was their purpose in moving you over there.

Knight: Right. They took me down . . . or I . . . went in a work

party, went down to the shipyards. Another fellow and me, they gave us to a hancho down there, and we went into the welding where they made boilers, steam boilers. He was a welder, and he passed. They put him doing arc welding--welding the boilers together. They tried me out on acetylene; well, I flunked.

I was just fortunate enough that the fellow that was in charge of me had enough compassion that he asked me if I knew how to use a cutting torch. Well, that I did. So they put me between him and the foreman of the shop. I assume the foreman of the shop was an elderly man, so I guess through his help . . . I cut steam pipe flanges . . . circles from, oh, the time I got there, oh . . . for a good . . . almost a year, I guess. Here this foreman would pass food to me. If you were a good worker, they'd give you a pay raise. They'd give us a cent a day, and I think I was a "number one" worker, so I got two cents a day. He raised my salary.

Marcello: What were you allowed to do with this money?

Knight: We could buy extra fish or cigarettes or stuff like this that they'd let us have in camp.

Marcello: Am I to assume, then, that these civilian workers did not really harass you here?

Knight: No. They treated me real well. In fact, they had a lot of Japanese girls working along with me and doing the same work

I was, and they treated me real well. Then all these shops had a cafeteria. If you was a good worker, they'd give all the Japanese an extra ration of rice at lunchtime.

Marcello: Now you actually were not eating in the cafeteria, though.

Knight: No, we had to go back to our assembly area where we were at and eat a little box lunch that they let us have--one rice ball. That's all we got for lunch. Usually, when I'd come back from this lunch period, this foreman'd send me upstairs where this lunch room was with the purpose of cleaning it up or help cleaning it up. Well, the only thing they'd do, they'd get hold of me and put me back in the corner and get me a great big ration of rice and whatever else they had to eat that they had left over. But they always managed to save something for me.

Marcello: Now were your quarters and so on here the same as they had been at Hakodate Number Two? Were they generally the same type barracks and so on?

Knight: Generally the same type. Well, I was going to say they could have been a little bit better but not much. But it was generally the same type. This is where we got the first taste of bad guards.

Marcello: Well, describe what the guards were like here at the headquarters of Hakodate.

Knight: What they were, they were returnees from the Solomon Islands,

and I guess they got the hell beat out of them from what I can gather. So they resented the Americans; they was afraid of the Americans; they hated the Americans. So therefore, they took it out on us.

Marcello: There weren't very many of you there, were there? Just the four of you?

Knight: At this particular time, there was only six of us there--the four that came over from this other island, and there was two more that we had left in Moji that they eventually brought up to the main island or this main camp, rather. There were around 300 Englishmen; there were around forty or fifty Javanese. With these Englishmen, part of the 300 was Australians; it was Australian and English, both, mixed in together. They stayed to themselves; the Javanese stayed to themselves; and what few Americans there were stayed in a little room by ourselves. That's all the Americans there was.

We was fighting the English and the Javanese, because they would have various things for us to do, and we always got the "crappy" jobs to do around. There wasn't anything we could do about it. The English would see that we'd get it, and they'd steal from us. See, we got our main rations from the English. Here again, the Japanese guards put out so many rules and regulations that you couldn't hardly do

anything without breaking one.

Marcello: What were some of the rules and regulations that were put out by the guards?

Knight: Oh, you had to bow to every guard you come across or come into the barracks--you had to bow to them. You couldn't smoke. At bedtime, you had to be in bed exactly at the right time. There was so many things that I can't recall a lot of them. But they just saw that you couldn't hardly do anything without breaking them, and they would come in and beat on you for no reason whatsoever.

Marcello: Were you personally subjected to any physical punishment here at this camp?

Knight: Oh, yes, quite a bit.

Marcello: What form would the physical punishment usually take? What would they do to you?

Knight: Well, I went through one real bad beating. I had a couple of gold rings that they wanted. They wanted gold because they'd take the gold and put it in their teeth. They thought gold on their teeth was . . . well, they liked that. I guess gold was hard to get or come by.

A couple of guards tried to trade me out of them, and I wouldn't do it. So they got to trailing me. One night they had lights out, and they caught me smoking a cigarette. The bell rang and I didn't have time . . . they caught me before

I could get the cigarette out. In other words, they were a little premature, but they were sitting there and they knew this was going to happen. They took me to the guardhouse, and they told me they'd let me go back if I'd give them the rings, and I told them, "No." So they stuck me . . . this was during the wintertime, and they put me in the cell, and I stayed in there for two weeks. In the daytime, I'd work--go on work details--and I'd come back, and they'd put me in the guardhouse. During the night while their time was to stand guard, they would get me out and try to get these rings off of me. They eventually got to torturing me until I got to the point where they took them from me.

Marcello: Now what sort of a guardhouse was it that they put you in, or what sort of a cell did they put you in?

Knight: Well, it was a regular cell--they locked the door--with no heat or anything in it.

Marcello: Okay, I guess this is what I was leading up to, because you mentioned awhile ago that it was the wintertime. I'm sure that the wintertime had some significance to the cell.

Knight: Yes, they took my coat away from me, shoes away from me. You was in there with just pants and shirt on.

Marcello: Approximately, what was the temperature?

Knight: Oh, it was around . . . there was snow on the ground. It was below freezing.

Marcello: And you spent every night for two weeks in this cell.

Knight: Right.

Marcello: And during this period, they would harass you when they were on guard duty.

Knight: Right.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that they did get around to torturing you. What form did the torture take?

Knight: Well, one of their main things what they did was, they had a square wooden wastepaper basket that was like a regular wastepaper basket, just straight up and down. They'd make me take and press my palm of my hand against it on each side and hold it out at arm's length and stand at attention. I'd get tired, and naturally it'd start slipping down. Every time I'd do that, they'd hit me in the head with a rifle butt or a two-by-four or something like that or hit me in the back because I'd let it slip. Then I'd have to get it back up and hold it. I'd do that until I'd just flat go out.

Marcello: Now in the meantime, how was the beriberi?

Knight: It was still prevalent. It was still . . . well, on the shins of my legs, I could press it in to the second joint of my finger; it was swollen that much.

Marcello: Is is accurate to say that by this time you had learned to live with it, so to speak?

Knight: Oh, yes, and you had taken it for granted, and I didn't pay

any attention to it as much as I possibly could.

Marcello: So after you gave these rings to the Japanese guards, I assume they more or less left you alone.

Knight: Yes, they let me back. It turned out to be that this one guard that done the most beating on me is the one that was our contact for the black market.

Marcello: Now is this where you got involved with the black market, or was it still another camp?

Knight: No, it was this camp later on.

Marcello: Okay, describe these black market activities. It seems to me that has a certain amount of significance.

Knight: A fellow by the name of Jack, last name was Baker--he's dead now--who was the chauffeur for the Japanese commandant of the camp.

Marcello: Was this Baker an American, or was he British?

Knight: No, he was an American. He'd drive this Japanese colonel wherever he needed to go during the daytime. When they'd get to their destination, he was pretty much on his own. In other words, he was kind of on a "truth" business. Well, he couldn't go anywhere. So he was able to make contacts on the outside, and nobody'd pay any attention to him. He was able to bring stuff into the camp in the back trunk. Well, the garage was outside of the guardhouse, but he was to go back and forth anytime he wanted to, because he'd go out and work

on the car or do something with it.

To get it into the camp, this one guard would let him bring stuff through with a little bit of a kickback. Or if this one guard found something he wanted or he'd find somebody outside that wanted something, he'd work through us. What I'd do in camp . . . whoever would want something, we'd sell it to them. In turn, we'd take clothes or something like this that we'd know that we could get a good price for on the outside. We fleeced the English pitiful this way. They wanted cigarettes and various things worse than they wanted warm clothes.

Marcello: In other words, they would trade you the warm clothes for the cigarettes. You in turn would take the clothing and trade to the Japanese for whatever articles they had, or this chauffeur would do this.

Knight: Right.

Marcello: I guess I'm to assume that you were more or less a middleman in this transaction between the chauffeur and the British or whomever the customers were.

Knight: Right. The chauffeur and I, we were in cahoots with it, but I was doing the inside direction and he was doing the outside work with the help of the guard.

Marcello: And I assume that once you had that guard bribed, he was yours. He couldn't turn you in, so to speak, because he'd get "nailed," too.

Knight: That's right. We had him "nailed," and plus he had us "nailed." But it turned out all right. It enabled us to get an "in," and we got extra food this way that we kept ourselves.

Marcello: Incidentally, did you have any permanent injuries as a result of the beating that these two guards had given you and so on?

Knight: I'm affected with them, yes. I'm getting a disability from them--service connected disability--right now from them, yes.

Marcello: And you mentioned in our pre-interview conference that the injuries were sufficient enough that you prepared an affadavit for charges of war crimes and so on against these Japanese.

Knight: Yes. Also, besides in working in a welding shop, I caught stevedore work, too. At this particular port, big ships couldn't come up and berth. They had to anchor out in the harbor and load stuff onto barges and bring the barges up, and we had to carry whatever it was into warehouses. They could be fish, salt fish; they could have been salt or anything of this nature. Naturally, we had to carry anywhere from 120 to 150 kilos of sacks into warehouses.

Something happened--I still don't know what happened--but one of the guys did something wrong, and I was the closest one to this particular guard, and he took it out on me and gave me one heck of a beating on. He hit me with his rifle and this, that, and the other. This is in this affadavit that the Army

took from me, and they used it on the war crimes court.

Another time I was coming back from going into camp, and they was running us. Naturally, I was kind of staggering a little bit because of the trouble with my feet. I had one guard come up and hit me in the middle of the back and shoulders and knocked me just flat as everything--knocked me out. Well, the rest of them went on, and one guard stayed with me until I come to and went back with me. Well, the rest of the work detail had to stand at attention until I got there. I think it was a matter of twenty or thirty minutes that they had to stand at attention until I got in line and they counted us to make sure there was the right count. That hurt me pretty bad.

So I wasn't just singled out. There was a few others that got similar treatment like that.

Marcello: Do you think, in part, this was due to the fact that the course of the war was now changing?

Knight: Yes, definitely. In fact, everytime something like this happened, it tickled us because we knew that . . .

Marcello: You were paying for another American victory someplace (chuckle).

Knight: Yes, we knew that there had been one, because it seemed like everytime that they lost someplace they'd come in and just beat the living hell out of us. We had one fellow, one little ol' bitty Jap--I forget his name--he wasn't over about four foot tall. He was an ornery little stinker. He'd come in and make

us all, the whole barracks--usually there would be 150 or 100 men in each barrack--line up in the hall. He had him a little stool. He'd come up and he'd put the stool down in front of a man, take his rifle and hand it to the other next to him to hold. He'd get up and he'd proceed to just knock the living dickens out of this guy with his hands on his face. He wouldn't do any damage to him, because the guy would go with his fist.

Marcello: You learned to roll with the punches, so to speak, after awhile.

Knight: Yes. Yes. This little guy, he'd shake his head. He couldn't understand that he couldn't knock him out or couldn't hurt him, so he'd go down to the next guy muttering to himself and do the same thing. Finally, he'd wear himself out and just give up and walk off. This type of thing . . . we got a lot of enjoyment out of it, if you want to call it that. In other words, we got a kick out of it.

Marcello: It was in a sense a psychological victory that you had won over the Japanese.

Knight: That's right.

Marcello: Those little things, I'm sure, become very important in a situation like this.

Knight: They did; they did. This is what got the biggest part of us back, because these things that . . . some of them we provoked ourselves, because it just gave us what we needed to go on.

Marcello: I think probably the theft of the coal awhile ago would have been a similar type of thing, and the black market activities would have also played a part.

Knight: It did. Well, this is where the coal part of it really came in. Because they had ships that was coming from the China coast over to Japan with salt and this type of thing, and they would use about 100 tons of coal. They'd make our boys--ten of them--coal that ship. In other words, in eight or nine hours, each guy would have to carry ten tons of coal to fill that ship. Well, they had a detail where that's all they did. Well, everytime they'd come in, they would come in with about 400 or 500 pounds of coal hung to them. It was between their legs; it was in their lunch boxes--they'd give us boxes to take our lunches. There's no telling where it was at, but they would come in with all this coal. Heck, we had more coal than you could shake a stick at. They'd hide it underneath their beds or underneath the house or the barracks or between the walls. This is one thing that they couldn't understand--why they'd only give us a certain amount of coal but that coal would burn for all week long or, you know, a whole weekend or something like this. They never did find the coal.

Marcello: Like you say, all these little psychological victories were probably some of the things that pulled you through.

Knight: That's what we lived with.

Marcello: What was the thought that was most constantly on your mind as a prisoner-of-war?

Knight: Getting enough to eat and living from one day to the next.

Marcello: It is safe to say that food was the thing that was most constantly on your mind.

Knight: Food was most constantly on our minds, and you'd always think about what . . . before we started this interview, I showed you a whole bunch of recipes. Well, that's where that came in.

Marcello: I would assume this even made things worse for you. You perhaps couldn't help but think about food, but when you sat around and dreamed up these recipes, it seems like it would be mind-blowing, in effect.

Knight: No, it didn't. Yes, it seems like it would, but it didn't. It helped us to a point, Here again, psychologically it's hard to say. But it did; it helped us pass the time.

Marcello: What sort of food did you particularly crave?

Knight: None in particular; just food. I found out that I thought I could eat anything; it didn't make any difference what it was.

Marcello: Okay, is there anything else that we need to talk about concerning your experiences here at the headquarters camp for Hakodate? We've talked about the guards; we've talked about your job; we've talked about the Japanese civilians; we've

talked about the black market activities. Is there anything else of importance that we need to talk about here at Hakodate headquarters?

Knight: Yes, at this time, in the latter part of, oh, '43, I guess, we got a bunch of prisoners that came in from Wake Island, Corregidor, from Luzon. They were Americans, and they brought them to Japan. Well, all of them was medical personnel. There were two, three doctors with them. When they found out that I was working down at the docks and was a medical man, they started raising Cain and eventually got me into the hospital. We had a hospital in camp. So I eventually got back as a non-combatant--medical man--and I started working in the hospital again. So I got out of all those camps.

Here again, I was in the treatment room. There was another fellow and myself doing all the treatment. I even helped the dentist; we had a dentist, and we filled teeth and pulled teeth. We even pulled Japanese teeth.

Marcello: How did you fill teeth? What did you use?

Knight: Javanese guilders.

Marcello: In other words, you melted down coins.

Knight: No, we filed them down with a file, because Javanese guilders was practically all silver. We was able to get . . . the Japanese gave us mercury. We'd file them down, and the mercury would liquify it, and we'd fill teeth that way. It was one way

of doing it but it worked.

Here again, an Englishman was working on a coal detail during the wintertime, and a great big chunk of coal broke loose and broke his leg. They brought him in the camp, and we couldn't take care of him there because it was a compound fracture. So here again, I was selected to go to the Japanese hospital with him. I stayed with him for about ten days, day and night, until they operated on his leg and set it. Here was another experience that I don't know how in the dickens I did it, because I was up with him day and night the whole time I was down there trying to take care of him. His leg was swollen, and they was trying to get the swelling out of it so they could operate on it.

Here again, if it hadn't been for the elderly Japanese feeding us, I don't know what we'd have done. The guard would let me go to the kitchen to get food for us, and these women would give me anything I wanted. I'd bring it back, and the guard would just turn his back. That's one place where I can say we ate pretty good.

Marcello: So in other words, there were some good guards on occasions, also.

Knight: Yes, there was some good guards along with the bad. Even though I got some pretty bad treatment, on the other hand, I got some fairly good treatment out of them.

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

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: What were some of the nicknames?

Knight: We had nicknames for all of them. "Necessary Charlie" was one.

Marcello: "Necessary Charlie?" How did he get that name?

Knight: I forgot. "China Clipper." "Billy Benton." "Billy Benton" was the one that gave me all my beating; the "China Clipper" really beat the heck out of me. Usually, it was a nickname that fit their personality or the way they treated us.

Marcello: Or a physical characteristic, too, I'm sure, in some occasions.

Knight: Yes. That was a few, but practically every one of them had one.

Marcello: This, I think, was a common occurrance in just about every camp where the Americans were. They ultimately ended up having nicknames for all of the guards.

Knight: Well, that's curious. Because any American, they'll nickname anybody something like this that they don't like or is contrary to their way of thinking; they'll come up with some type of thing. In most cases, these Japanese, they knew we was calling them that. Some of them resented it, and some of them didn't.

Marcello: Did you ever learn very much Japanese?

Knight: I learned just enough to communicate. That's all I had an interest in.

Marcello: Okay, when did you move out of this headquarters camp?

Knight: We moved out of there--in fact, they moved the whole camp--on

June 5, 1945.

Marcello: So you were at this camp, then, for well over a year.

Knight: I was at that camp . . . almost two and a half years.

Marcello: Now by that time, had any air raids occurred in that particular area?

Knight: At that time, no. Now the funniest thing about that, the day after we left there, they started hitting it, I understand. I heard--I don't know how true it was--but we heard that they just practically blasted it off . . . especially the shipyard.

Marcello: Were you glad to get away from that particular camp?

Knight: We didn't care. At this time, we was getting pretty well beat.

Marcello: In other words, wherever they moved you couldn't be any worse than where you were at the present time.

Knight: Let me put it this way. We had got enough news that we knew that the Japanese was getting the heck beat out of them. We also knew that it would be a matter of time before the Allies started bombing this port. It was a shipyard; we was putting out cargo ships and light gun ships. We knew it would be a matter of time that they were going to get it. We was wondering if they was going to get us out of there or just what they were going to do. Surprisingly, all of a sudden, they just picked us up, and here we went. They put us on a train and took us to a camp by the name of Bibie, Japan.

Marcello: Now is this still on Hokkaido?

Knight: This was still on Hokkaido.

Marcello: How far away was it from headquarters camp?

Knight: Oh, from Hakodate, it was . . . oh, the middle of the island, I guess. I think we done it in a day's run--500 miles, I guess.

Marcello: Was this a rather uneventful train trip?

Knight: No, it went pretty smooth.

Marcello: Okay, so what sort of camp was this new one?

Knight: It was one of the best billets that we had.

Marcello: Why was that?

Knight: Well, the way they had it fixed and it was heated a lot better. It was a little different type of a barrack. It was just one great, big, long room with beds all along. There was one, two . . . about three different rows of buildings that housed about a hundred in each building.

Marcello: How many prisoners were transported to this camp?

Knight: The whole camp.

Marcello: Oh, all the prisoners were taken.

Knight: All the prisoners. Bibie was a coal town. They put us in the coal mine, and we was mining coal.

Marcello: Were you actually down in the mines?

Knight: They sent me down in the mine as an aid man. Yes, I was right down with the guys. Here's where it really began to . . . mentally, it began to take effect on us.

Marcello: Describe what mental effects this camp had upon you.

Knight: Well, I don't know if you've ever been in a coal mine or not, but on a morning, the earth shifts; in the evening, the earth shifts. They call it "breathing." If you're in the mine, normally at the time we worked, you could hear old Mother Nature groan and moan, and things shift around. Well, this is the worst time for a cave-in.

This mountain that we was working in had I don't know how many levels of coal vein. They ran from three-foot width up to eight and ten-foot stratas of coal. Up above each vein, there's about a three or four foot of rock that when you take this coal out you have to shore it up. When you knock this shore out, then this rock falls down. Well, this is what bothers you. These faces can run anywhere from eight foot wide to a quarter-of-a-mile long.

Where it was real narrow and everything, you worked on your knees, and you had to shovel so many tons of coal a day. If you didn't do that within an eight-hour period, you stayed there until you did it.

Marcello: You were having to do this with your beriberi and so on.

Knight: Oh, yes. Well, I didn't have to. I was lucky enough that all I had to do was just go from one party to the next to make sure that nobody was sick.

Marcello: Were there any cave-ins that occurred while you were there?

Knight: No, lucky enough, there weren't. But there were cave-ins while we weren't in the mine. There would be times that they would be drilling, and all of a sudden they'd hit a water strata and we'd get a good dousing in water. So this is the type of thing.

Marcello: Now were you actually down in the mines all day, though, even though you weren't actually mining coal?

Knight: Oh, yes, I was. I was going from one place to the next. I was going with the guard. It got to the point where the guard got so lazy that he'd stay in where we congregated, and he'd send me out myself.

What was getting the men was that they were overworking them. They'd give them a allotment, and they'd do that, and then they'd add more to it so that they was completely working them down. If it'd been another six months--I don't know--half the prisoners would have probably died. They would have just died of . . . well, we weren't getting anything to eat.

We was running out of food, too. The blockade was taking effect, and we wasn't getting our food. We eventually were eating off the land. On weekends, they'd take a whole bunch of them to scour the mountainside for roots and this type of thing to try and get enough to eat.

Marcello: What was the lowest point that your weight reached?

Knight: Around ninety-eight pounds.

Marcello: Do you recall how much you weighed when you went in the service?

Knight: I weighed about 110. I wasn't very big. Here again, I told you I was a little bit underweight for my height. I weighed about 110, someplace along there.

Marcello: So you actually did not lose a whole lot of body weight.

Knight: Well, I couldn't afford to lose much.

Marcello: (Chuckle) You didn't have too much to lose.

Knight: I didn't have too much to lose. But I did get up to 132 pounds while I was in prison camp, and all that was water--beriberi. That hurt. But when I got so that I was losing part of it, then I began to be able to walk a lot better.

Marcello: Now fortunately, I guess you were not in this last camp too long, if you went in in June of 1945.

Knight: No, we got there in June of '45, and we left there on September 13th. That's when the war . . .

Marcello: You had been liberated by that time.

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about the events leading up to your liberation. I assume we're at that point.

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, describe how you learned the war was over and what the Japanese reaction was and what your reaction was.

Knight: Well, we was still getting tidbits of news, this and that and

the other. Surprisingly enough, our coal was going to a smelter, where they were smelting iron, and it wasn't too far away. On days that it was overcast, B-29's started flying over. We knew they were American planes, because once you heard a Japanese plane, it was completely different type of a sound. Every now and then a guard . . . or we'd overhear a Japanese talking about B-29's. We didn't know what a B-29 . . . we didn't know any difference, but we knew it was something that they were scared of. They were dropping enough bombs where the smelter was that we could hear from a far distance.

Well, by then we knew something was getting pretty close. This was the only thing that was keeping us going, because the treatment and the work was getting unbearable. They was just really beating us down to a nub.

They'd made a whole bunch of them go out and up kind of a little valley and dig slit trenches. Well, they said they were air raid shelters, but the funniest thing was that the top and at the lower part of it, they had put machine gun pits and installed .50-caliber machine guns. Well, it didn't take us long to find out that that was their burial ground. We found out later that they had orders to kill all of us if the Allies made a landing on Japan.

Well, it didn't take us long to figure that out. The

officers got together and decided, well, we weren't going to just be sitting ducks. So they more or less set up an escape plan that we would try to get as much . . . part of them would take over the Japanese headquarters, their offices; part of them would take over the guardhouse and this type of thing; we'd all go up in the mountains. We knew that we'd lose some, but at least we felt like that was better than being shot. We figured that they would try to parachute troops down in the valley where we were; we was up on the side of a hill or a mountain. We was hoping that maybe there'd be enough of us that we can finally get together with whatever the parachute troops came in. This was the line of thought, so they had all this set up. So this went on for quite awhile.

Our food began to dwindle and dwindle and get worse and worse. We got down to practically hardly anything, and they weren't bringing in anything to us--very little rice, if anything. But we knew that the China blockade was getting pretty bad.

So one morning, they took the shift into the mine, and the night shift came back. It came time for the evening shift to go back in; they all got up and ready to go, and they said, "No, there's been a cave-in, so the night shift don't have to go. Just as soon as they get it cleared, we'll let you go," I think that's the way that they said it. Well, they keep

giving excuses, and finally they said, "Well, there's no way that we can get anybody in." You started asking about the day shift. "Well, they'll finally get here. We've had problems getting them, but they're all right."

So we decided, "Well, we'll just find out." We didn't believe them. So the day crew finally did come in, and we asked them if there was a cave-in or anything. They said, "No, nothing happened. It's just as normal as everything." We told them the story that they'd been telling us. Well, they said, "There wasn't a cave-in." So we all got together real fast and said, "Well, there's something happening, brewing." So they finally cancelled all work details that night. The next day, it was still cancelled.

So I believe sometime during that next day--I don't remember now just when--a couple . . . first, let me go back. I believe the first thing they did, they brought in sake and beer and started . . . no, I'll take that back. Let me retrace that again. That night the guards was friendly as heck. In other words, the night before they was giving us all kinds of hell. Then after they cancelled all work details that night and the next night, they was all "peaches and cream." Boy, they let us go beyond lights out, and they was kidding with us, and this, that, and the other, and everything was just beautiful.

So we all went to bed, and we got up the next morning;

there wasn't a Japanese in sight. Their office had been completely cleaned out; at the guardhouse, the guard was gone and all the rifles was in this rack, and everything was intact; the ammunition and everything was just intact just like they put everything for inspection and walked off and left it. Right in the middle of the main room underneath the light was the Japanese interpretor. That's the first indication; he said that the war was over.

Marcello: He was the only one that was remaining.

Knight: He was the only one remaining. He was scared to death. So the next thing we knew, they brought in all this beer and sake.

Marcello: Now who did this? The civilians or the guards?

Knight: The commandant had it delivered in to us. I guess he was trying to soften us up. This interpretor said that the commandant would come in later in the day and explain what happened. So he got us all together later that day and told us with a great big flowery speech that the Japanese had just made an honorary non-conditional surrender. Still, we didn't even know that the atomic bomb had been dropped.

Marcello: Now you mean the Japanese commandant came back in the camp after they had abandoned the camp and left all the guns and so on there?

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: It seems to me he was either very brave or very foolhardy.

Knight: Well, no, it wasn't. Because he was given the instructions--and I guess the part of the instructions of the surrender--that they turn over the jurisdiction of the locality where the prison camps was to the commanding officer of the Allies, whoever the senior officer was. He was to be held responsible for the conduct of his men--the prisoners--and the governing of that area of the Japanese.

Marcello: So what happened to all the weapons and so on? Obviously, the prisoners didn't get a chance to get their hands on those.

Knight: Yes. In other words, we just switched sides. We governed ourself, so therefore the commanding officer, which the senior commander was an Englishman, he set up his guard force. At that time, they feared reprisal from the Japanese, so they set up a guard to protect themselves against whatever reprisal that would come.

Marcello: You talk about reprisals. After the prisoners got their hands on weapons, were there any thoughts among the prisoners of bringing about reprisals?

Knight: If there was, they couldn't, because the commanding officer was responsible for conduct of his men and the Japanese police and the policing of that area. So therefore, here again, discipline played an important factor. He couldn't afford to let any of his men go berserk, if you want to put it that way.

Marcello: So the Japanese commandant returns to the camp; you get the word that the war is over. What was your reaction when you heard this?

Knight: Well, we just whooped and hollered and thanked God it was all over with. Because up until that time, it got to the point that none of us . . . our lives, as far as I was concerned, wasn't even worth a plugged nickel. I was just living from day to day hoping to survive. As far as getting out, that was least of my concerns. I'd gotten to that point, and I guess all the rest of them had, too. We'd looked down the business end of a rifle so long, and the point of a bayonet, that it didn't mean anything to us. There was many a time I'd just . . . a Japanese guard would come up with his bayonet and stick it in my face, and I'd just lean right on it, and I said, "Go ahead and do what you want to do." I'd just "egg" him on.

Marcello: So what did you do after you got the word of the surrender?

Knight: Food was the most important thing, because we were out of food. We only have enough ration of rice to last maybe two or three more days, and we'd have been completely out of food. They got to the point where they couldn't even feed us.

Marcello: Did you tear into that sake and so on?

Knight: Yes. The guys just . . . there was a lot of drinking parties going on, I'll tell you.

Marcello: I would assume that most of you didn't have very much resistance to alcohol.

Knight: No, there was a lot of drunks.

Marcello: It got the job done in a hurry, I guess.

Knight: Yes, it got the job done in a hurry. They got an awful lot of their anxiety and everything out of the way. A lot of them got hurt.

But we had scoured the mountainside so much, so there was a bunch of us Americans--there was about two or three of us Americans--who decided we was going to go out of the camp. The English said nobody was to leave. We said, "To hell with it! We're gonna go!" "You're not, either." We told them they didn't have any rule over us. "Well, you have American doctors." We told them, "Yeah, but they're not line officers, so they don't have any control over us." We went. We told them when we'd be back, by gosh, and there wasn't nobody going to shoot us.

So we went out, and surprisingly there was no reprisals. The Japanese was just polite as they ever were. They knew it was over with. But here again, they didn't know about the atomic bomb. They hadn't even told anybody. I don't think we . . . we finally found out two or three days later, but we didn't know to what extent, again, the bomb was. Well, anyhow, we went out and come back. Well, the next day, the English

said, "Okay, you can go out, but you have to go in groups of two's and three's."

Marcello: What did you do when you went out that first time?

Knight: I went to a barber shop and got a haircut and found something to eat. Then I went to a whorehouse. Well, me and another guy did.

Then the next day, they said everybody could go out but in two's and three's. So the Americans, not wanting to go along with the English, said, "To hell with that! We'll go out by ourselves!" Well, the rest of the Americans went out, and they were bringing back dozens of eggs; they were trading stuff off for them. One guy come back with a cow . . . and this type of thing. The English followed suit after we forced them.

Then the English finally got hold of another camp that they found out was close to us that had some American flying officers. So they sent one over to our camp, and they told them, "We have a bunch of Americans here we can't do anything with, and they're causing us trouble." He said, "Well, I'll have to go see." So he come over and talked to us. We told him what the story was, and so he went back and said, "There's not a thing I can do with them! I join them!" So that was the last problems we had with the English.

Marcello: I've got to ask you this question. Okay, you mentioned that

the first time you went out you got a haircut, food, and a whore. In what order (chuckle)?

Knight: In that order. Then we rounded up the guys and had a softball game.

Marcello: The haircut was first, the food second, and the whore third.

Knight: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, I just wanted to clarify that for the record. Now up until this time, you had seen no American liberators as such. No liberation teams came in or anything.

Knight: No, In fact, it was two weeks before we saw anybody.

Marcello: Were you looking for any of these Japanese to take out reprisals on?

Knight: Yes, but we never could catch them. We had two in mind--especially the Americans did--but we never did find the little bastards. We would have killed them if we'd have found them, but we didn't find them. Now where they went, I don't know. I don't have any idea where they went. But, boy, they disappeared off the face of the earth real fast.

To get back, food was the most important factor, and it was getting critical. So we finally got word to the outside where we were at. They didn't even know we existed. They had a lot of prison camps spotted, but they didn't know that we even existed. But we finally got word out where we were; we only had about one or two days of food left; that we needed

some food and needed food fast.

B-29's . . . this was the first time we got a look at a B-29--from Midway now. They sent three B-29's from Midway. We saw them come in; they was quite high. One of them peeled off and went one way; the other one, I guess, they went to the other place. But there was this one B-29. We said, "Oh, hell! You mean to say they're only going to send one B-29?" Because from the altitude it was, it looked like it was small. It was something we'd never seen before. But I never saw so much goddamned crap fall out of a belly of an airplane in my life. I mean, they were fifty-five-gallon drums welded together, and there was six of them. I don't know how many of them damn things fell out of that goddanged thing.

Marcello: There were six of them welded together in a cluster.

Knight: Yes. And they just kept dropping them, kept dropping them, kept dropping them. We got enough food and everything to last us seven days or eight days for 300 men.

Marcello: Throughout your entire tenure as a prisoner-of-war, had you ever received any Red Cross packages?

Knight: Yes, I received one in '43, I believe it was. I can't tell; there is right there (points to diary).

Marcello: What did receiving that Red Cross package mean to you?

Knight: Here again, it made us know that the war was at a turning point. Up until that time, the Japanese didn't recognize the Interna-

tional Red Cross.

Marcello: I guess there were some fairly nourishing items in those Red Cross packages, too, weren't there?

Knight: There were. There were chocolates and . . .

Marcello: Cheese.

Knight: . . . tea, coffee.

Marcello: Powdered milk.

Knight: Powdered milk. I don't remember sugar being in it; it probably was.

Marcello: Did you get a whole Red Cross package?

Knight: Yes, they give us the whole . . . and I even got a package from my mother, and it had a pair of shoes in it. At the time I got the pair of shoes, I didn't have any shoes. I wore them things . . . the soles were completely out of them shoes. I whittled out a pair of clogs and cut the leather off the shoe, and I nailed the leather onto the wooden clogs and wore them until they was practically gone.

Marcello: Now when did you get the package from your mother?

Knight: That must have been the latter part of '43, first part of '44--someplace along in there.

Marcello: That must have been quite a surprise to get a package from home.

Knight: Yes, it was. We even got a representative from the International Red Cross. They let a representative come in; I think he was a

Swiss.

Marcello: Now where were you when the representative from the Red Cross came in?

Knight: I was in the headquarters Hakodate camp in Hokkaido.

Marcello: Did he ask questions, or did he just look around?

Knight: They didn't even let him do anything; they just whisked him through real fast.

Marcello: Okay, so the B-29's dropped the clusters of fifty-five-gallon drums with food in them. What happens at that point?

Knight: We went out and gathered it up, and we ate like kings until that run out. Still nobody had showed up.

Marcello: Were people getting sick from this sudden intake of all this food?

Knight: No.

Marcello: They handled it pretty well?

Knight: They handled it pretty well. The only thing that was giving me trouble . . . well, right after the B-29's dropped the food, they asked for a representative of four or five people to go to someplace--Sapporo. This was the main town of the island of Hokkaido, which was an airport. From there, I think they took them out to a Navy flagship or something--I forget now, but it was something of this order--for the primary purpose of finding out the conditions of the men, how many sick there were, how bad off they were, the ones that had to be moved as

soon as possible, how the food was holding out, and this type of thing and condition. But we still had orders to stay until we were told to do otherwise.

Well, when they left, we was almost out of food again. So when they finally got to . . . I forget now which one it was . . . one of the main battleships or aircraft carriers at that time. So the order went out to bring us some food in. So the first ones that I remember of them, there was three fighters that came in. They dropped a walkie-talkie to us with instructions how to put it together. We didn't know what the heck a walkie-talkie was. That enabled us to communicate with the pilot, and he asked us various questions. We told him what we needed and everything. We even needed some medical supplies. Because all these guys, they had pistol fire extinguishers, and these damn guys was getting drunk and they was shooting these things at each other. That stuff was hitting them in the face and just cutting the heck out of them. By this time, here again, I was about the only medic in the treatment room that would give treatment, and I spent all my time sewing guys up from getting hit in the face by drunks and fighting and then this type of thing. They were just having a good time. They'd pulled all the corks out, and they were just having a heck of a good time.

So we told them what we needed, and he radioed back and said, "Fine. There'll be planes over your camp all day long

to get you what you need." There was about a squadron or two squadrons of dive bombers with these fighters; all told, they amounted up to about 120 planes. I don't know how many times they made the trip, and I don't know where the carrier was. We had put a cross mark out in an open field--what little open field there was--for them to dive on. They dropped these doggone . . . here again, they dropped fifty-gallon drums like they was dive bombing. They was putting them dern things right on that mark every time. How they were coming, they had to come over the mountain and drop down real fast . . . drop what they had. They even had their flaps down and their wheels down, and they had to put the flaps up, bring up the flaps, and then they had to go over some high trees on the other ramp. They done that all day long.

There was one guy in one of the barracks, he was so dadgummed hungry for chocolate bars--Hershey chocolate bars. I'll never forget it; he was all morning long, "I wish they'd drop Hershey Bars . . . Hershey Bars." Well, he got Hershey Bars. What had happened was that they let loose of the stuff a little bit too late, and he was in one of the barracks in his bed. The dern thing went through the roof and hit him and broke both of his legs, but he had Hershey Bars all over him. It just so happened that they had a lot of Hershey Bars. So I had him as my problem.

But they dropped enough food--even bread; they even baked bread all day long and dropped them. From wing tanks, they dropped beer. On the last trip, they dropped a note. It said, "We might starve tonight, but you guys will eat." They cleaned out the commissary and the whole thing.

The far end where they went over these trees, they was coming in so low that they were taking the tops of these trees off. You could just see the imprints of the propellers and wings where they chopped off these trees, they were coming in so low.

Then it was just a little while after that our group of guys come in and checked us all over and told us which ones to send first. Then after we got rid of the sick, we went to Sapporo on the train, and from there we flew into Tokyo. From Tokyo, they flew us to Manila.

Marcello: Now when did you first go through any sort of a processing? Was it when you got to Tokyo?

Knight: No, we didn't do any processing until we got to Manila. We were at a processing camp right outside of Manila; I forget now the name of it. Our worries wasn't over when we got there. We got there, and we were people with no country. We was truly a "lost battalion." They knew we was Americans, and when we told them what unit we were, they said, "No, you're not. They're in Europe. They're in Italy."

Marcello: They're referring to the 36th Division, of course.

Knight: Right. "Well, how did you get here, if not?" They wouldn't touch us. For ten days we sat there. They gave us money and clothes, but they wouldn't process us. They gave us shots and everything, but they wouldn't process until Colonel Tharp . . . I understand they flew him to Washington as soon as he showed up with proof. After that was done, then they went ahead and processed us and brought us home.

Marcello: Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life after you got out of the service?

Knight: Yes. And I'm still having problems.

Marcello: I've heard some of the former prisoners say that they were very uncomfortable in crowds and also were very uncomfortable with all the attention they received when they got home.

Knight: I was very much so. I don't know why, but people knew . . . you could walk down the street, and they knew who you were or knew where you'd been. I guess you looked it, I don't know. I tried to stay away from crowds; I didn't want to mix. I still have a tendency of being that way. I haven't been able to shake it. I've even taken a Dale Carnegie course; that has helped. But on days when I feel bad or don't feel very good, I still fight this.

Marcello: I've heard it said that around the time of the liberation and for a time thereafter that most of these former prisoners

weren't about to take anymore orders from anyone.

Knight: It's true. This had been one of our hangups. Especially with me, I know I have to do it . . . I have to earn a living, but still it just grinds me to no end to have to do it. I'd find myself fighting it, and it'd get me in trouble sometimes. I couldn't tell anybody, because they wouldn't understand what in the heck I was talking about. My wife knows more about that than anybody else. I think all the wives of the POW's know this; they're the ones that's caught the flak.

Marcello: As you look back upon your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as being the key to your survival? I'm sure all of you must have asked yourselves this question at one time or another.

Knight: Not giving up; having hope; having faith; and looking to the only man that you can look to--God Almighty. He's the one that . . . you've got to have faith in him.

Marcello: I also suspect that a big morale booster for you must have been that package that you received from home. You know, here you are--a prisoner-of-war in the northernmost island in Japan--and I would assume that through the International Red Cross that package was able to get to you. You had to be one of the fortunate few to receive one of those packages.

Knight: With that first one from my mother, I was the only one. Now

why I happened to get it, I don't know.

Marcello: I assume that somehow got sent in through the International Red Cross?

Knight: That's the only way it got through. The International Red Cross or the Red Cross here at home told her that this is the way she could do it, and the American Red Cross handled it. It went through Geneva and through channels and eventually got to me.

Now as much as I can remember, I was glad to get it, sure. But as far as it making a definite impact on me, I don't think it did. I think I was too far gone as far as getting worked up or anything. It was just another thing that I was just lucky enough to get my hands on to carry me on a little bit farther, and that's the only way I looked at it.

I know it was the wrong way to do it, but when an individual gets down so low, these things don't react on him like they would normally. You're an animal; you're just fighting to exist. You're going to do anything in the world that you can to as long as . . . the only thing that made us come out clean is that we had enough discipline that this more or less kept our head screwed on right. Some of the guys didn't.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Knight, I have no further questions. Is there anything else that you think we need to talk about to get as part of the record?

Knight: No.

Marcello: I'm sure that you'll probably think of some things after I leave, but there's not too much we can do about that.

Knight: The only think I can add to it . . . even though the three-and-a-half years that I was a prisoner and what I went through and what it had done to me at that time . . . Dr. Lumpkin told me that for every day that we was prisoners-of-war, it would take at least six months to recuperate, if it was possible. This was his reaction. Then you wouldn't completely survive or, you know, get your health completely back, which I don't know if he knew what he was actually talking about, but he was exactly right.

Because here--what--thirty-two years later, I've found it a lot harder to try to rehabilitate myself than it was to cope while I was a prisoner-of-war. There, I only had two things to worry about--just to live from one day to the next and try to find something to eat. Since I got back here, there's been so many elements that I've found it very hard to to cope with. Some of them I haven't been able to cope with. I think every POW has went through this same thing, and I don't think we will ever be able to cope with it. There have been times when I wished I was back in prison camp, because I only had my life to worry about. It's just been rough; it's still rough.

One thing that I feel like, even though they didn't know at the time . . . they let all the prisoners-of-war go out on their own without any conferences or anything. The biggest part of us, they held us in hospitals for observations; if anything didn't show up physically, they let you go.

Marcello: I'm sure they felt they were doing you a favor by doing that, but it was an altogether different world out there in 1945 and '46 than what it was in 1941 when you left this country.

Knight: That's right. Our personality had changed; the people thought that we was the same person coming back as when we left. We also found that the situation here at home was completely different. We was just like Rip Van Winkle when he woke up. We didn't recognize a thing; even our own kin folks we didn't recognize. They didn't know us. They wanted to treat us like we were treated when we left, and that was the worst thing they could do.

In other words, it was just like putting you out to the wolves. This is where the armed services made a wrong--I feel--made a wrong. They should have gotten down in there and worked with us--every one of us. They should have rehabilitated us or put some type of program out to rehabilitate us. I hope that what we went through and what the Vietnam veterans has went through will help them develop a program that somebody else won't have to go through the same thing.

Marcello: Well, maybe these interviews will help in some way, too.

Knight: Let's hope so.

Marcello: Okay, well, again I want to thank you very much for having taken time to walk with me. You've said a lot of very interesting and obviously very important things. I'm sure that scholars will find your comments most valuable when they use them to write about the experiences of prisoners-of-war during World War II.