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Interview with
CAPTAIN CLARK L. TAYLOR
September 14, 1979

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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Open
Clark L. Taylor
(Signature)
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Oral History Collection

Clark Taylor

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Captain Clark Taylor for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on September 14, 1979, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Captain Taylor in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, during World War II. This particular unit is better known as the "Lost Battalion," and it was captured almost intact on the Island of Java in March, 1942, and subsequently spent the rest of the war in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps throughout Asia.

Captain Taylor, 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, your education--things of that nature. In other words, give me your background leading up to your joining the Texas National Guard.

Mr. Taylor: I was born in Iowa Park, Texas, in 1915. I went to school

there until I got to the sixth grade. The Big Depression came along . . . I was already a member of the National Guard prior to that. I had to lie about five years and tell them that I was eighteen so I could get in.

Marcello: So, how old were you when you went in?

Taylor: Right at thirteen.

Marcello: When did you enter?

Taylor: It was about 1927.

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

Taylor: Well, they paid a dollar each Sunday for a drill, and that was the main attraction. Then, I liked it. I just grew up in it and went on through the ranks.

Marcello: What was it about the National Guard that you liked?

Taylor: The outdoors, the maneuvering, training, discipline, fellowship. You might say buddies. If you were on guard, you didn't let your buddy down by going to sleep or anything like that.

Marcello: You mentioned fellowship awhile ago as one of the things you liked about the Texas National Guard. In a sense, is it not true that it was almost like a social club or a social event for a long time there before the war? That is not to mean that discipline was lax or anything like that, but it was a chance for young men to get together with their buddies and that sort of thing.

- Taylor: It wasn't a social affair, but it was just the only chance around for advancement. None of our families owned businesses where we could go into the business. My father was killed when I was two, and I was number seven in the family of seven. There were always hard times, that I can remember, and the National Guard was the one place that by taking courses I could advance. I became a corporal, a sergeant, and finally an officer because of the correspondence they had.
- Marcello: I was going to ask you how you managed to become an officer in the National Guard at that time.
- Taylor: That was the way it was. I remember when it was time for me to become a second lieutenant I asked my captain what I should do about my age. Should I put down my National Guard age or my real age? He said, "Well, you have to be twenty-one to become an officer," so I put down twenty-one. I figured out what year it would be. Actually, at that time it would have been 1913, so I used 1913 as my birthdate all these years. When I went to Iowa Park, I found that my brother was born in 1913. I was supposed to be two years younger than he was, so that would make me 1915, so I lost a couple of years. Anyway, that was it.
- Marcello: Was it rather unusual for somebody to become an officer in the manner in which you did?
- Taylor: Yes. Most of the time they were college graduates and had

been reserve officers and had at least a college education.

Marcello: I assume they would have been considerably older than what you were, too.

Taylor: Yes. The National Guard was expanding, and that was after Roosevelt had come in. It wasn't too long that by the time I became an officer, we had trucks. We had horses when I first came in--horse-drawn artillery.

Marcello: What particular specialty did you have, or were you associated with, by the time you became an officer? Did you have a particular responsibility?

Taylor: Yes. I was always in gunnery, like, gunnery sergeant, gunnery corporal. Then I got into being a firing officer-- a battery executive, they called them. You took this information that was sent down to you and cranked it in and had them put it on the guns, "mils" or yards or whatever it was, and line it up on an aiming point. That was the main thing. Then from there we go into, of course, captain. Normally, you had one lieutenant with each two batteries, a second lieutenant. One of them was handling the drawing, whatever you had to do in the way of drafting or measuring or using sights. This would be your battalion firing point, where you brought in all three batteries in the battalion and maybe fire on one target.

Marcello: What sort of fieldpieces did you have around the time of

mobilization?

Taylor: We had the old French 75.

Marcello: Was this the 75-millimeter?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: What kind of gun was this? In other words, was it a reliable gun? Was it an accurate gun?

Taylor: It was one of the best that was ever made at that time. The French invented the French 75. We had the American 3-inch that was sort of comparable, but it wasn't anything as good as that type of gun--the French 75. The American Army had adopted it.

Marcello: Let's come up to the time of the mobilization of the Texas National Guard, and, according to my records, it occurred on November 25, 1940. Was this an expected or an unexpected event, so far as you and your fellow officers were concerned?

Taylor: I had gone to the School of Fire at Fort Sill the summer before. It wasn't too big of a surprise because they were cluing us in at Fort Sill on the number of airplanes and guns and whatnot that the Germans had. We kept wondering, really, when the Americans were going to get in on this thing and could we avoid it. That was leading up to mobilization.

Gosh, we had weekends before that and we'd go to summer camp, so mobilizing . . . I don't know how you would say whether you were worried or whether you were concerned. I

certainly wasn't. It was double or triple the pay that I was making, and I liked it so I was glad to do it.

Marcello: Which one of the particular batteries were you in? You mentioned that you were born in Iowa Park.

Taylor: I was in D Battery, which was in Wichita Falls. When we mobilized, I had been transferred to the regimental staff as liaison officer. The liaison officer on the regimental staff goes to the brigade. We are under a brigadier general there who is over all three regiments.

Marcello: So, when mobilization occurred, where did you report?

Taylor: I reported to Plainview, Texas. That's where Colonel Bay's headquarters were--at Plainview.

Marcello: What was his name?

Taylor: Colonel Thomas Bay.

Marcello: What happened at that point after you reported to Plainview and mobilization had occurred?

Taylor: Just a general preparation. At regimental headquarters I had the job mostly of going to different batteries to see what was going on, and were they getting prepared. They were home stationed there. We had not moved to Camp Bowie. It seems to me like it was around at least December when we moved to Camp Bowie, near the end of the year.

Marcello: I think the units moved to Camp Bowie at various times. Some of them moved in mid-December, and then I think some moved

at the beginning of January. When you went around to inspect these various units, what could you detect so far as the readiness and morale of the various units and so on?

Taylor: I would say super. Everybody was getting prepared to get mobilized to leave town. They were going out on maneuvers to practice.

Marcello: How long did you think this mobilization was going to last at that time?

Taylor: I don't think I even thought about it. It is strange how you don't think about war very much when you're a soldier or fighting. You just think about preparation and being ready. It was a real unit. In the whole regiment, the esprit de corps was great. Of course, the two battalions are always vying against each other to out-do the other. It was the same way with the batteries.

Marcello: When you moved on to Camp Bowie, did you move there as part of regimental headquarters?

Taylor: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Describe the state of readiness that you found at Camp Bowie.

Taylor: Not so good. I believe we did have mess halls, and that was about it. They put down cement tent floors, but it doesn't seem like they had it when we there. There was a lot of work for us to do to get that thing ready.

Marcello: What particular functions did you have after the Texas National

Guard moved to Camp Bowie?

Taylor: I was regimental liaison officer for quite awhile. Then, we expanded into a square division and added on another service battery, so there was an opening for me to become captain. I really didn't want to be a supply officer, but to be a captain I did. Colonel Bay said, "Go on. The first chance I get, I'll move you." It was a little bit of a unique position. I was an S-4, supply officer, and when it came time for the regiment to shoot, I went to the firing center, and I was a firing officer. I was one of the two in the regiment that had been to the School of Fire. I was rather fresh from the School of Fire and didn't know what I was doing on the firing points.

Marcello: Awhile ago, you mentioned that division was reorganized into a square division. Later on, it would become a triangular division, isn't that correct?

Taylor: That's when we left, true.

Marcello: You mentioned that for a while in there, that is, after the unit moved to Camp Bowie, that you were a liaison between regimental headquarters and brigade headquarters. What does that exactly mean when you were the liaison officer?

Taylor: Missions were assigned through the liaison officer. We had forward observers, and they would send the unit's information back to the battery, to the battalion, to the regiment, or

to me at the brigade. Then there were times when the target might become big enough that all three regiments would need to be clued in on it--map work, identification, and things like that.

Marcello: In the summer of 1941, the 131st Field Artillery, and I guess other units in the 36th Division . . .

Taylor: The whole division.

Marcello: . . . the whole division moved on to Louisiana for the maneuvers. Now, were you a firing officer at that time?

Taylor: No, I was a supply officer.

Marcello: What happened on those Louisiana maneuvers?

Taylor: Well, we really earned our keep on that because we would go at night. After sundown we would go to division headquarters. Most of the time this was during blackout. We would go to division and then draw supplies for our battalion and then come back. We divided it up--so much for each man, so much for each battery--and then they'd come and get their food. It was the same with the water, gasoline, or whatever they needed. The service battery supplied ammunition, gasoline. We were the motor maintenance battery for the rest of them. We would have chief mechanics that would help them when they got in trouble.

Marcello: Are things getting more serious by this time?

Taylor: Well, I would say, "Yes." Here was Patton with his armored

outfit, I've forgotten how many . . . it seemed like there was an entire army down there.

Marcello: I guess it was the 3rd Army that was there, was it not?

Taylor: I believe it was. Everywhere you looked . . . of course, they had umpires, and if the other side would knock you out, then you were out of the picture for a while. It was the same way when we got somebody out. We declared that we had them on target and that they were no longer in existence. This, of course, put your ambulance people to work, and they would doctor them. Well, everything was really just like war--as close as it could be without it being so.

Marcello: Shortly after returning from Louisiana, the 2nd Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery was detached from the 36th Division. I've heard all sorts of stories as to why this particular unit was singled out. What is your version?

Taylor: Well, I first heard the rumor. The service battery always gets the rumors at headquarters because, since the Army travels on its stomach, the supply people are going to know just about as quick as anybody else. This rumor did come down in Louisiana, but it never said who it was. When we got back to Brownwood, we heard that one of the battalions was going to be sent to Fort Sill to go to Fire School again, which would please me very much.

I first found out when a lieutenant colonel from the

36th Division, quartermaster, came up to me and said, "Well, captain, what kind of pistols do you want to take with you?" We had revolvers then. I said, "Well, I don't know where we're going, but if I had a choice, I would go back to the automatic because we were raised on the automatic and everyone is well-trained in the use of it." He said, "You'll have it." I said, "What is this all about?" He said, "Haven't you heard?" I said, "No, I haven't heard anything." He said, "You'd better go talk to your colonel."

So, that's when I got the news. I said, "Colonel Bay, what's this all about?" He said, "Well, the 2nd Battalion is being detached. You're going to PLUM." I told Colonel Tharp that just as soon as it's available to let you have a firing battery because you've grown up in one all these years." So, we began the big hustle of getting ready to leave. He said we were to take our straight trail 75's to San Francisco and draw split trails. We were also to draw carbines. So, this began the big load-up.

We did get a break, though, I believe, for a week. Lieutenant Ayres, who was later to become the adjutant general in Texas, was my executive officer at that time. I remember him telling the men, "You've got a week off, and you'd better be here. There is one deserter left from World War I, and they're still looking for him. Goddamn,

you'd better be here!" Sure enough, they were.

Marcello: Wasn't it around this time, also, that the married men and men over a certain age had an opportunity of getting out of the unit? This may not have applied to the officers, but wasn't there something like this for the enlisted men?

Taylor: Not that I know of. There had to be more of a reason than that. Ayres didn't go because his wife came down with a real bad kidney infection and later died. So, he stayed and went with the 1st Battalion to Europe. Sergeant Cogdell was one of my good sergeants. He had poison ivy so bad that he couldn't go. We called him "Moco," a real good man. Schmid was my motor officer; he took Ross' place. And we transferred Lieutenant Humble from the 131st Field Artillery.

Marcello: So you're still in supply, then, when the unit moves out as part of PLUM?

Taylor: Yes. We were the last unit out, and I remember it was on November 11th when we left Brownwood.

Marcello: Everything seems to be happening in November,

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, so you go by train to San Francisco.

Taylor: Yes, three trains, I believe.

Marcello: What happens when you get to San Francisco?

Taylor: Our property was taken to Fort McDowell, as far as I know, and we went to Angel Island. There, of course, we checked

for fevers every morning and made sure everybody was well when we shipped out. We were allowed to go to town. McDowell was taking care of everything else. Lieutenant Schmid did function over there. Of course, as I recall, we were still feeding ourself and everything on Angel Island.

But we did have some time off to go to town. I was one of the lucky ones that got to go in with Major Rogers and Captain Fowler and Captain Lumpkin. They had met some fine people in San Francisco the night before, and they had invited us back for Thanksgiving and said to bring some friends. So, they met us at the dock with Cadillacs and took us to their fine home where they had Chinese servants and bartenders. Later on, they took us out to a nightclub and wouldn't let us spend any money. Then they took us to the top of the Empire Hotel. One of the men owned it or managed it, and he had a lot of stock in it. They took us to the Blue Room and opened the bar. He said he wanted us to go there because the dishwashers were having a strike, and he wanted us to walk through and have people see us going in. Then they gave us whiskey and took us to the penthouse--four- or five-bedroom thing, fireplace, and two pianos. It was just gorgeous on top of that hotel. That's where we spent the night. Of course, bright and early the next morning we were up to go to reveille, and we rode the

barge back and forth.

Marcello: On November 21, 1941, you set sail aboard the transport, USS Republic, for Honolulu. What sort of a ship was the Republic?

Taylor: Oh, it was a huge thing. It was the biggest ship I'd ever been on. I believe they said it was a 29,000-ton ship. It had been one of the presidential liners of World War I but was still in pretty good shape. I think it was the President Taft. Then began the semi-blackout. We began immediately--the 2nd Battalion--to learn to use their 3-inch and 5-inch guns and the machine guns.

Marcello: You were doing this aboard the Republic?

Taylor: Yes. They didn't have gun crews, so we formed crews, and all the batteries took turns all day and all night. Semi-blackout means that you don't have many lights showing at night.

Marcello: We haven't talked much about operation PLUM, but by this time did most of the people know that it indicated a destination in the Philippines?

Taylor: Yes, or some island out there that needed some help. I think the general feeling was that we were going to the Philippines.

Marcello: Actually, I guess you were going to form a part of a new division that was being created there.

Taylor: Yes,

Marcello: But you didn't know this at the time.

Taylor: I didn't know that. There was a brigade headquarters unit with us, but I didn't put us going into a new division in the Philippines,

Marcello: I guess there were thousands of people aboard that transport, were there not?

Taylor: Yes. I don't remember exactly how many.

Marcello: I know that a lot of the enlisted men came down with seasickness. Did you or any of your fellow officers have any problems along these lines?

Taylor: No. We were up above the waterline where we could get a little fresh air. It was awful going down for inspection in the morning, though. That was coming out of San Francisco when we first hit the land swells. I think we had cabbage and ham that day (chuckle), so it was conducive to getting sick. It didn't take much.

Marcello: As a supply officer, had your functions changed any at this time, or were they still basically the same?

Taylor: No, we weren't required to do anything in the way of supply on the ship, so we did our part on handling the guns.

Marcello: You were still not made a firing officer yet?

Taylor: Well, it was the same thing. I did have a group, and everybody was trained, whether they were a gunner or not. We

worked eight hours and were off eight hours--standing guard, doing different things on the ship,

Marcello: I think it was on November 28, 1941, that the unit enjoyed a very brief stop-over in Honolulu.

Taylor: Yes,

Marcello: Did you have a chance to get off the ship there?

Taylor: Yes,

Marcello: What did you do?

Taylor: Well, there were four of us. I'm sure it was Fowler, probably Lumpkin, and it seemed like Captain Fitzsimmons and I that went to town together. I guess we rode a taxi out to Waikiki Beach. That was the month Honolulu had begun to change from the left-hand drive over to the right, and their wheels were on the wrong side. It was rather hectic sometimes. People were learning, and you wondered if they were going to remember. Then we went out to Waikiki Beach and went to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. We said, "We're sure glad Uncle Sam's paying for this," because it was rather a disappointment. Waikiki Beach isn't what you think it is. It really doesn't have any sand on it hardly at all. It is a rocky beach. We went down to the Williams Hotel, and it was gorgeous! Flowers and . . . it was that time of the year when they call it the "dog days." It seemed like there was no wind, no rain--just hot. We went

to a camera place, and they showed us pictures of the volcanos in the southern islands, and they were really pretty. We went to a nightclub and saw some girls dancing on the drums and had supper and were back by eight o'clock, I guess.

Marcello: So, you had more time ashore than the enlisted man did. I think most of those guys only had about four hours ashore or something like that.

Taylor: I don't remember. I'm sure that they were taking turns about. They had some duties to do.

Marcello: Also, I know that a lot of the enlisted men have mentioned that they hadn't been paid for a while. They didn't have very much money by the time they were in Honolulu. Was this the case with you, too?

Taylor: That's true. We hadn't either. Our first payday, I believe, was in Australia.

Marcello: So, you get back aboard the Republic the next day, which would be Saturday, November 29th. Now, you are part of a convoy of ships.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Of course, you are supposedly on your way to the Philippines.

Taylor: Things began to get serious. They started zigzagging all the way from Honolulu, and then there was total blackout at night.

Marcello: You are also accompanied by a cruiser here, are you not?

Taylor: The Pensacola, yes.

Marcello: Did you seem to have more drills at the guns and things of this nature?

Taylor: We were more or less doing the same thing we'd been doing-- practice shooting, practice aiming and all different kinds of things.

Marcello: On December 7, 1941, I think you were a short distance from the Gilbert Islands when you received word of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor.

Taylor: I believe we had just crossed the International Date Line. That particular morning I had gone to church, and I remember the chaplain's sermon was on Lot leaving the town of Sodom and Gomorrah. God told them not to look back, and Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. It wasn't long until the captain came over the P.A. system and said that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: What was your reaction and the reaction of your fellow officers when you heard this news?

Taylor: Well, again, it seems like when you're training, you're just training; so you just keep on doing what you're doing. We didn't like it worth a damn, but because we were soldiers, we immediately dragged out our fieldpieces. I became a firing officer again (chuckle). I was in charge of a French

75 on deck without any ammunition.

Marcello: Did the ship continue to utilize the zigzag course?

Taylor: Oh, yes. The next stop was Fiji, but I don't know how many days it took us to get there.

Marcello: In the meantime, what was the scuttlebutt and so on going around on the ship about what had happened? I assume that most of you had no idea as to the extent of the damage at Pearl Harbor.

Taylor: No, we had no idea.

Marcello: Did you and your fellow officers think this was going to be a short war, or were you looking for one of relatively long duration?

Taylor: We thought it would be short. We felt like we were really capable of taking them. I guess that was one reason why we weren't so uptight.

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

Taylor: Just a little bastard, was about all (chuckle). We thought of them as small people, and we felt superior to them and not afraid of them. We knew our weapons, and we felt like we could lick them. That was just the way it was.

Marcello: So, you get to the Fiji Islands, and here I guess you just take on some fresh supplies and didn't stay too long.

Taylor: Fifty rounds of precious shrapnel! We finally had ammunition for those 75's. By the way, back at San Francisco, I asked Schmid, "Did you get some ammunition?" He said, "No. They won't let us have it. They won't let you carry ammunition on a troopship, but there will be plenty where you're going." They said the same thing in Australia: "There will be plenty where you're going." There was always going to be plenty there, but we couldn't put any on the ship.

Marcello: I guess you would have got the fifty rounds there in the Fiji's because that was the French possession, was it not?

Taylor: No, it was the English.

Marcello: An English possession?

Taylor: It was really something to see those red-headed Negroes with their military uniform on. They wore skirts and were bare-footed, but when they came to attention, it was just like they had shoes on--the way they clicked those heels.

Marcello: Did you get a chance to go ashore there in the Fiji's?

Taylor: No. I don't know that anyone got to go ashore there.

Marcello: Of course, by this time your destination has been changed, and you are on your way to Brisbane, Australia. I think you arrived at Brisbane on December 22nd. Evidently, it was quite an interesting experience going up the river and landing at Brisbane. Did you not have to wait for the tide

to come in or something along those lines because of the shallow nature of the depth?

Taylor: What was more interesting was before we got to Brisbane, and they sounded general quarters one morning. We looked out, and there were three cruisers out there. Of course, we loaded up, and we were ready to cut loose if we had to. Then they called and said everything was okay, that they were ours. It was later, I believe, that they said it was the Boise or the Marblehead and maybe an Australian cruiser.

Yes, it was rather interesting. It seemed like that in the Brisbane River there a ship would go aground every now and then. Mud would come up along the sides, and, like you said, we did have to wait for high tide to get in.

Marcello: What happens when you land at Brisbane?

Taylor: They took us to Ascott Race Track. That's what it was--a race track--and we just put tents all over the place, and they began to supply us.

Marcello: Now, were you the only unit that went ashore at Brisbane?

Taylor: No, all of us went ashore. The whole battalion did.

Marcello: What I mean is, the battalion went ashore, but nobody else off the Republic went ashore.

Taylor: We all unloaded at Australia and began to eat mutton. Also, we began making rough requisitions for an entire division

that was to last six months. That means the condiments-- salt, pepper, cinnamon, flour, chili, baking powder--all the different things that you would be feeding on all the time. Then we got a certain amount of meat. Not enough for six months, but quite a bit of meat.

Marcello: You were talking about mutton awhile ago, and you didn't exactly seem too enthused about it.

Taylor: No. Finally, I asked this Australian captain--I've forgotten his name--"Don't you have any beef here?" He said, "My gosh, we have all the beef in the world! We thought we were giving you a treat with mutton!" I said, "Hell, we're from Texas! We don't eat mutton!" So, everything went okay from then on.

Marcello: I've heard a lot of the enlisted men mention that they were struck by the lack of young men in Brisbane at that time. Did you notice that, too?

Taylor: I don't think that I did notice it particularly, although I did know that the men were away fighting in the desert.

Marcello: What sort of a reception did you get from the Australians?

Taylor: They were friendly, damn glad to see us. They helped us in every way that they could. Again, the service battery, mind you, is working during this time, so we didn't get to go to town near as much as the rest of them did. I think I went to town maybe one time.

Marcello: Did you get to spend Christmas in the homes of any of the Australians?

Taylor: No.

Marcello: I gather that there was nothing in terms of training and that sort of thing that went on here in Brisbane?

Taylor: No. It was just a matter of getting ready to get on another ship and take back off again--loading it up, getting everything aboard the Bloemfontein, getting all of our trucks and cannons and everything moved in.

Marcello: Are you basically in charge of all of this kind of preparation, or was your job basically to procure that food?

Taylor: Yes, to procure that food, and, of course, we had help. All of the officers got in on that, to help do that. It would be impossible, just about, for one person. Major Rogers, Major Elkins . . . everybody was working.

Marcello: How do you go about procuring that food? In other words, are you buying it from civilian contractors, so to speak?

Taylor: I'm sure they were working through the army, and it was the army that bought it and supplied it--the Australian Army.

Marcello: But you had nothing to do so far as the handling of the funds or the transfer of money and that sort of thing.

Taylor: No.

Marcello: You would have had a regular finance officer in the unit to do that.

Taylor: I'm sure that they charged it to us, but there wasn't any money exchanged. You just signed a bill for it.

Marcello: Okay, so you get back aboard ship again, and this time you're aboard a Dutch motor transport, the Bloemfontein. It was a much faster ship, I understand.

Taylor: It was much faster--eighteen knots with two propellers.

Marcello: Describe the voyage on the Bloemfontein,

Taylor: Well, we were inside the big reef, the Great Barrier Reef--beautiful water in there. You could see all colors of water. It was some comfort that you were in there, too. There was still some zigzagging, taking turns on watch.

Marcello: Are you part of a convoy, or are you alone by this time?

Taylor: No, we were alone all up that side. I'm trying to think when we ran into the others. I guess it must have been at Port Darwin when we saw some more Americans and other ships. I remember we were going through the Makasar Straits on New Year's Eve, and we were having quite a celebration. The Dutch were loaded down with everything. We had the finest cheese from Europe, wine, champagne, whiskey. You name it, and they had it. In the bathrooms, we called them "aught-washers." That was when we first were introduced to "aught-washing." That meant they didn't have paper that you could use after you had gone to the latrine.

Marcello: You called it "aught-washing?"

Taylor: Aught, like in zero. You had a little hydrant thing, and you turned it on, and the water would spray right up at your bottom. You would wash it off, and when you'd get through, there was a towel there, and you would dry off and wash your hands.

Marcello: Why did you call it "aught-washing?"

Taylor: That night some of them didn't know about it yet, so we did some fancy designs on the wall across from them and had them sit down with their clothes on on the bathroom commode. Then somebody would slip their hand around the corner while they were looking over here and turn on the "aught-washers." It was funny, the expressions that they got. Some of them would react real quick; some of them would sit there and get their whole bottom wet. That was the night of the Makasar Straits initiation.

It wasn't but maybe a day, a little longer, while we were in the straits there. I wasn't on duty at the time, but they did say that we had the alert sounded two or three times because the wakes of torpedoes were spotted. Like I said, that old Bloemfontein was so fast that she could turn and miss them.

Anyway, we landed in Port Darwin after a little while. There was another battalion there, and . . . we didn't know whether we were going ashore or not, so the colonel sent

me ashore to check around and see what facilities were there in case we did go. I believe Captain Fowler probably came with me, or Lieutenant Schmid. God, we would rather be anywhere than stop at Port Darwin!

Marcello: Why was that?

Taylor: It was barren, just hot and dry. Aborigines were sitting around the place with long, black hair, wide-eyed. It just wasn't a healthy-looking place. Port Darwin may have close to the highest tides of anyplace in the world--something like thirty-five or forty feet. You would go down that much. Ships would kind of go down to where they would kind of lean to one side or the other and then get back up. So, we were rather happy when we pulled out of that place.

Marcello: Now, as you go to these various places, had you been forewarned about them? In other words, after the news of the Japanese attack, did you know that you were on your way to Australia, and after you got to Australia, did you know that you would shortly be going to the Dutch East Indies?

Taylor: No. You might say everything was a surprise from then on (chuckle).

Marcello: Even the officers didn't know.

Taylor: No.

Marcello: So, you are on your way to the Dutch East Indies, and you land at Surabaja. What happens at that point?

Taylor: I remember the first contact we had was with an American lieutenant colonel, and I believe he was with the Office of Strategic Services. He had been there before, and he said, "Are you going to stay for sure?" We said, "As far as we know." He said, "Well, one time they brought a shipload of tanks in here, and we were so glad to see them. They unloaded about a half-dozen and then were told to load them back up, and they sent them to Russia. I just hope you are going to be here. These people need help." Then we journeyed up to Malang.

Marcello: You didn't stay in Surabaya for any length of time, did you?

Taylor: No. Of course, we went right back down, and when they started to unload the ship, we had men down there to bring them back. It was the same way with our cannons. That was a really busy time. It took two to three weeks for our service battery to get all that stuff, find a place to put it. At Camp Singosari they had warehouses full of milk, sugar--I'd say enough for dang near a division. We had to put the other stuff in Surabaya; we just couldn't take care of it.

Marcello: So your function, then, was to see that this material was moved from Surabaya to Singosari.

Taylor: Right, besides feeding them. We bought food on the open market, fresh-killed beef maybe in the morning. We would

take it to them that morning, and maybe they would eat it that day. The service battery was a terrific unit. I had three or four sergeants that had been in Texas Tech that had belonged to the National Guard out there. They were men that you would give a job to and turn them loose and forget about them. By that time, I'd picked up two more officers. Captain Parker had been transferred there, and Lieutenant Stensland had come to us from Borneo.

Marcello: Talk a little bit about Stensland. He is kind of like a mystery man in many ways.

Taylor: Well, he was. They parachuted him into Borneo with some money to be used in fighting--to pay the troops with and to do this and do that. Then he got on a ship and came on around to Surabaja and finally found us. They assigned him to our unit, which we needed all the help that we could get. We never had a division anymore. We had to completely supply ourselves. Of course, the Dutch, we had their help. Anything we needed, they would help find it.

Marcello: What sort of a relationship developed between the Americans and the Dutch?

Taylor: I think real good. I thought an awful lot of the Dutch people. They were putting up such a show. One of the disappointing things that happened was that on that ship we had a hundred American 3-inch guns that we had brought

them, but they never had one round of ammunition for any of them. The Dutch said, "Hell, they're better than the wood we were using for these dummy places. We'll put the real guns where we have dummy guns now." They put those kinds of guns out to a good effect. You know, a hundred guns is enough for three or four divisions. They placed them out in strategic places for the airplanes to take pictures of, and there still looked like there were a hell of a lot of people there.

Marcello: Getting back to this Lieutenant Stensland again, I gather he was a rather rough-and-tough character, was he not?

Taylor: I'd say he was. I don't know any of his background. I know when he did come back, he taught English. He went to school and finished up in college and taught high school English. But he was an outsider, you might say, and outsiders were a little more sensitive to being an outsider than being one of us.

Marcello: When you say he was an outsider, I assume you are referring to the fact that he was not a native Texan and, more specifically, had not been born and raised in West Texas, which was where most of you guys were from.

Taylor: We were essentially from Texas--Jacksboro, Decatur. That would be it; that he wasn't a Texas National Guardsman. It was the same way with Captain Parker. Parker was a little

different type, but he made on a lot better than Stensland.

Marcello: Where did Parker come from?

Taylor: Ozark, Alabama. He had played football all of his life. He played at Alabama and then Auburn. He played, I believe, against Johnny Mack Brown, and that was a real big deal with him when they were the American champions.

Marcello: How did Parker get into the unit? In other words, where did you pick him up?

Taylor: In Australia, they transferred him to replace one of the captains that went down with the Aussies. I can't think of his name.

Marcello: So, you said it took you about three weeks to get things established there at Singosari?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Did you mention that you had your supplies scattered all around the area, wherever you could find room for them?

Taylor: Yes. After the first bombing, we lost so much stuff in there, and then we started renting houses and moving stuff into rented houses. Then we would have to put our men up there on guard with the darn things. Then meat . . . the Dutch gave us K-rations, you might say. We bought a lot of K-rations from them, so we'd have that to travel on.

Marcello: Here again, throughout this whole operation, you are not actually handling any money at all.

Taylor: No, it was a charge deal,

Marcello: Now, when you get to Singosari, were the remnants of the 19th Bomb Group already there?

Taylor: No.

Marcello: They came in later on.

Taylor: Yes,

Marcello: Describe the 19th Bomb Group.

Taylor: I can't give you too much of a description because I was gone so much of the time. I remember that everybody in there had just been promoted. I think everybody in the Philippines just got promoted. We just never did get the message. We should have been promoted. I should have been a major all the time. I met a Colonel, former Major, Connally. Of course, he was from Texas.

Marcello: What was his name?

Taylor: James Connally. They named a base for him down in Waco, James Connally Air Force Base. I didn't have much contact after that. Colonel Tharp and the rest of them had contact with Colonel Eubanks, but I didn't have much contact. There wasn't any time.

Marcello: So, you were dividing all your time between Singosari and Surabaya. Is that correct?

Taylor: Yes, and Malang. I had a Dutch liaison officer with me all the time. We were in the process of buying vegetables,

buying everything that we needed.

Marcello: You mentioned a moment ago the first air raid that occurred, and I believe it happened on February 5th or sometime around there. Describe that first air raid.

Taylor: Well, we'd had some warning that they were getting closer and that we'd better get ready and dig us some slit trenches, so we did. They were about the size of this table. Later on, we abandoned those things, because when you have a dozen men in a foxhole about the size of this table (four-by-ten), you feel like you're rather exposed when these fighter planes start coming down and dropping bombs around you and strafing you. It was a hectic day, with everybody shooting. I remember I had a pistol, and I was shooting. We had dug the trails of our French 75's in and shot up the shrapnel at the bombers.

Marcello: Now, had you done this by the time the first raid occurred?

Taylor: We had done the trenches. Yes, the guns were in place.

Marcello: So, you actually were firing those guns at the bombers during that first raid?

Taylor: Right. They would go up there and make the prettiest burst, but their range was short, though. It was a pretty sight to see when they would run up to the end of their time limit and go off.

Marcello: Were you scared?

Taylor: I don't think you get scared when you're busy. You don't react like being afraid when you're shooting at somebody. You're just reacting and doing the thing that you've been trained to do. That's what they call fire discipline. You do it so many times that you just do it automatically. I wouldn't say you were afraid in that sense, no. You are busy. You're doing what you've been trained to do all these years.

Marcello: What sort of damage had been done to the base after this first attack?

Taylor: Well, I didn't count them, but they said there was close to a hundred bomb craters around the camp. Like I said, it did quite a bit of damage to some of our supplies and warehouses. Fortunately, as far as I know, there wasn't anyone killed because of that. None were killed.

Marcello: Incidentally, describe what Singosari looked like from a physical standpoint, in terms of your quarters and that sort of thing.

Taylor: I would say they were really excellent. They were made with tile shingles and stucco--real quality. You couldn't ask for any better. We had showers. Of course, we put our cots in, and everybody was comfortable as far as I know.

Marcello: What sort of food were you procuring for the men here?

Taylor: Just about our standard diet--meat, bread, and potatoes (chuckle).

We hadn't gone on to rice, to speak of, by that time. We were still eating bread,

Marcello: What sort of an attitude could you detect on the part of the native Javanese here?

Taylor: Well, you could see some anxiety in their eyes. They didn't know what was going to happen. After that first raid . . . there was a little village next to us, and they abandoned that village. I have a picture--and I meant to bring those things--at home. It's a picture I picked up in that abandoned village , . . and a little tea deal, double boiler. I was one of the few that got a trunk out of there. They sent word up one day that if you wanted to send anything home to get it ready because the last ship was leaving out. There wasn't anybody there; they were out on maneuvers. So, I got my trunk and put in the stuff that I'd been given. I had a Javanese-made head of a man, made of teakwood, that a person on the Bloemfontein had given me. Then I had one or two items that I had bought while I was in town--all wood-carved, I also had the records of our ship duties and everything on the Republic--who was to do this ship, who was to do that ship. I had a lot of that stuff that I sent home, but the rest of them lost theirs. Now, I gave a bunch of that to this colonel. I don't know whether he's given you a copy or not. If he hasn't, I'll ask him to

furnish you a copy of everything that I gave him,

Marcello: No, I have nothing along those lines.

Taylor: These were, you might say, the orders to the first task force--who was to do this, who was to do that. They set up a plan so that if we were to go ashore, we'd know what was going to be done.

Marcello: Did they tell you what your purpose was in being there on Java?

Taylor: Well, to fight and defend. When you're being given orders, you just kind of go along, and, no, you don't know what's going on particularly. I would know less, probably, than most of them, because they were in when Wavell came to inspect. Hell, the service battery . . . half of us were down in Surabaja working. He came and left, and we never did get to see him.

Marcello: I guess in many cases being a supply officer could be a pretty good deal, since you would be dealing with people who were going to become prime customers of the Army and things of that nature.

Taylor: No, it wasn't hardly like that at all. The Dutch liaison officer . . . I spoke some Malayan. It was a matter of contacting the market, going to the market, and telling one man in the market you wanted so many goods and that you would have a truck there to pick it up . . . so much meat. It

wasn't like dealing with a food contractor here in America. They didn't have them there. It was more or less that Navy-type of deal. Eggs . . . , we more or less put in an order for so many eggs. We were still using a lot of stuff that we came off the ship with.

Marcello: As the result of these air raids, how was your routine as supply officer altered?

Taylor: It wasn't changed hardly any, except to get our trucks away from the place.

Marcello: You mentioned that you did begin renting private houses to store the supplies,

Taylor: True. And then we had to get our shop equipment. What trucks we didn't need, we got them away from there so they wouldn't bomb them and tear them up. Everytime you had this to do, you had to have people there to take care of it.

Marcello: Without putting words in your mouth, let me ask my question this way: were you there when most of the raids occurred?

Taylor: I was "real lucky" to be there just about everytime (chuckle), and I was in a couple of raids in Surabaja. Of course, we weren't anywhere near where they were bombing. They were bombing the docks, but they did have air raid shelters in Surabaja.

Marcello: What kind of frequency were these raids occurring there at Singosari?

Taylor: Oh, it seemed like a week apart.

Marcello: So, it was not a daily occurrence,

Taylor: No.

Marcello: Approximately how many raids were there, then, altogether?

Taylor: I recall six. One time there were some planes, we thought, being sent to us. We heard that they were bringing planes, and, boy, were we happy--until they opened up fire. Hell, I just came out of the shower and went out there to wave and be happy, and here they started shooting. We got in what little hole we could get in.

Marcello: I gather that the enlisted personnel helped to service the B-17's that the 19th Bomb Group had.

Taylor: They sure did. They couldn't have flown without them. I do have some correspondence from the now commanding colonel of the 19th, and he said, "Without you we could have never flown." Of course, the Japanese wrecked, I believe, about thirteen before it was over, and we stripped all the 20-millimeter cannons of them that we could. They were flying twenty-four hours a day, just about. They had to stay off the ground and just maybe come in at night.

Marcello: I would assume that the base was not putting up too much effective resistance against these Japanese planes.

Taylor: Just what little we had in the way of shrapnel. When we got the 20-millimeter up, it still wasn't a lot. We did finally

get a British ack-ack battery in there.

Marcello: Were you using 20-millimeters or .50-caliber machine guns?

Taylor: Twenty-millimeters . . . no, they were .50-calibers.

Marcello: These were the guns that you stripped out of the wrecked airplanes?

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: In one of these raids, how many Japanese planes might possibly be coming over?

Taylor: It seemed to me that in that first one was about seventeen or eighteen, I don't know how many fighter planes they had brought over, Other times, it seemed like it was fighters, and you might not get more than six of them. I don't remember the clouds being filled with them. That first raid was the biggest amount I ever saw.

Marcello: While all of this is going on, are you under the assumption that the United States Navy is out there somewhere and that they can take you off whenever they want to; or by this time is the feeling getting to be that you are stuck there?

Taylor: I don't know if I went that far in my thinking. You're busy all the time. I remember when the order came down for us to leave and go to Tjilatjap to turn in all of our equipment. I would say it was sort of a disappointing thing. We had come there to fight, and the Dutch were certainly doing all they could. They were having it much tougher than we ever

dreamt of because some of their people were loyal, They had officers and non-commissioned Dutch officers, and the rest of them were Javanese. They didn't have a unit like we had--made up of Dutch--at all that I ever heard of. They were all native soldiers, with just non-coms and officers. Of course, the fifth column of the Japanese was promising the Javanese everything in the world. It just didn't stand like the Dutch thought it would, either, with their native soldiers. They had quite a few of them, but not anything like to put up the resistance that was needed.

Marcello: On February 27, 1941, the Japanese landed on the north side of Java about twenty-five miles from Surabaya. The B-17's and their air crews then immediately left for Australia. What sort of reaction did this cause, that is, the evacuation of these B-17's?

Taylor: Well, we could see that they needed to be evacuated because they couldn't function where they were. Colonel Eubanks said, "Get on these planes and go with us." Well, we couldn't desert. I mean, that's something we didn't even hardly think about. He said, "We'll make as many trips as we need to make." We were ordered to stay there and fight. Then after that came the movement to Tjilatjap.

Marcello: Then very shortly after the B-17's left, the unit itself left. Describe what happens when Singosari was evacuated, that is, when you left. What are you personally doing then?

Taylor: Making sure we have gasoline, water, fuel oil, motor oil, food. Then we took over . . . I don't know how many, but it seems to me like there were twelve or thirteen automobiles that the Air Corps had brought, and we used them. I later got a bill for them (chuckle). Everybody . . . all the Americans left. I believe it was General Brett in command.

So, we headed toward Tjilatjap, and when we got down there, we were told that we were going to turn our guns and everything over to the Dutch and get on the ship and leave and go back to Australia. Before we got there or were near there, we were told that all fighting combat troops would stay on the island. That made sense to me.

Marcello: In the meantime, wasn't the unit in constant motion? Wasn't it moving constantly around the island?

Taylor: No, not at that time. We had a destination to go to, and then when they told us we were staying, they gave us another destination, which was the capital of Java.

Marcello: Batavia?

Taylor: No, not Batavia. It was right in the center of the island. It was the capital, but I can't recall the name. We still didn't have any ammunition. They said, "Oh, you're going to get it over there. They have it." They said that 40,000 Aussies had landed on the island, and I've got a picture at home showing me collecting fifty guilders from Major

Rogers. I bet him fifty guilders that there wasn't anything like that--maybe 4,000.

Marcello: In other words, you went from Singosari down to Tjilatjap, and you went there under the assumption that you were going to be evacuated.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Then they told you that you weren't going to be evacuated and that all the fighting units were to stay on the island.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Then you headed toward the interior of the island, toward the capital.

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: It is at this time that you hear the rumor about the 40,000 Australian soldiers.

Taylor: No, it was way before that, before we left Singosari.

Marcello: Okay. So, now what happens next? What is the next course of events?

Taylor: We finally made contact with the Dutch. Then they told us where the Aussies were and that we were going to back them up, and they told us where the ammunition was. We were really glad to pick up some HE [high explosive] ammunition--load some of those good old service battery trucks down with HE ammunition and distribute it. It wasn't too long before we started shooting, just almost within the same twenty-four

hour period.

Marcello: Now, are you supporting the Australians this time?

Taylor: Yes. They had a bridgehead, or had a bridge knocked out. I'd say it was on the north side of the river, and they were keeping them across the river. In one way, they didn't do it as much as the rice paddies--those deep, strong rivers. The Japs had a bicycle division, and there was no way they could ride those bicycles in rice paddies.

Marcello: This was the Japanese division that was a bicycle division?

Taylor: Right. They moved at an incredible speed, or so we thought at that time. They said they landed, and they had no more than landed and here they were.

Marcello: I assume that you were somewhere behind the Australians giving them support?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: How long did this continue?

Taylor: It seemed to me like it was three or four days.

Marcello: Now, are you commanding a firing battery at this time?

Taylor: No. It was headquarters battery. We were trying to know what was going on and what we were going to do. Yes, we were still functioning--supplying right along. We were mainly using what we had already brought with us, like, the K-rations we had bought from the Dutch . . . coffee, tea, all the different condiments that we had brought with us. So, it

wasn't so much going out and buying any more. We were pretty well supplied by the Dutch with what we needed.

Marcello: On March 11, 1942, according to my records, the Allied forces surrendered to the Japanese. By this time, I think you are gradually retreating toward Bandung, are you not?

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: On March 11, the surrender order comes in.

Taylor: Before the surrender order . . . well, it may be right along that time. Colonel Searle and I went into Bandung and drew out 100,000 guilders in five's and ten's.

Marcello: Five and ten guilder notes?

Taylor: Yes, a couple of barracks bags full. We scattered this out with the different captains. We assigned them so much, and they assigned it to their lieutenants, their sergeants, so that everybody had money assigned to them. But there was a record of this 100,000 guilders.

Marcello: Colonel Searle was British or Australian?

Taylor: No, he was American.

Marcello: He was American?

Taylor: He was left behind when headquarters pulled out. He was left behind to be with us. He was a Regular Army colonel.

Marcello: I see. Were there any American Army units there at the time except the 2nd battalion?

Taylor: No.

Marcello: By this time, that's the only one that's left there.

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: Plus a scattering of these other individuals like Colonel Searle and so on.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: What was the purpose in drawing out this 100,000 guilders?

Taylor: So that if we needed to take to the hills, we could still exist. Each man could buy food for a while, trade with the natives.

Marcello: Where did you get this 100,000 guilders?

Taylor: At the bank. I had a million-guilder credit that had been set up for me by the Americans. I could draw out a million if they had it, but 100,000 was a lot of money then.

Marcello: You mentioned this money was brought back, and it was distributed to the captains and then down through to the lieutenants and the sergeants and so on?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: I assume there were careful records being kept of this distribution.

Taylor: Right. We could recall it at any time. We did on occasion recall some.

Marcello: Was all the money scattered out in this manner, or was some of it kept at headquarters?

Taylor: Oh, yes. We had a sizeable amount and kept very careful

records. I made up my mind that I was going to have a clear record the day I got back home.

Marcello: Do you recall how much was kept by headquarters?

Taylor: No, I don't really know. It had been scattered around. We probably had 10, 15, 20,000 guilders that we could lay our hands on if we needed it.

Marcello: Okay, like we mentioned, on March 11, 1942, the surrender comes down. Describe this event.

Taylor: Well, they said, "You're on your own. We can't help you anymore." So, we decided to head south. We had been traveling by night, and we still traveled by night.

Marcello: When you refer to "we," are you referring to the unit?

Taylor: The battalion. I've forgotten, but I think it was two or three days that we traveled down toward the coast. We were going south to see if we could get off of that darn thing. The Aussies were right along and sending out wires for help. We never had any response. We got to . . . I can't think of the name of that little old town, but, anyway, that's when we stopped.

Marcello: What were your feelings when you heard that the island was capitulated?

Taylor: I guess it didn't really come as a big surprise. What kind of feelings do you have? Well, what's next, is really what it amounts to. What do we do next? Well, the next thing

is that we'll try to get off this damn island.

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

Taylor: Well, we could head for the hills. You could go anywhere you wanted to, but we stuck together. You could take off for the hills. We were down in the hills; that's all that was around there. We could have gone, and some of the people did. We gave them money; we gave them our best. I said if I thought there was anything down there to get off in, I would go down there myself. Anybody could go that wanted to go. We had trucks, gasoline, equipment, money, and arms.

Marcello: When the word of the surrender did come down, what did you do, with regard to your fieldpieces and your trucks and other vehicles and so on?

Taylor: The ammunition went in the rivers. Now, this is at another place, a different place. It seemed to me like we got back near to Bandung, near a tea plantation. Before we got there was when we got rid of our stuff. That's where we turned in our equipment.

Marcello: In other words, even after the surrender comes down, it is quite a while before you actually even see your first Japanese.

Taylor: Right. I remember seeing my first Japanese. It wasn't Bandung; it was at a smaller town. We were still going in

and buying supplies. We were buying everything we could get our hands on from those Dutch merchants. We were on this tea plantation, I had gone in to get some boots and shoes repaired. I had a couple of my sergeants with me, maybe Lieutenant Schmid. We went down to the shoe shop, and when we came back there were some Japanese guards around our jeep. We were the first Americans they had seen, too. So, really, there was not any meanness or anything going on. They were talking about Babe Ruth and Joe DiMaggio and all that kind of stuff (chuckle).

Their sergeant was there, and he told me to come go to his major. I went down there and told them who I was after he asked me. He stayed sitting down; he didn't get up. And I didn't salute, either, because we were both majors. Anyway, they gave us some arm bands to put on our arms so that we could come and go as we needed to.

Then it wasn't many days later when we field officers went to headquarters and met the Japanese and were told what we were going to do, what they wanted us to do. First, they said we would walk to Batavia, and after quite a bit of convincing that we were field artillery and not foot soldiers, and that walking that far would be cruel and inhumane and against the Geneva Treaty . . . of course, they pointed it out that they hadn't signed the Geneva Treaty covering the

treatment of POW's,

So, finally, they said, "Okay, we'll bring trains."
So, we stayed there another day, or so it seemed like,
before we finally loaded on the trains to go to Batavia.

Marcello: In the meantime, did you destroy most of your trucks and
weapons?

Taylor: No. They fixed them to where they would self-destruct,
like, sand in the motors.

Marcello: Didn't they drain the oil and the water out or something,
too, and then run the engines?

Taylor: I don't know what all they did, to be truthful. They said
they drained the recoil oil out of the cannons and put in
water, but they didn't destroy them as such. I mean, there
was a threat of death for our colonel if we did that.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were put aboard this train for Batavia.
At this time, or around this time, have you been harassed
at all by the Japanese?

Taylor: No. In fact, we haven't even seen any.

Marcello: Are all the officers more or less together?

Taylor: Yes. Usually, the first three-graders were pretty close to us.

Marcello: At this point we haven't mentioned anything about Colonel
Tharp yet. What sort of relationship did you have with him?
In other words, were you in contact with him very much?

Taylor: Yes. You mean at this time?

Marcello: Yes.

Taylor: We were all together, yes, except when I'd go to town or they'd go to Japanese headquarters--he and General Black. Black was commander of the "Black Force," you know, the Aussies and Americans.

Marcello: What sort of a man was Colonel Tharp?

Taylor: I would say he was a rather shy man. I don't know that I ever heard him really "eat anybody out." He got things done in a quiet manner. I didn't disapprove of Colonel Tharp. He had good military sense. He had been in the National Guard a long time. He was a little different than what we'd been used to under Colonel Bay and Colonel Griffin. Colonel Griffin was our battalion commander, and they changed him. He had phlebitis, so he didn't get to go with us, and they changed it to Colonel Tharp. We came under Colonel Tharp, you might say, after we left Brownwood. We didn't have the experience with him that we'd had with the others.

Colonel Bay was tough-and-rough. He was hell on haircuts. He was an old infantry captain during World War I and a real good baseball player, athletic-type. He ran his regiment with a firm hand, and you knew that he was fair. He may "eat your ass out" one minute, but he didn't spare anybody else, either. He was fair and tough. You function better

when you have somebody that is fair and tough, I believe, than you do when you have someone that is not tough but fair. Hell, you're trained officers. You don't need an "eating out" everytime you turn around. If you're told to do something, that's an order and you do it. Or you question why or how to do it.

Marcello: Were you married at this time?

Taylor: Yes. I left two children at home--a boy four and a girl two years old. They were living in Brownwood.

Marcello: How did this affect you emotionally, psychologically, and in all other ways, that is, now that you were a prisoner-of-war?

Taylor: Well, they were home safe. I knew that. Hopefully, the war wouldn't last too awfully long; and, of course, the Americans would win it, and we'd go back home.

Marcello: Were you still thinking in terms of a very short war?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: You mentioned that you get on this train, and where are you headed?

Taylor: Tanjong Priok.

Marcello: I assume this is a pretty short trip.

Taylor: It was within a day easy.

Marcello: Were the Japanese harassing you any on this trip?

Taylor: We still hadn't hardly seen any of them.

Marcello: You had not been searched in any way?

Taylor: No. I might say we were never searched physically.

Marcello: You have all your physical possessions? At least, those physical possessions that you could carry?

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: What did yours consist of at that time?

Taylor: Well, I had a wedding band and money and a watch. That would be what I would call a possession that might be attractive to a Japanese soldier.

Marcello: What did you have in terms of clothing and that sort of thing?

Taylor: I hadn't thrown any clothing away or anything, so I still had at least three or four changes, and I had a couple of pairs of shoes at least.

Marcello: Tanjong Priok is the port city for Batavia, is it not?

Taylor: Yes, it is right in next to Batavia.

Marcello: Describe the compound where they put you at Tanjong Priok. What was that like physically?

Taylor: Physically, there wasn't much there. We had one little hut that the officers all got in. There were some other barracks there, but it wasn't anything like Bicycle Camp that we'd later move into. The wire was spread to where anybody could crawl through it, but we were told when we got there . . . the first thing that the commander of the camp told us was that anybody caught outside that wire was going to get killed. There wasn't really anyplace to go.

You could go out of any of the camps and escape, but there was no place to go. By that time, there was a reward on your head by the natives. The natives were taking care of themselves.

Marcello: They were loyal to the Japanese at this time, I guess.

Taylor: Well, they were frightened. They really didn't know what to do. Most of those soldiers took their uniforms off and went back home and got rid of their guns. They went back to farming or whatever. They looked like farmers and not soldiers, although quite a few of them were captured with the Dutch and went into prisoner-of-war camp with us. In fact, we saw some at Tanjong Priok that they had brought back from Borneo.

Marcello: Describe what the interior of your barracks looked like there at Tanjong Priok.

Taylor: Well, it was just a bare interior. I don't recall whether it had a restroom or not, but it probably did.

Marcello: Did you have beds as such?

Taylor: Only what we had carried with us--our own cots. We had those.

Marcello: What was your function after you got to Tanjong Priok? In other words, what would the officers be doing?

Taylor: There would usually be one officer to go on a work detail that was going to the docks to work. I didn't get to go on many of those. In fact, I don't think I got to go on any

of that outside work duty,

Marcello: So, what did you do at Tanjong Priok?

Taylor: Played bridge, dominoes, whatever you wanted to play. There really wasn't much to do there except police yourself. We were issued rations for our men to cook. By that time, our service battery wasn't having a lot to do with it. We had a cooking crew, and everybody had the mess sergeants and the cooks in there, and they cooked what we had. That's when we got on our first rice diet.

Marcello: Are the Japanese issuing the food here?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: So, you had nothing to do with procurement as such.

Taylor: Right. Mind you, we still had canned food and everything we had bought. Every man carried all he could carry, That's corned beef, those K-rations, salmon, canned fish of any kind we could get. Every man could have had a meal of his own with a little rice. Of course, this was still a while yet, but they saved it back as much as they could. In Tanjong Priok we had some rice that had been swept off of warehouse floors, so it was pretty tough. It was red rice, and we could hardly get it clean enough to eat. That's when we started cracking our first teeth on volcanic ash that came off of that darn floor.

Marcello: Did the men have some problems learning how to cook that

rice at first?

Taylor: Yes. They finally became real good at it. Of course, the best part of the whole rice was getting down to the stuff on the bottom layer. It was crusty and charcoalish.

Marcello: Why was that the best part?

Taylor: Well, because charcoal was sort of like, you might say, compared a little bit to a pancake. It just had a little bit of taste to it, that's all.

Marcello: Were officers getting the same food, the same rations, as the enlisted men here?

Taylor: Yes. We stopped a long time ago . . . it used to be that when we were in the field, the officers went first through the line for a couple of reasons--respect and for him to be ready first. If something happened, he would be the first to be called out. This was an old tradition in the Army, but after we got in prison we came up last. The colonel was the last man through. If there was anything left, he got it. If there wasn't, he went without food, or the officers went without food.

Marcello: So, the officers went last through the chow line?

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: What had happened to the company funds that you still had left? Were they being used at this time yet?

Taylor: Not yet. We hadn't had a chance to spend them, but we still

had it.

Marcello: Things, I guess, weren't really that desperate just yet, were they, in Tanjong Priok?

Taylor: Not yet. Plus the fact that when we had an inspection, we laid out everything that we had in front of us. They would come by and look at it, but they never one time searched us personally, and everybody there had money. They hadn't said anything about money yet. It was after we got into Bicycle Camp when that came into play.

Marcello: What happens to military discipline at this point? Are there any modifications in it as such? I'm referring now to military discipline among the captured Americans.

Taylor: Not an awful lot of change. We still wore our rank. Sergeants still had their rank. They just conducted themselves the same as we would in peacetime. There wasn't any big ordering to do. Yes, they were still respectful to us. We never lost our respect from the men, and we respected them.

Marcello: How about things such as saluting and so on? Would that have ceased?

Taylor: That had stopped, I think, yes. We saluted the Japanese privates from then on. If you had your hat off, you bowed. The way I took it was maybe different from some of the others. You don't have a choice when you're a soldier of who you're

going to fight for your country. You're going to fight whoever they want you to fight. So, we had come under the disciplinary rules of the Japanese Army, and in their army the buck privates salute the first class. It goes right on up the line. The only thing was that we were lower than the buck private, so we had to salute him. You could curse a little under your breath or something, but it was something you could live with. Hell, when you would come under their rule, by dang, you would live by their rules or take their punishment. If you wanted to be bull-headed about it and not salute or stand up when they came in, and you would rather have a slapping for it, all right, you could have that. They gave the rules, and we had to live with them or take the consequences.

Marcello: What other rules did they lay down for you in addition to the bowing and saluting?

Taylor: I can't remember any, except standing up when they came into the barracks. We were a little different in that respect. I understand that we handled prisoners-of-war . . . usually, they don't allow the guards in and out of the barracks, but there they did but they weren't so troublesome.

Marcello: Did they seem to treat you differently from what they treated the enlisted men? I'm referring to the Japanese who came through the camp.

Taylor: I would say not any different. There was no rank involved. They might ask what our rank was. Like I said, Tanjong Priok was probably the worst circumstances that we had then or thereafter.

Marcello: Why was that?

Taylor: Well, it wasn't bad. It was just crowded and crummy. You had to work to keep it clean. The men were going out on work details and would slip in an occasional bottle of whiskey that they'd found down on the docks, or cigarettes or cheese or whatever they could smuggle in. The Koreans were our guards; we didn't have but maybe one Japanese.

Marcello: Oh, you already had Korean guards here at Tanjong Priok?

Taylor: Yes. As far as I can recall, we did. It may have been at Bicycle Camp, but it may have been before we got over there. I can't quite remember that; I'll have to think. I think we got them at Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: What sort of food were you getting here at Tanjong Priok in addition to rice?

Taylor: It must not have been very good because I can't remember very much. I think we were still grazing on a little bit of what we had and mixing that in. I'm sure we had some vegetables and probably a little meat or maybe fish, but no big deal.

Marcello: Were there any other nationalities in this camp besides the Americans?

Taylor: Yes, these people from Borneo.

Marcello: How about Dutch, English, or Australians?

Taylor: I don't believe there were any Aussies there, except maybe our Australians that were with us.

Marcello: What were the bathing facilities and sanitary facilities like there at Tanjong Priok?

Taylor: We must have had restrooms. We may have had latrines, but I can't recall having latrines here. I'm pretty sure it was a little bit more up-to-date than that.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how did the . . .

Taylor: Oh, yes, some English had come back from Borneo, too. They were there with maybe some of their Indian troops.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how was the health of the troops holding up at this point?

Taylor: Still okay. There weren't any of them overweight, I would say, but they were still in good physical shape.

Marcello: Who is assuming the responsibility for that company money that we talked about earlier, that is, the money that was left and had not been distributed among the troops?

Taylor: Well, I was responsible for it. So, you might say I was responsible, and the others were responsible to me.

Marcello: I mean, who had physical possession of that money?

Taylor: Just about every man there because we hadn't called any in at that time, and we didn't want to be caught with a lot

of it in one man's possession.

Marcello: Let me ask this. Maybe I don't quite understand this. You mentioned that this money was distributed. Then was each man free to spend it, or were they simply to keep it?

Taylor: That's right. We would call it back in if we could buy something with it. I can't remember us being able to buy anything there at Tanjong Priok. It doesn't seem like we stayed there so terribly long until we went over to Bicycle Camp,

Marcello: At this point, was there any resentment among the enlisted men over the fact that officers were not working as such?

Taylor: Not that I know of, not among our men. They were doing what officers normally do. We always made tea when we went out. If anybody got in trouble with the Japanese, we were there to interfere and to help. I don't know of any resentment. They were damn glad to have us along, as far as I know, because they did show us a little bit more respect when we talked to them: "What's going on here?" "Why did this happen?"

Marcello: So, are you saying, in effect, that one of the functions of the officers was to act as a go-between for the Japanese and the enlisted men?

Taylor: Yes, true.

Marcello: How would the chain of command work?

Taylor: It would work from the Japanese to the officers.

Marcello: In other words, the Japanese would perhaps tell the officers that they needed so many men for so many working parties, and then it was up to the officers to organize those working parties?

Taylor: Yes, that's true. They really did leave all that organization pretty well to us. You might say our whole staff functioned like they normally functioned.

Marcello: Did you actually have very much contact with the Japanese?

Taylor: No, not in that camp. They had their place to stay, and we had ours. Except for an occasional guard coming around, there was not much contact.

Marcello: For the most part, I'm assuming, then, that there was virtually no physical harassment.

Taylor: Very little.

Marcello: I think you stayed at Tanjong Priok about two months. Does that sound about right?

Taylor: It seems like it was longer than I thought it would be, but it could well be.

Marcello: Then you move on to Bicycle Camp.

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: According to my records, it was May of 1942 when this move was made. Bicycle Camp isn't that far away, is it?

Taylor: No. We went by truck, as I recall. There was some walking

done in there, but it seemed like it was from the train to Tanjong Priok.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever try and humiliate you in front of the local population or anything of that nature?

Taylor: Not that I ever heard of.

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

Taylor: It looked gorgeous! The streets were paved with asphalt; the quarters were well-built. It was a Dutch barracks, so it had just about everything you would want--showers, all the space you needed, real clean. It was quite a relief, although the facilities for keeping people out or keeping them in were better than we had been in. As I recall, it seemed to me like they had a wall around this camp, not too big.

Marcello: Of course, on the other hand, nobody really had any thoughts of escaping, anyway.

Taylor: No. There wasn't anyplace to go.

Marcello: Describe what the interior of your barracks looked like here at Bicycle Camp.

Taylor: Well, they were stucco with cement floors, tile roofs, running water. I don't know whether it was hot and cold or if we even needed any hot water. The cooking facilities . . . I believe we were still using our field equipment

to cook our own rice in.

What was beautiful was that we could get food from the outside. This captain, when we first came there, lined us up. He had worked for GMC, General Motors Corporation.

Marcello: This is a Japanese captain?

Taylor: Yes. He spoke perfect English. He had been to America many times, he said. He told us, "This war, like all wars, will come to an end one day. You're going to run into some good Japanese and some bad Japanese. Treat them on an individual basis. Don't think of every Japanese as being like any particular one. Make friends. Those that you get along with, make friends with them because this war will be over one day, and then we're going to want to be friends after it's over with." That always stuck in my mind. What else could you ask for?

The way we were treated by him, I would say it was a real blessing to get in that camp. He allowed volleyballs to be brought in, boxing gloves, band instruments, to where we could entertain ourselves. We had work parties going out of our camp. It seemed like we still had time on our hands, so we played a lot of volleyball, had a boxing tournament, an all-nations tournament. It surprised me to see that I had so many good boxers in my outfit (chuckle). I didn't know that "Zip" Zummo had been a Golden Gloves champion. I

remember that to win the tournament there he fought an aborigine from Australia. That Italian sure had a killer's look on his face when he went in there. He was the heavy-weight. We had an international officer's international volleyball tournament. We got pretty good at playing volleyball.

Marcello: Describe how this process worked, that is, the procurement of food on the outside, because I think it is a very important part of your function here at Bicycle Camp.

Taylor: We drew some money, and, again, mind you, we displayed our equipment for them to have a look at it. Within that equipment was a complete radio, disassembled, that would be put back together. They weren't using it then, as far as I know,

Marcello: In other words, each officer had a portion of that radio--a part of it.

Taylor: Well, it wasn't the officers. I believe the headquarters battery had it, and they scattered it out among their non-coms, and they pretty well concealed it. They didn't go through our equipment physically, looking under everything. They never laid a hand on a person to search him.

Marcello: Okay, pick up the story of the money. How did this procedure work?

Taylor: We started gathering whatever we felt that we needed. I believe

Major Rogers headed a little group to go out in the open market and buy what he could buy. Most of the time it was canned goods, beans, those good old pinto beans.

Marcello: I guess you were looking for anything that would stick to your ribs?

Taylor: Right. Our kind of food, you know, like beans, peas, dried fruits, or anything we could get like that, and canned foods. Down in the basement of the officers' quarters, we had collected a good amount of rice and canned goods down there. We had a nice collection. Chinese cabbage . . . the Chinese off the Houston taught us how to cook Chinese cabbage, and it was pretty darn good eating. We had good food there in Bicycle Camp. Plus, we had our canteen deal where we got cigarettes, bananas, maybe a coconut, eggs, to where a man could supplement his own diet.

Marcello: How did the canteen deal work? In other words, who stocked it?

Taylor: We stocked it. Parker took charge of that. We had so much money to spend, and he would buy it and then get it back. We sort of had a fund there to buy and sell and get back. It wasn't like running and getting everything at the canteen. You bought out of sort of a fixed fund. That was when they asked us if we had any public funds, and if we did, we were to turn them in.

Marcello: The Japanese did?

Taylor: Yes. Colonel Tharp said we'd been out of public funds a long time ago. They took his word, and that was it, although we still probably had around 90,000 guilders spread out among that group.

Marcello: And it was this approximate 90,000 guilders that was used to procure this food.

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: Am I right in assuming that the basement in the officers' quarters served as the warehouse, so to speak?

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: Was there ever any resentment or rumors as such that perhaps the officers might be living a little bit better than the enlisted men in terms of food? Did you ever hear anything like that running around?

Taylor: I'm sure you'd get that, but we were going to our own units to eat. I don't know why they did. As far as I remember, there wasn't much change in our eating. We were going through the same line that they were going through. They might think we were eating chocolates or something in there, but there wasn't anything like that.

Marcello: The food that was in that central warehouse, then, was being distributed among the various units?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: When you talk about the units, are you talking about each battery or what?

Taylor: I would say to the cooking unit, which comprised of all batteries.

Marcello: Everybody was fed as one big unit, I guess.

Taylor: Right. You might have a couple of different serving lines, but most of the time we probably had two or three stations set up to where we would eat.

Marcello: I assume that you had nothing to do with the cooking end of the operation.

Taylor: No. My own men that were cooks in our battery, they were in it, but we didn't have anything to do with it.

Marcello: What would a typical meal consist of here at Bicycle Camp?

Taylor: At Bicycle Camp we had good rice. So you had rice. You might have some cabbage, beans. You see, we were supplementing the diet that they were giving us. Some meat would be in it. Not big chunks of meat, but there would be meat in it, and maybe some kind of fish. Java still had a lot of food out there. It wasn't like later on when we got in the jungle. The stores still had food in them. Hugh Lumpkin was my best friend. He was our doctor. At this particular place, a Korean . . . we had all Korean conscientious objectors guarding us then, and it took on a little different pattern.

Marcello: Korean conscientious objectors?

Taylor: Yes. They didn't smoke, they didn't drink, and they thought we were bad because we did. Anytime you came through that place with a book that you may have picked up someplace like a school--we did work at some schools--we'd tell them it was a Bible. They would say, "Okay," so we could bring it in. They weren't good soldiers like the Japanese. They were conscientious objectors. They had been given some training, but they probably never were in any fighting force. They were a different breed of cats. We were up against fighting men, and then here we come into the conscientious objectors.

Marcello: From everything I've heard about these Koreans, they were by far the cruelist of the guards.

Taylor: They were, and those were individuals, too. Some of them were worse than the others. You would have them in American prisoner-of-war camp. You would find somebody who would enjoy maybe beating up on somebody for the least little infraction. They put forth a discipline that could have been a little lighter. Yes, we were to live with them from then on. I would have to say that I'd rather have had Japanese.

Marcello: What were some of the things that you would see the Koreans do to the prisoners?

Taylor: I can remember a couple of occasions. They would like to talk about boxing and things. I think it was Sergeant Schmid

that had done some little small infraction, and this short Korean couldn't reach up to him. I remember he had him come over to a lower place where he could hit him. Instead of just slapping him like they usually do, he doubled up his fist and hit him. Well, it didn't take long to get over there to put that to a stop, but what he was trying to do was to see if he could knock him out. This is one that was hung, you can be sure. His name was "Magen."

Marcello: This is one they hung?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: As a war criminal?

Taylor: Yes. Nearly all these guards were hung, and their commanders. One thing happened one night. I heard some God-awful commotion going on over in the next barracks, and I went over there. It was "Magen" again. This was right when they said lights out, nine o'clock, or when we went to sleep. There was a sailor whose name escapes me right now. By the time I got there, he had slapped him enough to where some blood was coming out his ears. I said, "Wait! What's the matter?" He said, "He was smoking." I asked him, "Were you smoking? If you were, it's better to say 'yes' than maybe get another smack and make him out a liar." That's what he was doing, but I didn't know it. Anyhow, he took him outside the hut and put him up against a tree and drew that bolt back like he

was going to shoot him. He wanted him to say that he had been smoking--his name was Hendricks--and he kept saying "no." The little Chinese came over there, "Su" Suomi, and between "Su" and I we finally persuaded him to leave him be, that he was sick in the head and everything. He finally stomped off.

When I got back home, I told this to the OSS in Calcutta, and they sent a picture of "Magen" and asked, "Is this the man you were talking about in Calcutta?" I said, "Yes."

There was a man named Milner that came through getting stories from everybody. He was going to write a book. He said, "You know that your story was the one that they hung him on?" I said, "No, I didn't. It wasn't a hanging offense." The next day Hendricks told me that he was smoking, and I put that in my report, too, that he actually was smoking. Later on, the man died, but not from that. He was sick at the time. But Milner said that they hung just about all of them. It is awful hard to have animosity against somebody that has been hung. Yes, maybe five years of labor like we were, or three years, but not any hanging.

Marcello: Awhile ago you were talking about this person having been off the USS Houston. Those guys were in the camp when you arrived, weren't they?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Describe the condition of the Houston survivors.

Taylor: Well, they were so glad to see us with some extra clothes, they were without clothes, without money. Some of them had American money, and we exchanged for it. Later on, we had a payroll, and then they all had a little money. I wish I could remember, but it seems to me like it was fifty guilders a man. I don't know how much exactly, but they signed for that payroll in Bicycle Camp. Yes, the Houston survivors were kind of cruddy.

Marcello: At the same time, I guess you could use those Houston survivors, though, because since they had come off a ship, I'm sure there were all sorts of skilled personnel among them.

Taylor: Yes, but we didn't have many things that were calling for any skills in that particular situation, but it was good to mix and mingle with them and get their thoughts on the war. They had already moved everything from field grade and up, except for doctors they left behind.

Marcello: It was also here at Bicycle Camp that the Japanese came up with that non-escape pledge that they insisted that everybody sign. Do you remember this incident?

Taylor: Yes, I remember the incidents leading up to it. I'd been out on a work detail, and I can't recall what we did, but I came in and the officers had lined up. They yelled for

us to come to attention, and everybody came to attention and bowed over, and all of them had had their heads shaved (chuckle). Then, "Why the big deal with the heads shaved?" They could hardly wait to get me sheared real quick. It was the funniest thing, seeing all the marks and scars on their heads (laughter). Then came the deal of the pledge. We still didn't know what it was all about.

Marcello: Let me ask you this. Are you saying, in effect, that everybody's head was shaved?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Did it have anything to do with this non-escape pledge, or was this simply a procedure?

Taylor: It was really preparing to take a sea voyage that we didn't know about at the time. I didn't know about it. Then came the deal of all their officers being lined up in a little area up there and squatted down or sat down. Then they said they had a pledge for us to sign for non-escape, and that they were going to start paying us, I think, either ten cents a day or twenty-five cents a day. It would be that way where we were going. That's when we sort of got the idea that we were going someplace.

We put up a token resistance. It was planned ahead of time what we were going to do by the colonel and General Black. It would be a token resistance. We would just sit

there and sit there. I believe we finally got in a squatting position. The guards would come by with their bayonets and get real close to your nose. I would say this went on for something like an hour.

I don't know how they worked it out. I know they had Captain Black, Lieutenant Stensland, and somebody else at the guardhouse. They were sitting on bamboo between their knees and on their calves. It was a pretty tough deal. Every now and then they would get a slapping around. Finally, the general and Colonel Tharp said, "Okay. Turn them loose. We'll sign." He said that to us it didn't mean a damn thing. Anytime you sign under duress--and that's what we said when we told the men to each sign it--it doesn't have any meaning. You can't escape, anyway; you don't have anyplace to go. So, why not have a little pay?

Marcello: Did they ever threaten you in case you didn't sign this? In other words, did they ever bring out any machine guns or anything of this nature?

Taylor: Yes, they were there that day. They had them lined up. I'd forgotten about that. They sure did.

Marcello: What sort of activities did you personally engage in here at Bicycle Camp? I'm referring to activities in terms of both work and recreation. Let's start with work first of

all. What sort of functions did you perform here in the camp in terms of work?

Taylor: Nothing, except to take care of my own stuff and to shell out the money and keep track of the money. My men still issued it out. I was keeping track of whatever we did. We still had pencils and paper then, and everything was signed for that we issued out. I can't remember being on but about one or two work parties that went out, because there were that many officers there. Four or five work parties went out with maybe thirty or forty men in a work party. Well, with an officer on one group, you still had many left over. Mostly, I engaged in recreation.

Marcello: And what did you do for recreation?

Taylor: I played volleyball and bridge. That was about it.

Marcello: In your bull sessions what seemed to be the principal topic of conversation?

Taylor: Well, of course, we talked about the Navy's version of what happened to Pearl Harbor and our version of what we thought about it. It was later on, when we got to Singapore, that we saw a Life magazine which before the war outlined exactly how it was going to happen. Okay, this would be the Japanese Life.

Marcello: The Japanese version of Life magazine.

Taylor: Yes. They had, I believe, a picture of the darn ships--the

way they were lined up. That gave us a lot of conversation.

Marcello: Was food a major topic?

Taylor: No, not at that time. I'd say we talked about anything else, but we didn't have food problems at that time. We still had medicine there.

I was going to tell you, I was close to Captain Lumpkin one day, and a Japanese came to him and he'd caught syphilis. He had some medicine he had gotten and wanted Captain Lumpkin to give him a shot. I've forgotten what they were using in those days, but it wasn't penicillin. He was so afraid that if he went to his own doctor for treatment that he would be in hell. He really would have been. That was a big offense for them--to have sex outside of their own traveling sex group. You see, they had their own geisha girls. A private or anybody got rewarded, if he was a good soldier, by getting to go to the geisha house. They kept them sanitary. If they got it on the outside, boy, they'd better not know about it. He would be in real bad trouble for it. I guess once a week he'd bring in his shot, and he's always bring something to eat. Hugh would say, "Here comes my little ol' friend. I'm so glad that son-of-a-bitch had syphilis!"

Marcello: I would assume that there wasn't a whole lot of sickness and so on on the part of the Americans here at Bicycle Camp yet.

Taylor: No, there really wasn't. The Navy had . . . we called it "jungle rot." They had picked it up, but they did have medicine to treat it with, and it wasn't long before they were over it. I would say medicine wasn't any problem; food wasn't any problem. It would have been nice to have spent the war in Bicycle Camp (laughter).

Marcello: I've heard some of the people talk about some of the cars, the automobiles, that were parked in Bicycle Camp. They have commented to me how, day by day, gradually parts of these cars would disappear. Somebody would come along and see a particular portion of it that they would want, or they'd cut out a piece of a door panel for a frying pan and this sort of thing. Did you ever notice that?

Taylor: No.

Marcello: Like you just mentioned awhile ago, I guess if you could have stayed here at Bicycle Camp, being a prisoner-of-war might not have been too bad.

Taylor: No, it wouldn't. Of course, Java is one of the richest places in the world in export food. In fact, they don't eat their long rice. They grow the real long staple. They ship it out in exchange for smaller rice. Like I said, it's the richest place in the world--quinine, bananas, coconuts, maple sugar, palm sugar. It's just real rich. The rice grows plumb to the top of the mountains, all over

the place. The Dutch were terrific colonizers. Their trains ran over that island like electric trains we had at home. They were electric, most of them. They were utilizing their people. There were close to 50 million people in Java at that time. They didn't have electric warnings on their crossroads or anything; they had a man out there to warn you, to put down the thing. They do it by drums. You could hear the train coming down the track by the drumbeat. It was the same way with an air raid alarm,

Marcello: How long was the war going to last at this point?

Taylor: Well, I don't remember whether we were getting any news there or not. It is still sort of a day-by-day situation. We probably made up our minds that it wasn't going to be over quite as soon as we thought it was going to be.

Marcello: Do you experience any discipline problems here at Bicycle Camp?

Taylor: Oh, one or two. Somebody stole some food. I've forgotten just how that came about, but that was the ironclad rule-- that was the thing. You did not take food or anything from your own buddies. "Don't steal our rations. If you want to steal some rations, go steal it from the Japanese." So, we had one sergeant that stole, and you might say he was tried and busted. Outside of that I don't recall too much of it happening.

Marcello: Were careful records being kept in this camp?

Taylor: To the exact penny.

Marcello: How about other kinds of records in terms of discipline and demotions and things of this nature?

Taylor: I have some that . . . I would say I probably have the only records that got back home. That got back in that last trunk.

Marcello: But all that took place actually before the capture.

Taylor: Yes. I ran into one of those where one of them had been reduced. I thought in my own mind that was it. There may have been a battalion order issued on that. There would have been at that time. We still had typewriters and could work up orders. I remember from my records a copy of that final order. I got back home with that thing. I can't remember any other papers. I don't want to get too far away from this camp, but I'll say that later on, when we had men dying, in service battery we promoted men. They had their handbooks--a little ol' service record--and we'd make a notation in their service record. I don't know whether the others did it or not, but I know that we did.

Marcello: Incidentally, had the Japanese ever processed you in any way, that is, in terms of having you fill out any forms? Were they keeping any records on you? Did they assign you numbers

or anything like that?

Taylor: No, no numbers. We wore our own uniforms, own rank, I'm sure that they would have asked for a list of the prisoners-of-war from the colonel. That would have come through the adjutant section. I'm sure that they had a list of all of us and probably our serial numbers and the whole works. We were never individually questioned. I don't know anyone that was. They probably said, "Give us a list of the men," and that's what happened--we gave them a list of the men.

Marcello: What would be the normal day's routine here at Bicycle Camp? How would a day begin?

Taylor: I'm sure we had our bugles, had reveille blown. Everybody got up and took care of their toiletry or whatever . . . shave. Everybody shaved everyday. By that time, it would be breakfast time.

Marcello: In the meantime, would the Japanese take roll or anything of that nature?

Taylor: Yes, I'm sure that we were accounted for there at least once a day.

Marcello: I guess you were having to learn a little bit of Japanese at this time?

Taylor: Well, they did insist that we count off in Japanese, so we did learn to count in Japanese.

Marcello: I guess it's in October of 1942 that the first units begin to leave Bicycle Camp.

Taylor: Yes,

Marcello: Describe how the move took place.

Taylor: The first group that they collected up were the technicians-- those that had any technical skills. Humble worked for the telephone company, so he went in that particular group. Some other mechanics or technicians of some kind went. I don't know that they told us they were taking them to Japan. They just wanted those with some skills that they could use. I don't think they knew that they were going to Japan until later. Now, when that group left out, they had their fair share of all the rations. You might say they had just about all they could carry. The money was divided. What amount we had was divided with that party leaving. We were still using Dutch guilders. Medicine or whatever we had was divided out with those who left. The colonel still didn't go with that group. He stayed there when we left, and he came over with E Battery,

Marcello: So the first group to leave were the skilled technicians, and they were sent to Japan?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: When did the group start to leave then for Singapore? That was sometime in October, too, wasn't it?

Taylor: Yes. It wasn't too long after the haircutting and the signing that we were told that we were going. I don't know whether they told us where they were going. I think that was what the signing was all about--the escape bit--because they were afraid that some would jump overboard at sea.

Marcello: At that particular time, was it rather disconcerting to learn that you were going to be leaving Bicycle Camp? In other words, I would assume that most of you had fallen into some sort of a routine there and were kind of used to the place.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Describe the process by which you left.

Taylor: It was the same thing--dividing up food among everybody. I mean, this is beans, rice . . . whatever we had was divided up where everybody carried a share of it. We were in pretty good shape, too. We left there with quite a bit of canned food. I would say there were at least two or three cans of food per man.

Marcello: In other words, each man had at least two or three cans of food.

Taylor: Yes. Milk, maybe salmon, corned beef--anything that we could buy to eat that was canned goods or was cooked. Just about every man had about three or four cans . . . coffee.

Marcello: Now, were you in one of the first groups to leave? The Fitzsimmons group was the first one to leave, wasn't it?

Taylor: Yes, they were first.

Marcello: Is that the group that you went with?

Taylor: No. I went with the next group. Colonel Tharp was still with us.

Marcello: Describe your departure and the subsequent voyage from Bicycle Camp over to Singapore.

Taylor: I'm sure we went down to the dock by truck and got aboard the Dai Nichi Maru. We were packed aboard the Dai Nichi Maru. My particular bunk . . . I was next to Clyde Fillmore, and it was right beneath a steel deck, I guess there were about four feet between the two deck layers. God, it was hot!

Marcello: You mentioned a bunk. You really didn't have a bunk.

Taylor: Not a single bunk. It was just a platform. And I mean we were stacked next to each other! Clyde and I got one with a pole in it--a big, round support that came down. We were really laying next to one another, but we had to stay there until they got out to sea.

Marcello: There wasn't enough room to stand up, like you mentioned.

Taylor: No. We could sit.

Marcello: But you couldn't stand up.

Taylor: Not that I recall. Later on, when we got far enough out

to sea, then we could go up, which was really great--to get to go to the restroom that they had built over the side, maybe get a little tea, or just to get a fresh breath of air.

Marcello: Could you go up whenever you wished, or were there specific times when you had to go up?

Taylor: I think there were pretty well took turns about going up and didn't stay too long. I remember Clyde and I were sitting there, and there was so much sweat in their shoes that you could hear them sweating and their hands crinkled up from loss of water like you'd been washing too much. Ol' Clyde said, "God Almighty! If we can survive this, we can survive any damn thing!"

Marcello: How did the Japanese feed you on that trip to Singapore?

Taylor: I can't remember our people being involved in the cooking at all. We cooked up rice, tea, and whatever things we had. I can't recall.

Marcello: Did you go through a chow line on deck, or was it lowered down?

Taylor: It was lowered down, and then we dipped it out, right.

Marcello: I would assume that it would take a certain amount of discipline there in order to distribute that food equitably once it got down below decks.

Taylor: It didn't seem to me like we ran into very much of that stuff. I mean, there wasn't much of that buddy bit. Going through

the line, every person got a certain amount. Of course, you always hear some grumbling, but I would say most of it was just plain old bitching that goes along with the Army. I don't believe there was anybody . . . maybe occasionally one might get a little bit more, and they'd compare what you've got against what I've got, but we didn't hear too much of that grumbling.

Marcello: I would assume that there might have been some water problems, too, because what you carried aboard would have gone pretty fast.

Taylor: Yes. We were on, I believe, a quart a day or a canteen a day.

Marcello: Here again, how did you get your water? Was it lowered down?

Taylor: It seems to me like it was topside, but I don't recall exactly.

Marcello: Some people have compared the Dai Nichi Maru to the African slave ships of an earlier period. Do you think that's a fair description?

Taylor: I would say it would be to us. The African slaves were probably used to a little more rough treatment than we were. But I thought the men took it real well. I didn't hear a lot of grumbling or anything. There wasn't a damn thing they could do about it.

Marcello: How hard was it to sleep? Could you sleep aboard this ship?

Taylor: You were exhausted, so you slept. At night it cooled down, too. Mind you, we were just about on the equator all along

there, and it got hot as hell in the daytime, but at night it cooled down.

Marcello: In a situation like that, do tempers go short?

Taylor: I don't know. I don't recall any shortness of tempers.

I don't remember. I can't recall any incidents out of the ordinary on that ship. We had one man that did have appendicitis. It was probably a Dutchman. They didn't have any treatment for it; they couldn't operate. I remember the Japanese captain brought sort of like a little ashtray, and put incense on top of it to draw blood to that area to help him, which is an old treatment to try to get some blood there. The man died later on, I think, about one day out of Singapore. It caused us a little trouble later on. I was trying to think how long that voyage was. It seems to me like it was about three days.

Marcello: I guess you're lucky that not too many people had dysentery at that time.

Taylor: We sure were. We sure were lucky.

Marcello: Okay, so you land in Singapore and you go to Changi Village.

Taylor: Yes. Before that, in the harbor, coming into Singapore was something else with all the sailing vessels and the barges. One of the ships was unloading cement, and I thought it was something else to see those little Chinese women set a hundred-pound pack of cement on their head, and they would

come up out of the hold and go back down the other side covered with cement. They wore black clothes. The terrific strength of those women was something else. Yes, then we got to Changi Village,

Marcello: That was a huge camp, was it not?

Taylor: Changi Prison was where our first stop was, and that had a real bad feeling to think that we were going to go into that damn Changi Prison.

Marcello: This is a jail, in other words?

Taylor: A big one! A big penitentiary, was what it was, with walls. I would say the walls were thirty feet high--cement--all around it. What was happening was that the ship's crew that brought us there now were changing commands. Well, they kept counting and counting, and we were near the end of the thing. Finally, I said, "What in the world has happened? What is it?" They said to us we were one man short. Captain Lumpkin said, "He's right over there in the truck. He's dead." "Well, I could smack the hell out of you for not telling them ahead of time, or somebody not telling them ahead of time, that that man was dead in there!"

Marcello: This was the guy who died from the appendicitis?

Taylor: Yes. We were really relieved when we got back on those trucks, and then went to Changi Village. You could see the guns,

big ol' guns, that had been blown up--not by the Japanese but by the English. They had become useless to them because the attack wasn't from the sea but from the land, and they hadn't prepared for a land attack.

Marcello: Describe what sort of a reception you got from the British here at Changi Village.

Taylor: I would say it was a good feeling, a good reception. We were always dealing with the officers, mind you. Now, I don't know what our men ran into. I don't remember there being any complaints. The English, individually, you don't make very many friends with them, but as a group you have to admire them. They've got so much military tradition behind them, and customs; and they kept right on at it. They didn't change their military status. We weren't close to them.

Marcello: I'm sure they probably thought you were an undisciplined rabble when you came in.

Taylor: Well, I don't know. They could have. I mean, we didn't knock ourselves out with the saluting exchange or anything. Hell, these were friends, these were allies, as far as I was concerned. We were shaking hands. We were telling them where we were from; they were telling us where they were from. Then later on they told us about the war and what happened--the fact that they cut off the water from the mainland and they went without water. No damn place to go. They had

already sank the Repulse and the Prince of Wales.

Marcello: Now, they more or less ran this camp, did they not?

Taylor: Yes, It was there where we picked up the Sikh guards that had, more or less, decided to go with the Japanese. They said that just as soon as they got close enough to the border, they were going on (laughter). It was, you might say, a better way of life for them to be guards.

Marcello: What did you do here at Bicycle Camp?

Taylor: Well, this is the shocker. We were to change our guilders into Malayan dollars. So, we gathered up all the money. They took us to the bank--I think it probably wasn't too far away--and we changed what we had. I'm sorry I can't remember the balance, the amount, we took in there, but it was a damn good chunk of money that we exchanged. Of course, we were holding back the American money we had cashed for the Navy and for our own men when we cashed some money in. We'd say, "How in the hell much longer can we hide this money? What are we going to tell them?" We were going to tell that it all belonged to the men, that we collected it up from all the men. That was a hell of a big chunk of money for them to be carrying, too. From then on, I can't recall anything . . . I'm sure our men worked some. I can't recall ever being on a work party.

Marcello: I know that this is where the enlisted men seemed to obtain an almost universal dislike for the British, and I was

wondering if you were aware of any of this activity or not.

Taylor: No, because, again, the officers really were quartered some distance away from them. Of course, the non-coms and all were down there. You would get more of a rumble there than we got, I didn't find any dislike for the British at all. Hell, they'd put up their battle, and they'd lost the same as we'd lost. We were in the hole together.

Marcello: The rumor was that they were holding back supplies, especially Red Cross supplies, and weren't distributing them among the Americans. Did you ever hear anything about this?

Taylor: I never heard of any Red Cross supplies there. I doubt very much if there really were.

Marcello: How long were you at Changi altogether?

Taylor: A month is what I'd say.

Marcello: What were your quarters like there?

Taylor: All right again, sort of like Bicycle Camp--stucco, cement floors, paved roads to go around wherever you were going, showers. I've forgotten who was handling the food. Probably the English were handling the food in that camp.

Marcello: What sort of food were you getting there?

Taylor: Oh, we had, for the first time, some shark and a stingray. I know we had some different kinds of fish that we'd never had before. It seemed to me like the rations were still all right there.

Marcello: Was it consisting basically of rice?

Taylor: Rice and a condiment or something to eat with it. I don't remember it not being palatable to where you just couldn't eat the damn stuff.

Marcello: Now, wasn't Battery E separated from the rest of the men here in Changi?

Taylor: Yes, they were left in Malang at the far end of Java, and then they moved on down close to Surabaya.

Marcello: Then they passed through Changi, did they not, on their way to Japan?

Taylor: Yes, at Changi. That's when we gave them money again and more food to take with them. It seemed to me like Colonel Searle was with that group. We didn't know what in the hell had happened to them, so we were real glad to see them. Before they got in the HE (high explosive) ammunition down there, and we left them most of the shrapnel we had left. How they made out on ammunition, I'll have to find out one of these days.

Marcello: Describe the process by which you leave Changi and move up toward Burma.

Taylor: This time we went to the railroad station and moved by rail up to George Town.

Marcello: Or Penang, as it is called--either name.

Taylor: Yes. George Town, I believe, is the city.

Marcello: What sort of a trip was this by train?

Taylor: Well, crowded conditions always and poor sanitary situations. I mean, you had to make it to one stop or the other, or you had to dispose of it in another fashion. I can't recall what kind of sanitation they had on there.

Marcello: Were these boxcars?

Taylor: Yes. I was trying to think--boxcars or cattle cars. It seemed like these were boxcars.

Marcello: Did they allow the doors to be opened?

Taylor: Yes. I don't remember any condition of being real uncomfortable on these trips.

Marcello: Did each one of the cars have a Japanese guard or guards?

Taylor: No, not that I can recall. I can't recall us having a guard in any of those.

Marcello: How long of a trip was this?

Taylor: It seemed to me like it was overnight, not too terribly long.

Marcello: What happens when you get to Penang?

Taylor: We went from the railroad station to the ship. I'm trying to think of the name.

Marcello: The Dai Moji Maru?

Taylor: The Dai Moji Maru, yes. We loaded on that darn thing with similar conditions that we'd been on before. They had vegetables stacked on the top of half of their closed deck. We didn't get to move right out; I've forgotten how long we

stayed there. I think it was a day-and-a-half or two days that we sat in that damn ship. The Japanese said, "There are American submarines out there. Don't blame us. We can't go until they are out of the way." So, we finally set out to sea. One of the best reliefs we'd had was to get out of that stinking place--the vegetables were stinking--and to get some fresh air. They did have air sacks coming down in there where it did pick up some air, canvas sacks. It was really good to get on the move again where you could get some breeze and get out and walk around.

Marcello: Nevertheless, is it true that conditions aboard the Dai Moji Maru were very similar to those aboard the Dai Nichi Maru?

Taylor: Yes, right. Not any better, you can rest assured.

Marcello: Now, were you on the Dai Moji Maru when it was attacked by the American bombers?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: This occurred on January 15, 1943. Describe this incident.

Taylor: Okay. Captain Fowler and I were in charge of the front hold. They had several holds, maybe four, and we were in charge of the front one. I remember when the alert first started. Our man was smoking, and the Japanese guards came to attention and cocked their rifles. So, Fowler and I got up and said, "Wait a minute! What's wrong?" They told us the man was smoking, and we said, "Okay, we can take care

of that." So, we told everybody to quit smoking. Hell, they were the guards, I believe, that were going to stay with us for a hell of a long time. They were real skittish about it. Anyway, finally here they came and made the first run on us. It was a beautiful miss, but it was so close.

Marcello: Could you hear these planes coming?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Did you see them?

Taylor: No. We were down in the hold,

Marcello: Describe the actual attack itself, as best as you can remember.

Taylor: All right. The Japanese manned their guns. They weren't real big guns--something like a 3-inch. There was all kinds of noise--a lot of hustle and bustle.

Marcello: Is there panic down below decks?

Taylor: No. A man by the name of Hershel Cobb was next to me. He's from my hometown, Iowa Park. He was a staff sergeant, and he was down there. We passed the word around for everybody to get their shoes off, tie strings around them so they could tie them around their neck. They were to look around, and there was some loose wood up front to take with us. We didn't have lifejackets. They were to be sure that their canteen was tied to their belt, so that when we went overboard we could survive a little bit. Of

course, they were to make their money secure. We were ready to go.

Marcello: Describe the near misses,

Taylor: It was like a cloud of dust. Every time they would get close, all the dust and sand would fly and everything. Finally, the hit came. I think it took about five sticks of bombs. It took off a piece of the captain's cabin and hit the waterline near the rear of the ship. The Dutch were back there. I don't remember any officers being back there, but there probably were some back there, too. Then they set it on fire.

Marcello: Now, this was on your ship?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: But you were kind of at the opposite ends of the ship from where this took place.

Taylor: I was at the front end of the ship, the front hold. This happened mainly in the center and the rear.

Marcello: In the meantime, what was the conduct of the Japanese guards?

Taylor: Well, they settled down and were just as nervous as we were.

Marcello: Did they close the hatches or anything?

Taylor: Oh, no.

Marcello: Could you feel those bombs having hit in the aft end of the ship?

Taylor: You just shook. They vibrated that damn ship. It shook

like hell. You were wondering what had happened. I went up to the deck to see what had happened. There was a sick feeling. Theoretically, the bombing was over with.

Marcello: How long did the whole thing last?

Taylor: It couldn't have lasted more than twenty minutes, I don't believe. It was over in a pretty short time. They came in and made their run. I looked over to the other ship that was with us, and the damn thing was going down. Its nose was right up in the air and slipping down, and that was a really sick feeling.

Marcello: That one had Dutch prisoners and Japanese technicians aboard, didn't it?

Taylor: Yes. I think the Japanese took the bigger licking out of that thing. The gunboat that was with us was going after the Japanese. They said they would look at them, and if they weren't Japanese, they would push them back down. Finally, they didn't have enough Japanese--they brought aboard all of them they could--and then they started picking up the Allies then. We were loaded before they got on, so you can imagine the conditions from then on. Now is when you're talking about sitting room and standing room and relaying out. Of course, if I was at the top, the fellow on the bottom would come up, and I'd go back down to let so many come at a time. Then when we put that food down there,

you couldn't even find a place to even put it. We had at least two or three panics, It was really touchy.

Marcello: Panics when you were distributing food and so on?

Taylor: No. I mean, thinking we had another air raid coming.

Marcello: I see. I'm sure everybody was jittery.

Taylor: We were really jittery. It didn't take but some seagulls to almost start a panic. Everybody wanted to get below deck. When they would jump in those holds, you had to be careful because they were liable to jump right on top of you. This is when we did sit down, and you did it with your legs kind of folded up to you, and you were right next to somebody else, body to body.

Marcello: In other words, your knees were on somebody's back, and somebody's knees were touching your back and that sort of thing,

Taylor: Yes. Luckily, being the captain and in charge of that hold, we could get some air by rotating and taking time to shift those men up and down.

Marcello: What would you do? Would you shift them closer to the hatch as such?

Taylor: No, we'd let them come up for air and go to the latrine and then get them back down and let somebody else come back up.

Marcello: And the Japanese had no objections to this procedure?

Taylor: Oh, no. They were as jittery as we were, I guarantee you.

Marcello: Was the food still being lowered down into that hold in buckets?

Taylor: Yes, but in containers bigger than buckets.

Marcello: Big tubs or something like that?

Taylor: Yes. It seemed to me like it took us three more days, and that was the most hectic three days that I can remember ever spending. We buried fifty some-odd men at sea that had died. Captain Lumpkin was working like crazy up there.

We finally got into the Moulmein River, and lo and behold, some of those Javanese jumped overboard. The captain slowed down, and they went and picked them up. You'd think that he'd line them up and shoot them, but he didn't. He said, "If anybody does this again, they're really going to be severely punished," and we went right on up the darn river. Then was when you couldn't maneuver. We were sitting ducks for sure if they'd have come back then. We finally wound up at Moulmein with five bodies that we hadn't buried at sea. You couldn't bury them in the river.

Marcello: Were these Americans or Dutch?

Taylor: Dutch, as far as I know.

Marcello: You really hadn't lost very many people yet throughout this whole experience.

Taylor: We hadn't lost any yet! It was the craziest thing I ever saw--to go through so many close calls. We'd been bombed

by the Japanese six times straight, and now we came to the Americans.

Marcello: I guess about the only people that you had lost were the volunteers who had gone up with the 19th Bomb Group.

Taylor: As far as I know, yes. Even some of those made it all the way through. Okay, they asked for a Christian place to bury them. Of course, the old pagoda, you could see it.

Marcello: This is the Moulmein Pagoda of Kipling's works?

Taylor: Kipling, yes. They got a truck and went to a little Catholic mission there in the hospital. So that was the Christian place they took them for burial. They sent back all the clothing they had, all the food they had, because we had men coming to our ship again that didn't have clothes. Division of the clothing again.

It impressed me very much. I was a First Christian at that time--a TCU Christian, you might say. Here the teachings of Jesus told them to go everywhere in the world. Here out in this godforsaken place was a little, ol' Catholic mission. They sent back handful of medals; the Catholics go for those medals. I got hold of one called a miraculous medal. It said, "Mary, conceive without sin," and had a picture of Mary on it. I kept that baby through the war, I guarantee you. It didn't have much meaning to me, but it was something that had a meaning to it.

Marcello: So, what happens when you get to Moulmein?

Taylor: That was when we go to the . . . I think it would be an asylum.

Marcello: This was the leper asylum?

Taylor: Yes, with the tall walls around it. God, they couldn't miss. All they'd have to do was shoot one in here, and they'd clean out the whole nest.

Marcello: I guess some of them are put in a prison here, too, aren't they, at Moulmein?

Taylor: No, it was into this deal. As far as I know, we all went in there. I can't recall us being divided. I remember Hugh Lumpkin digging into some of the old records, medical records, that the English had about the lepers. Some of them were still there. You would hear them sing out at night or when the sun comes up. It was eerie damn feeling.

And the food value began to drop. That's when we had so much boiled turnips and rice and very little meat, if any. It doesn't seem like we were there so terribly long--maybe a week or so--and then we moved out to our first camp. It seemed to me like it was the 10 Kilo or the 20 Kilo.

Marcello: You did not go to Thanbyuzayat? Thanbyuzayat was the base camp or a hospital camp. It was like the beginning of the railroad.

Taylor: No, this is the Burma end of it now. You're talking about

the Thailand end of the line. You see, we were at least a hundred, 125 miles north of Thanbyuzayat.

Marcello: Thanbyuzayat? You did not go there?

Taylor: No, that was in Thailand. There wasn't any Thanbyuzayat in Burma. There wasn't a base camp at the northern end of that line. We moved into our first . . . it seemed to me like it was 5 Kilo Camp or 10 Kilo Camp, and they had some barracks started there, and we had to add to it. That was where we began our work there.

Marcello: Describe what this 10 Kilo Camp looked like.

Taylor: Well, it was thatched huts made out of bamboo. It is really lovely--what all you can do with bamboo. That means making roofs, stripping the insides and flattening them out to make your deck where everybody slept on. Sometimes we were in an area where they had the small bamboo to where we could just lay it across there like fishing poles. In most cases it was bigger bamboo that had been flattened out and stretched across there. There was enough sleeping space for a man. Each man had a section of about a foot. You would walk up and down the deck. Latrines, we dug the latrines there.

Marcello: About how much space did each man have on one of these decks in the thatched hut?

Taylor: It would be about like this, maybe a little longer (gesture).

Marcello: Maybe about three feet wide?

Taylor: Yes, three or four feet wide and about five or six feet long.

Marcello: And you slept there, and you had all your possessions there and everything else.

Taylor: Yes, that's true.

Marcello: Describe what a typical day was like here at the 10 Kilo Camp from the time you get up until you went to bed at night. Describe the day in terms of the food, in terms of the type of work you were doing, the discipline you came under, and that sort of thing.

Taylor: Of course, the quality of the food had begun dropping ever since we left Batavia, but it was still fairly good there. You would get some beef that would come in. It was still close enough to civilization to where the natives brought eggs and tobacco, a few bananas, to where we could supplement our diet. Then the work crews started going out.

Marcello: By this time, that is, by the time that you got to the 10 Kilo Camp, did you already realize that you would be working on a railroad?

Taylor: I feel sure that the rumor had gotten to us about where we were going and what we were going to do.

Marcello: So, describe the work on the railroad.

Taylor: Again, it was making up what you called kumis or groups. Maybe thirty or forty men were assigned to a group with one officer in charge of the group. We would meet the Japanese engineers,

and the Japanese engineer would tell the guards what he wanted us to do. It was either digging out dirt or moving dirt in some fashion. It could be that we were either making cuts or fills. Later on the ties came along, and we put the ties down. Then here come the tracks.

I mean, the wildest part about this is that the English had been contemplating this road for many years and had surveyed it already and had a quite good amount of equipment to build it with. Then these Japanese start moving bridges from everywhere. They brought a bridge from Java, mind you, section by section and put it up. They weren't dummies, that's for sure. The Japanese engineers knew what was going on and what job they had to do. They would just parcel out the work, and we'd work until it was time to go home, and then we'd go home.

They would bring the food out to us at noon, whatever we had. It took an officer to be around in those days to keep from happening what you said was happening. Officers would more or less stay fairly close to the chow line to see that they were getting the right proportions and weren't putting too much on for their buddies. It seemed to me like there was pretty much quality in our men, and I didn't see hardly any of that.

Marcello: How large are these kilo camps in terms of the number of men?

- Taylor: In our group there were 345 Americans. We still had more or less a contact with our old Black Force. I'd say the camp had 1,000, maybe 1,500, men.
- Marcello: And it is a mixed nationality?
- Taylor: Yes. We did our cooking, and they did their cooking.
- Marcello: When would a typical workday begin? What time?
- Taylor: Oh, you were out and going by sunup. Eating your breakfast, actually getting ready. I think the work detail probably headed out by seven o'clock at least.
- Marcello: In the beginning they had established quotas for you, did they not? In other words, you had to move so many cubic meters of dirt per man.
- Taylor: Yes. One cubic meter per man.
- Marcello: Is it not true that in the beginning the Americans were getting that quota fulfilled relatively early and then coming in early?
- Taylor: Yes.
- Marcello: Then what did the Japanese do?
- Taylor: It seems like they upgraded it maybe to one-and-a-quarter cubic meters.
- Marcello: In other words, they gradually kept increasing that quota until they made sure you were out there for a full day's work.
- Taylor: Yes. Then, of course, they would never assign a quota to an

officer. The sergeants and non-coms were still required to work, but we weren't. Of course, we were making the tea; we kept the pot boiling. We were helping in any way that we could if the men got in trouble. I got to be a real tea-maker (chuckle).

Marcello: Now, would this be done actually out on the work parties?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: I gather tea was plentiful.

Taylor: Still plentiful, yes. I was trying to think how long we stayed there. We had a real good Japanese sergeant in charge of our camp at that time. He headed off any disturbance with those Koreans. I feel like he would be the one that they never had a complaint against. He probably wouldn't have made the hanging. He liked Americans. I mean, he knew all about America, all the movie stars. You know, I didn't dream that the Tokyo Times is printed in English, but it is. They could write English, but it was a little difficult sometimes to speak it. Of course, in addition to English they had to learn Malayan to where they could communicate . . . enough to communicate with natives.

Marcello: Did these Japanese seem to have more respect for the officers than they perhaps did for the enlisted men?

Taylor: I think just a small amount more, but not anything like . . . we saluted them just the same as the others, okay? But they

did appreciate the fact that we were officers, and I would say they didn't molest us particularly.

Marcello: I would assume that it didn't make any difference to the Koreans.

Taylor: No, except there was still some authority there whenever something came up, and we talked to them. All of their dealings came through us. They would tell the adjutant . . . the camp commander would tell the adjutant what he wanted to be done. So, there still is a certain amount. Especially when some trouble happened and you went over there to intervene, it did have an effect that you were an officer, yes. Say, treating us any better? No. They slapped you if you didn't salute just the same as they did the others.

Marcello: What sort of an attitude did the Japanese seem to have toward the Koreans?

Taylor: They didn't think too much of them, either. I would say that they didn't have the respect that they would have for one of their own soldiers. The fact that they were conscientious objectors--they were non-fighters--didn't sit too well with the Japanese, either.

Marcello: It seems ironic that on the one hand they were supposedly conscientious objectors, but yet on the other hand they didn't hesitate to beat the hell out of you guys.

Taylor: That's true; that's true. That's when it stopped. I don't

know what they expected from those Christians that were there--to be walking angels or what, It seemed like they got over a lot of their objections to this bit about smoking and whatnot.

Marcello: I'm even surprised that the Japanese recognized such a thing as a conscientious objector. That almost surprises me that the Japanese would tolerate conscientious objectors.

Taylor: Is this the first time that anyone's mentioned that there were conscientious objectors?

Marcello: Yes, that's correct. I guess I just assumed all along that these Koreans were nothing more than conscripts.

Taylor: No. Well, yes, they were conscripts, but conscientious objectors were not to be in a fighting force. They probably wouldn't have them in one of their fighting forces. So I think they would have looked on the Koreans with a little bit of contempt. I will say, by far, our worst trouble was with the Korean conscientious objectors and not the Japanese, because they didn't have more than one or two Japanese in the camp. Maybe there'd be an officer or a non-com, a sergeant, but the rest of them were Koreans. The engineers were all Japanese.

Marcello: In these kilo camps did the officers have quarters apart from the enlisted men?

Taylor: Yes. Well, in one area you had your officers, the first

three-graders. You might say on down the line, it could be sergeants, corporals.

Marcello: But you would theoretically all be in the same building.

Taylor: Oh, yes. No, we didn't have a separate hut. It would have more than that in it. Then you get your allies. They were pretty well the same. They had their area, but we always got together and talked. I'm trying to think . . . I can't remember us ever being housed together like that.

Marcello: What was the rice like here that the Japanese were distributing?

Taylor: Still all right as far as I can remember. I'm trying to remember where we had all the red rice. It could be that's where it was. If we could have held on to the red rice . . . we didn't like it as well, but we were getting some nutrition out of it that we lost later on when we got all white rice.

Marcello: How much do thoughts of home enter your mind at this time?

Taylor: When you weren't hungry, you were always thinking about home or talking about home. You were thinking about it, especially at night when you lay down; you think about your loved ones. Then when you got real hungry, you would think about what you were going to have your wife cook up and have all kinds of dreams about some fantastic foods.

Captain Cates started a cookbook. I don't know what he ever did with it, whether he got back home with it or not. He would sit down and very patiently let them describe a

meal that they were going to have their wife fix for them. I remember one of them was going to get two pies, one chocolate and one coconut, and put a layer of ice cream on top of one of them and then put it together and have a pie sandwich. So, yes, all those thoughts went on.

Marcello: Is there very much time for recreation here at 10 Kilo?

Taylor: It seems to me like we had a Sunday break, but that was about all.

Marcello: In other words, you would work six days a week?

Taylor: It seems to me like we had a little break for ourselves in there. It could be that we rotated going in and out to where somebody got a little rest. I know there were enough officers to where you could rotate officers to where you would have a day off. Of course, not here but later on down at the 100 Kilo is when we started digging graves all day.

Marcello: Where do you go from the 10 Kilo Camp?

Taylor: Eighty, I believe, is our next move.

Marcello: You make a big jump up to 80 Kilo?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: But there were a lot of camps in between, were there not?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Now, I assume as you progress from the 10 Kilo Camp to the 80 Kilo Camp, you are really getting back in the jungles. The 10 Kilo Camp was pretty easy work, wasn't it?

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: Because you're still on basically level ground.

Taylor: And people were bringing food in.

Marcello: You're close to civilization. Is it also true that there is another road or a trail paralleling the railroad or close to the railroad so that supplies can be brought up?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Do you have anything to do with supplies anymore?

Taylor: No, except, like I said, when the canteen came in, we got to where we were buying. Nobody spent any money. I was trying to think of how . . . we got paid that little amount from the Japanese. I know that I didn't handle it, whatever it was. It seems like there was a little bit coming in to where we could still buy things when they came in. It got to a situation to where we were buying just about everything that came in, giving it out, distributing it out.

Marcello: Here again, what are you using for money?

Taylor: The same old money we had hid away.

Marcello: The Dutch guilders?

Taylor: No. We had changed those in Singapore, you remember, for Malayan dollars.

Marcello: That's correct. They would accept the Malayan dollars here?

Taylor: Yes, let's see. What kind of money did Burma have? It seems like they had the rupee. I was trying to think of a

time going into Moulmein to exchange money. I can't remember that happening. I believe it would still work there. These, mind you, were Japanese Malayan dollars. They weren't the English Malayan dollars; they were Japanese money.

Marcello: What time of the year is it when you move up to the 80 Kilo Camp? Are we getting close to the monsoon season by that time?

Taylor: Yes,

Marcello: You must have stayed around the 10 Kilo Camp for quite a while, then?

Taylor: It seemed like it. The time just goes so fast. A month or two.

Marcello: Was it when you were at the 80 Kilo Camp that the "Speedo" campaign had begun? In other words, in May of 1943, the Japanese are behind schedule on the railroad, and so they try to hasten up the activities.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: It just so happens that this coincides with the monsoon season, also.

Taylor: True.

Marcello: Describe what the "Speedo" campaign meant in terms of what it did to your life.

Taylor: Well, I would say this. This is when we began to pick up a

little malaria and dysentery at the 80 Kilo. They would come in in the morning, and say this man had malaria. Well, they would feel his head, and he didn't have fever, and so they would push him on out. Of course, Dr. Lumpkin tried to tell them it was going to come up in the evening. We got our quotas increased, too. That is when we doubled up, and we had to stay there until we got the dirt out, and we were having to do it in the rain. I would say that's where it began to really kind of close in on us, because of being overworked now, and our food supply was really cut down low.

Marcello: Why was the food supply cut down?

Taylor: Being away from civilization again.

Marcello: I guess with the monsoons coming, the supply trucks couldn't get up to the 80 Kilo Camp.

Taylor: Right. It seems like we always had tobacco coming in and a few little things. I can't remember the time when we didn't have some tobacco.

Marcello: What kind of tobacco were you getting?

Taylor: Well, we're getting native tobacco, and it was getting stronger. You might get a pound or a kilo of it, and by the time you washed it down, you would come out with just a little bit. It was too strong to smoke.

Marcello: What did you use for paper and so on? How did you make your cigarettes?

Taylor: Stuff that we had brought along with us. We had a little deal that you could use the Bible as long as you read the page (chuckle). The Bible is treated with a kind of arsenic or something, so it didn't smoke very well. It is amazing how you would have little old things to throw out, and you could make a darn cigarette out of it.

Marcello: I guess a lot of them got to the point where they could actually split that paper, could they not?

Taylor: I don't know.

Marcello: Let's talk some more about the 80 Kilo Camp because, like you say, this is where the work picks up. When does a day begin here at 80 Kilo Camp?

Taylor: It was light by the time you got out to work, so I don't remember ever going out in darkness, okay? I remember coming back when it was getting dark, but in going out, I don't ever remember going out in darkness.

Marcello: How did the attitude or harassment of the guards change as a result of beginning the "Speedo" campaign?

Taylor: It was tougher.

Marcello: By this time, do you have names for the Korean guards-- nicknames?

Taylor: We had a nickname for all of them.

Marcello: Can you think of some of the nicknames?

Taylor: I can think of the bad ones better than I can the good.

"Magen" and "Liver Lips."

Marcello: The "Brown Bomber?" Was that one?

Taylor: Yes. I was trying to think of who we had along with us in that area. That would be about the extent of nicknames, as far as I can recall.

Marcello: Describe what it was like working in the monsoon season.

Taylor: Well, it just seemed like it would rain and rain and rain. To build a fire in the rain isn't easy. I had an old beaver . . . you know, those old-type campaign hats that I went through that experience with, and it was terrific. You'd get a little break, but it seemed like everyday sometime it was going to rain. It didn't rain twenty-four hours a day. They do have a 120 some-odd inches a year in that area.

Marcello: But nothing is ever dry, is it, during the monsoon season?

Taylor: It doesn't seem like it.

Marcello: Did the barracks and so on leak during the monsoons?

Taylor: I would say no. It was amazing how those leaves would flatten out and shed water. That may have been in some particular area, but I don't remember ever having a leaking roof.

Marcello: It must have been extremely hard to make cuts and fills in that kind of weather.

Taylor: Yes. Yet, I can't remember it being so terribly muddy where

we were, Whether we were on higher ground . . . I think we were on higher ground where, more or less, the water was running off.

Marcello: Before you make the cuts and the fills, do you have to clear the land, so to speak? Cut down the trees?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: I would assume that that would have been pretty hard work, too, given your weakened conditions by this time?

Taylor: Well, we did some of that, but most of that was being done by another crew, another group. Maybe another camp was cutting the trees. We did in some areas get into making the pilings, you might say, but we didn't do too much of that. It seems like it came to us sometimes, and you would get about thirty or forty men under one of them to lift the darn thing with sticks and put it in place. But I can't remember us doing an awful lot of bridge work.

Marcello: Are the beatings increasing?

Taylor: I would say it was coming out in the Korean guards. All the time, they were getting a little worse, and it was over smaller infractions.

Marcello: Do you think the Japanese were putting the pressure on them, too?

Taylor: Oh, yes. I would say the pressure was mounting. I believe it was at this camp . . . no, it would be the next camp.

Marcello: The 100 Kilo?

Taylor: Yes, where I had contact with this Japanese sergeant.

Marcello: How was the food being cut at this point? What were you doing to eat?

Taylor: Whatever we got was divided equally. I can't recall being short of rice, but it was the things going into the rice. Like, so we would get a cow or two. For 1,000 or 2,000 men, a 150 to 200-pound cow would just make soup; you couldn't even hardly taste it. It seemed like sweet potatoes we were getting, which was great. You would get one whole one and roast it, and you would eat everything on it. You didn't throw anything away. And then eggplant . . . we still had eggplant.

Marcello: You're getting this sort of thing even up at the 80 Kilo Camp yet?

Taylor: Yes. Of course, everybody by that time had gone down in weight.

Marcello: What was your weight when you went into the service?

Taylor: About what it is now--154 pounds, I believe.

Marcello: What did you get down to at your lowest? Do you recall?

Taylor: As far as I know, close to ninety pounds. We went on to the 100 Kilo Camp now, and this was where we were really having troubles.

Marcello: By this time, that is, from the time you get to the 100 Kilo

Camp, all of the various diseases are setting in, to go along with the starvation and everything else.

Taylor: Plus the fact that I believe we walked from the 80 Kilo to the 100 Kilo. Maybe it was from the 100 Kilo to the 105 Kilo or something like that.

Marcello: Anyway, be that as it may, it would seem to me that the number of people who would be available for work parties would be getting less and less. Consequently, who was it that it determined, ultimately determined, who went out on the work parties?

Taylor: I think it was the Japanese. Then Captain Fowler worked in that area, and Captain Lumpkin.

Marcello: But the basic decision was made by the Japanese.

Taylor: Oh, yes. We could be protesting all we wanted to, but they had to have so many men out there to work.

Marcello: They had a quota.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: What would happen to men who were too sick to go out on the work details and who would be staying back in camp? What happened to them in terms of rations and that sort of thing?

Taylor: They were cut. Of course, we were trying to make up for it. When they killed a cow, we would catch the blood and cook the blood for them. That was a rarity that only those in the hospital got.

Marcello: This blood would then congeal, like?

Taylor: Yes. We'd cook it--fry it--and it would come out pretty good. I would say it was a rarity if you would get some of it. That all went to the hospital.

Marcello: I've heard it said that the last place you wanted to go was to that hospital.

Taylor: That's right. That's a "getting-off" place. I don't know how many men we buried there, but I know it was an awful lot. When I was having to dig graves, you would just about pray that nobody would die so you wouldn't have to dig a grave. The men were buried in a proper manner. Most of the time we wrapped them in bamboo--you might say a little throw mat. You would save his clothes. Clothes and shoes were real precious.

Marcello: Were careful records made of the burial sites?

Taylor: Yes. I would say we made copies. I remember Sergeant Casey, one of my men, was assigned a deal to have a little cross fixed with the man's name on it. Then we had our own records going-- where they were and who they were.

Marcello: Did you see instances where a man would simply lose the will to live? Give up and die?

Taylor: Maybe only on one occasion there was one that didn't do much about his ulcer, and it finally killed him. I think he could have worked harder to keep alive. There were plenty of others

that had them, and all they had was saltwater to treat them with.

Marcello: What was your own physical condition like?

Taylor: I was still holding up fairly good. I would say by then I was probably down to 125 or 130 pounds.

Marcello: Did you get any tropical ulcers or malaria or anything like that?

Taylor: Oh, malaria, I had plenty of that--at least ten times. I had the milder type. There are two different types. I had benign tertian, I believe. Then there was another one that attacked your kidneys. It was called blackwater fever, but there is another name for it. By the way, that is what finally got Colonel Tharp when he got back home, was blackwater fever.

Marcello: Now, it was also at the 100 Kilo Camp that Dr. Lumpkin died. Isn't that correct?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what that did to the morale, and how this all occurred.

Taylor: He was, I guess, one of the best-loved, well-liked officers that we had. Yes, he was sleeping right next to me. In fact, he was sleeping between me and Parker. We were all buddies. The three captains were buddies. What we would get we shared; anything we got extra we shared. Rasbury

always helped him, and so did "Dude," I mean, like doing something extra to it, like a little rice cooked up and kind of baked in the little ol' ground deal to make it taste just a little bit better.

Marcello: You mentioned Rasbury and somebody else who helped you. Who was the other guy?

Taylor: "Dude" Cobb. I mean, we were close-knit and helped whenever we could help or shared whatever we could share. We cared for one another.

Marcello: So, in other words, the officers would form little cliques just like the enlisted men did? I was going to ask you about that, if it was the same thing,

Taylor: Oh, yes. You are going to get closer to one or two. The others are going to be good friends, but you have a special closeness, more of what I would say is brotherly love. You really loved this person. You don't think of it in terms like that. You have self-respect--that's the main thing--self-respect for one another and care. "We're in it; let's work together." Yes, the others were the same way. Nothing like cliques particularly, just friends.

I remember when Hugh got so sick, He had malaria and dysentery at the same time. He dehydrated so bad. We cut a hole through the floor, so he could put his bottom in it because he was going ten, twelve, fifteen times a day.

Everytime he'd drink water, it would go through. He wanted a Dutch doctor to boil some water and put it through his veins. That's about the only way

He had been making autopsies, looking for cholera, because a cholera scare had come up the river. He'd have to cut off the top of the head and look at the brain to detect whether they have cholera or not. They could have dysentery, and it looks like the same situation. But then we started doing everything not to let this cholera get us,

So the only thing that he felt like could save him was to get some water in him. That's the way they treat cholera and dysentery--just keep putting water through your system. But this doctor was afraid he would kill him. He didn't have the equipment to do it, and he was afraid it would go in too fast and get air in his blood vessels. He didn't want to take that responsibility. Hugh had gotten so weak that we finally had to take him over to the hospital. We couldn't stay there with him all day--we had to go work--so we put him over there. But he was a beautiful man,

Marcello: I'm sure that was devastating to the morale of everybody,

Taylor: It sure was.

Marcello: I'm sure that they figured if the doctor couldn't live, then what hope was there for anybody else.

Taylor: It really hurt. But the Dutch doctor took right over, Dr.

Hekking . . . or was it Bloemsma? Hekking, I believe, was with the Fitzsimmons group, so we had Bloemsma. We were used to him.

Really, I'll tell you, it is hard to come to the realization that somebody isn't there anymore. We buried old Hugh good and said some prayers over him. I believe Colonel Tharp read the sermon. Usually, for the man that died, his captain would read the sermon over him.

Marcello: I would assume that everything you do, given these conditions, would take a real physical effort.

Taylor: Yes, it really is. Like I say, the officers didn't work very much. Well, we had latrines to be dug, so we'd dig latrines . . . graves. It was voluntary work--just things that needed to be done to try to survive.

Marcello: The latrines, I guess, were just open pits.

Taylor: Pit of maggots. The craziest thing about them is that a fly can't become a fly until that maggot buries into the ground, and then he flies out. It kind of knocks your latrines out before long; they get in the walls of the darn latrine. I will say one thing, they kept all that stuff going in there churned up.

Marcello: Did you mention awhile ago that you did not have any tropical ulcers?

Taylor: No, I didn't have any. I had ten attacks of malaria.

Marcello: How did people treat those tropical ulcers?

Taylor: About all they had to treat them with was saltwater, Put a cloth on it and put saltwater in it.

Marcello: Was there salt available?

Taylor: It seems like we always had a little salt around, That was one thing that you can bet was something dear when we had a chance to get any.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that in some cases maggots were used to clean out that dead flesh.

Taylor: Yes, if you were ready and willing to use those. They started doing that in the Civil War. The only thing about those maggots is getting one of them to be a sterile maggot. Yes, they would really get in there and eat it, I remember "Dude Cobb," you could see his shin bone. He kept pouring on the saltwater. It's back filled up so nice now, but I never thought it would be.

Marcello: By this time, what is the condition of your clothing?

Taylor: They were getting mighty poorly. There were a lot of sarongs worn and G-strings, wooden sandals.

Marcello: I guess the leather is gone on shoes by this time, is it not?

Taylor: As far as I know, mine always held out. I had a couple of pairs that held out for me. We would wear the wooden shoes all the time we were at camp, but when you'd get out on the working party . . . I don't remember wearing those sandals

out on the working party. It seems like my shoes were still holding up. I had one good uniform laying back in there for the day I got out.

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

Taylor: You just made them last. It is amazing how long you can make a razor blade last with a glass. You would just put it in there and sharpen it up again.

Marcello: When you say you would sharpen it on glass, how would that procedure work?

Taylor: You just lay it in there and put your thumb on it and work it around on the glass.

Marcello: In other words, you're taking a piece of a glass bottle-- the curved part of a glass bottle or something?

Taylor: Yes, the inside. I would say it would be from the bottles that were made, more or less, where they would put a string around them and sort of pop off the top of the bottle.

Marcello: What did you do for toothbrushes and things like that?

Taylor: Well, we had one we took with us. I don't recall having too much toothpaste, but I'm sure we had some along or something. That was when we began to grow our beards and moustaches and whatnot . . . let our hair grow longer to where we weren't doing a daily shave. It wasn't long until I went back to it. I couldn't stand those sticking things.

Marcello: Were bedbugs and lice and things like that a problem?

Taylor: Yes. It was a continuous process of keeping them picked out.

Marcello: How do you get rid of the bedbugs and lice?

Taylor: Well, if you can get them in sunlight, that will do it for you, and that was about the only thing you might do--hang the darn thing out, maybe wash it and hang it out in the sunshine and let it do it that way, or get in and catch them physically.

Marcello: Are you referring to your blanket?

Taylor: No. Mostly in the mosquito nets is where they were.

Marcello: By the time that you get to the 100 Kilo Camp have you been able to send or receive any mail?

Taylor: Oh, no. Nor did we have Red Cross supplies.

Marcello: Does all that come later?

Taylor: Yes. After the war is over, a little bit before. At Tanjong Priok we got some.

Marcello: How about sending out the little postcards? Were you able to do that here yet?

Taylor: No. You know, we made them out in Java, and we thought that they'd been mailed home, which relieved our minds quite a bit, but they hadn't. They didn't get there until three years later.

Marcello: What do you do in terms of bathing?

Taylor: When it rained is when you got your bath. Or you'd get a little bamboo bucket of water, and you could take a bath in a gallon of water. Mainly, you just washed under the arms and whatnot and then let it go.

Marcello: Are there ever very many opportunities to steal from the Japanese here in the jungle?

Taylor: No, not at that particular place. The 105 Kilo Camp was one of the first times that I know of that somebody was able to steal and get something from them.

Marcello: By the time that you get to the 105 Kilo Camp, are the monsoons and the "Speedo" campaign about ended, or are you still working as usual on the railroad?

Taylor: That's when it began to slack up a little. Yes, I would say the monsoons were over, just about. Mainly, it was still cuts and fills. At the 105 Kilo was where I really got down low.

Marcello: What happened here?

Taylor: I started having dysentery, and I was already legally blind by that time. That even started back in 100 Kilo.

Marcello: You were legally blind?

Taylor: Yes. I am now.

Marcello: Maybe you need to explain this a little bit more.

Taylor: Legally blind means at twenty feet the smallest number you can read is two inches tall. You call it 20/200. That's

when you're legally blind--when you can't read below that. So, I can't read below that. I can now by using my feel. Your eyes become trained, and my eyes have improved. When I have to focus down, right straight down on something, a little blind spot is still there to the right of the center of each eye. It is beautiful how your feel will come in. When I drive a car at this angle going down the road, I don't look straight ahead. Nature has done it; it isn't even a point anymore. I can pull it down to about 20/70 in one eye.

Marcello: Did this blindness occur because of malnutrition?

Taylor: Malnutrition, yes. We were really down at 100 Kilo, getting scurvy. We finally started eating what we called "jungle spinach." It is a beautiful little heart-shaped decorative thing that we see here in flowering plants all the time. It isn't particularly palatable, but you boil it up and it gets real yellow. So, you get the juice and hold your nose and drink a cup of it. Well, thank heavens, we even had that because my scurvy had gotten so bad at that time. When you get scurvy, your nose splits off, the corners of your mouth crack, and your scrotum really gets rough, too. That was our first introduction to "jungle spinach."

We started out in the 100 Kilo, and then we went on to 105. The section of that railroad was just about completed

at the 105 Kilo. I would say the biggest burial part of our people took place at the 100 Kilo.

Then they came in one day and said they'd fixed up a hospital camp at the 80 Kilo, and they took the very sick in trucks and took them down there where they could get aid. It turned out it was a place to get them down there to die. They had the sick looking after the sick.

Marcello: Did you have to go down to the 80 Kilo Camp?

Taylor: No.

Marcello: You mentioned it was at the 105 Kilo Camp where you got your worst.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Describe, again, your condition here at 105 Kilo.

Taylor: It turned out to be a situation . . . but, mind you, our food was getting very limited in that camp. Rice and ground-up fish heads were our main menu. I would say I had the dry beriberi comparable to pellagra in the South. My feet, the sheaths around my feet, nerves in my feet . . . what happens is your body starts eating on itself, and your sheath pulls back and leaves that little nerve exposed, and it dies. It is so sensitive to where you stretch your feet out and then you go to sleep and relax, and then you jump halfway out of bed by just having a sheet on. It is that sensitive.

I was going to the latrine . . . it built up to about

eight to ten, about fifteen, times a day. Most of the time I was going. I wasn't doing a lot. Your stomach was just growling and cramping so that you would go out there to get relief, and you may not hardly do anything. It was sort of like beating a trail back and forth.

Then came the order for us to go out of the jungle. At the headquarters camp where Fitzsimmons was, they said for me to stay behind, which would be kind of natural. They didn't know what kind of condition I was in. So, that's the order that came down. They were to go, and I was to stay behind. There were very few people. Well, that's when the old buddy showed out in Captain Parker. He said, "Taylor, you'll never make it! I'll stay. We'll change identity. You're me and I'm you." I said, "Mike, you have a family at home, too." So, I didn't think I was going to, and there's when I give Cellum credit for saving my life. That was when the theft happened from the Japanese.

Marcello: So, in other words, you and Parker did not actually change places?

Taylor: No. He wanted to. He insisted on it, but I wouldn't do it.

Marcello: So, you have dysentery; you have dry beriberi; you have malaria.

Taylor: No, I don't have any malaria at that time.

Marcello: But, you have the dysentery, and the beriberi, and, of course,

your sight is gone. I mean, you can still see, but you can't see very well.

Taylor: Not close, right.

Marcello: Does that kind of panic you a little bit?

Taylor: No. Again, you don't live hardly even a day at a time. You're just going along with the status quo, not ever thinking of tomorrow. I wasn't feeling so bad that I was anything like panicky. Really, I started going more panicky after they left than I was going at that time.

Marcello: That is, your morale began to suffer because . . .

Taylor: Of course, you hated to see them go, but you're glad to see them go, too--get out of that damn jungle--because we were in there now close to thirteen months by this time.

Marcello: I'm sure that you were laid out while you were here at the 105 Kilo Camp. You were not going out on any work details, were you?

Taylor: No. That's when Cellum came by one day and tossed me a can of salmon. He said, "Captain, eat this thing and get rid of this can as quick as you can." He had stolen it. He said, "Hide this can. Don't let them find it." So, I managed a little rice from the kitchen some way and opened that can of salmon, and that was the best feast I ever had in my life. It gave me a little strength.

Marcello: I think what is amazing is, in a sense, that this man, Cellum,

gave you this salmon when he could have very easily used it himself.

Taylor: True.

Marcello: He probably needed it almost as much as you.

Taylor: He probably had some left for himself, too, but he was sharing, was what he was doing, and they caught him. They put him in front of that guardhouse at attention. They had bamboo and every now and then they'd whop him. They kept him there at least twelve hours, and I prayed every time they hit him (weeping).

Marcello: Ultimately, was Cellum able to walk away from that beating?

Taylor: Oh, yes, and I'd say he did it like a man. A couple of days later, Lieutenant Schmid came through with a little party that was going down. He said, "Captain, I've got a can of milk." It's not the milk that we think of; it is that real thick stuff, gorgeous stuff. He said, "We've been saving this between Eldon and me," that was Sergeant Schmid, his twin brother, "and now is the time to use it." So, he gave it to me. He had picked up some pills somewhere for dysentery, and he shelled those things out.

So, between the two of them, I began to recover. My stomach stopped cramping, and I could eat more, and, like I said, I started progressing. Can you imagine saving a can of milk for three years? From the time we left Java is when

he had it, and it had been with him all this time. Thirteen months in the jungle, we were approaching, and he had still held on to that damn thing, and I know there were a lot of times he would have liked to pull it out and eat it, but he was saving it back. So, it wasn't too long before we moved out.

Marcello: So, between a can of salmon and a can of that sweetened milk and a few of the dysentery pills, that was able to regain some of your strength for you.

Taylor: Yes. It got me up off of my bottom to where I could walk around and feel better.

Marcello: By this time, how many people are left at 105 Kilo?

Taylor: Not so many. It seemed to me that you could say at the most it was about fifteen. We headed out of that place with fish head stew and rice as a ration.

Marcello: Are you walking or are you on a train?

Taylor: No, no. We're on a cattle car at this time.

Marcello: The railroad is completed now?

Taylor: Up to that section, it is complete. Like I said, we went by train.

Marcello: And where did you go?

Taylor: The big camp in Thailand.

Marcello: Okay, it would be Kanchanaburi.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: That was just like heaven, compared to what things were like in the jungle, was it not?

Taylor: Oh, Lordy! And to see your old buddies . . . Parker.

Marcello: You were reunited with your buddies?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what Kanchanaburi was like.

Taylor: Well, of course, it had better food. When you say better food . . . how can a can of cowpeas be better food--little ol' round peas? But it was food. Like you said, the meat . . . and the Thais were adding to the ration. You had OSS men there--of course, we didn't know anything about it--and they were working with the Thais and paying them to get extra food for the ration that the Japanese were giving us, that we were allowed. They were giving them more than that so that we were getting food and getting our strength back. Of course, tea, again, was plentiful.

Marcello: Again, you're close to civilization, so you can get more food.

Taylor: Right, right. This was the place where they had the ack-ack battery across the railroad track. It was that steel bridge that I understood was moved from Java.

Also, by the time that we got there, they had the monument up at that place for the prisoners that had died and for the Japanese that had died.

Marcello: Was this at Kanchanaburi, too?

Taylor: Yes. Fillmore has a picture of it. How they did that, I don't know--with him standing in front of the darn thing.

Marcello: This is Clyde Fillmore that has the picture?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: What were your quarters like here at Kanchanaburi?

Taylor: It was a replica of the thatched huts. We were still living in the huts. There was a parade ground.

Marcello: Was there very much work to be done here?

Taylor: No. After a while it seemed like we were allowed to go down and plant little gardens, which was heaven to get some extra lettuce or any of that kind of food. I remember there was an officers group, and this particular group went down to do this garden. Thailand is one of the breadbaskets of Asia, too, where we did get enough food to start regaining our strength. I remember getting on a scale there--I think it was in kilos--and it seemed like I weighed about fifty kilos. That would be right at 100 pounds.

Yes, we had some recreation there. We could play bridge.

By the way, up at the 100 Kilo Camp word came down that we could start using the flag on the caskets--the American flag. We hadn't been able to do that, not on the bodies. We hadn't been able to use the American flag. We'd kept it hidden away all this time. So, this order came down that it was okay. We wondered what in the world had happened.

We found out later what it was all about. I think we probably learned of it in a Japanese paper, too, where they had caught those Jap submarines in Australia and sunk them. They gave the dead a Japanese military funeral with their flag on the casket. So, they got a picture of that, and they said, "We'd better do that, too." Just a little example.

Yes, it was like walking from hell into heaven coming into that camp.

Marcello: How large a garden was this?

Taylor: Not real huge. I would say it was not more than an acre, maybe two acres.

Marcello: What were some of the things that were planted in it?

Taylor: Tomatoes, lettuce . . . I can't remember planting any beans. I think that was probably the extent of it--just to where you could kind of make a salad.

Marcello: You mention that there is the concrete and steel bridge here. What significance does this bridge have in terms of your stay there in Kanchanaburi? Were you there when it was attacked by air?

Taylor: Six times.

Marcello: Do you want to describe these incidents?

Taylor: I remember the first day. I believe I had malaria and had been left to stay in the barracks. They counted us in there. Lieutenant Schmid and another group had come down from the

jungle, and so he came to where I was. They counted him and put him in our area. They put the rest of them over on the far side next to the bridge. I don't know who they were or what they were; I just know they were a work party. They weren't Americans . . . maybe a few.

I remember the first day he got in there. He said, "Captain, get the hell out of here! They're coming!" Then about that time I heard them coming. I can't think of the number, but it was plentiful. They were coming in low with their machine guns open, and you could hear them going through those bamboo huts.

Marcello: Were these four-engine bombers?

Taylor: Yes, I believe so--the old B-24. They cut loose, and, my God! They didn't hit that bridge one time. The bombs landed in our camp, and that crew had just gotten down from the jungle. It seems like they killed fifty or sixty of them. I know we were digging all night long, and it was awesome to go look at a hole that they had made. Then those that didn't explode, the prisoners got a detail to go out and move them.

Marcello: These are bombs?

Taylor: Yes, from Dayton, Ohio. I think they were 500-pounders.

Marcello: They were made in Dayton, Ohio?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the Japanese in the aftermath of

these raids?

Taylor: They were over there pumping all they could at them. As far as I know, they didn't hit them. The only damn thing they hit was our camp. Yes, there was quite a change. We could now have slit trenches that we didn't have before, and they wanted some, too. They had a moat around this camp, filled about half full with water. There wasn't any big way to get out of it. I believe that came later. I believe we built the moat after the bombing. We dug our own slit trenches.

The only thing was having enough of them so that you didn't have to kind of get in a hurry when we had an alarm. Everybody wanted to be below that ground. I remember I was in charge of one of them. I had to kind of get stern occasionally to make somebody move a little bit so somebody else could squeeze in. Those were hectic days in that camp.

Of course, any little thing . . . orders went out that we were not to run or point up or do anything unless it was real. You could get a panic started just by starting to run.

They got into taking the healthy ones to Japan, you know.

Marcello: Did they finally ever knock out that bridge?

Taylor: Not while we were there. They bombed it six times, one way or the other. Finally, a group of us were sent across the river to a camp over there. I've forgotten the name of it.

Marcello: Tamarkan?

Taylor: I believe so. I mean, it was weird walking across that bridge! Parker and I said, "What are we going to do if they bomb this thing while we're on it?" We finally made up our mind to lay down between the tracks and just pray like hell. It was too far down to jump. Gosh!

Anyway, we finally got over there, and this was still a nice camp like the other one was. It was nice in that you could see some orchids growing around the place. They are beautiful flowers. We were over there long enough for Parker and Major Rogers to be picked up for having brought in that Thai paper. You know, we were buying the Thai paper out there and bringing it in.

Oh, yeah, it was this camp that I got caught. The money was gone, just about. I was down to the American money. We were sending that money out and getting five for one. This Thai doctor was bringing us a newspaper. This five for one that we could get . . . now this was our men trading with the natives.

Marcello: When you say you could send that money out and get five for one, what do you mean?

Taylor: Five of their money for one of ours. We used the money then to buy for the canteen, buy extra things. We had divided it out with whatever party that was left there, including

the ones that were going to Japan, because we were getting down to hardly any money at all, except American money. I'll be damned if I didn't just get careless with the damn stuff, and I got caught with \$1,352 of American money.

Marcello: How did you get caught?

Taylor: I got caught while I was out on the parade ground. They searched my area in there and found it. They searched everybody, but they happened to find that \$1,352. I'm sure we still had some money left. Anyway, I asked for a receipt for it. The colonel told him, "This money belongs to the men, so we need to have the proper receipt," Well, they wouldn't give it to us. We said we took it out to keep the men from gambling. Oh, they liked that because they didn't like that gambling a bit. We said we took it up to keep the men from gambling with it. So, I thought I'd never see that again, but I'll tell you later on what happened to it.

Then they began to have you turn in your precious metals, rings.

Marcello: Were you punished in any way because you had that money?

Taylor: No.

Marcello: How long did you remain in this area altogether, that is, in the area of Kanchanaburi and Tamarkan?

Taylor: It don't seem like more than a couple of months. We hadn't

gotten settled over there when they took Parker to Saigon. The Kempei Tai caught him and finally ran that doctor down and herded up the whole bunch that had anything to do with it. I had gone out someplace on detail of some kind, and when I came back, Parker was gone. I thought I'd never see him again.

Marcello: When do you move out of Tamarkan?

Taylor: After just about all the men had gone that were going to Saigon. They were shifted to another camp, and their officers were sent over to a little bitty camp. It turned out where all the Allied officers were moving to this one camp. It wasn't so very far; we walked over there. It wouldn't be Kanchanaburi.

Marcello: Kanchanaburi was a big camp.

Taylor: This was a smaller camp. It was close to a little town. You could hear drums going off if anything was happening, or they would spell out the time with the drums. They must have had a big one, because they would pull it up, drop it, and then they would hold it if they were telling the time, count out the time. Then if the air raid was coming, it just made all kinds of noise.

Marcello: This camp was fairly close to Kanchanaburi and Tamarkan.

Taylor: Yes. It had a "buri" on it, but I can't think of what it was.

Marcello: It wasn't Phetburi, was it?

Taylor: No. Maybe it will come to me before this interview is over. There is where we ran into all the officers--English, Dutch, Australian.

Marcello: And this was strictly a camp for officers?

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: What did you do at that camp?

Taylor: Nothing. Played bridge. The food was fairly good. Charles Mott, we had. We picked him up somewhere. He was a flier, a Flying Tiger, that was shot down in Burma. He was a Flying Tiger. He was from Philadelphia and the most terrific chess player you ever saw in your life. He could play five to six players at one time--just move from one board to the other--and beat five of them.

Marcello: How many officers would you estimate were at this camp?

Taylor: I think around 2,000 or more. This was the one that had the big moat around it. This is where we ran into the worst Japanese we ever had. They called him the "Black Sergeant."

Marcello: What made him so bad?

Taylor: He was just as cruel as hell and took delight in punishing you excessively.

Marcello: What were some of the things he did?

Taylor: We had a raid there, but it was a pamphlet raid. A few of the little pamphlets got into camp, and the Dutch officer picked one of them up, and he broke his arm with his sword.

Then something else went wrong, They would impose silence on us in punishment of something that somebody did. The whole camp couldn't speak. That's when we learned to play charades.

Marcello: Who did all the cooking and all of that sort of thing in this camp, since there were all officers here?

Taylor: I don't know. I know they had a group in there of the enlisted men to do the cooking. Who they were, I don't know. As far as I know, there weren't any Americans.

Marcello: Essentially, you performed no tasks or jobs here?

Taylor: No. It was a recuperation kind of a deal. I know that by that time propaganda had gotten so bad about the way that we were being treated and what the Allies were promising those guys was going to happen to them one of these days. There was little let-up, but not for that particular sergeant or that camp commander.

Marcello: Did the food pick up here?

Taylor: I would say it would be about the same as the other camp. I wouldn't say that we certainly weren't showered with anything any different or any better. Still if the little canteens would come in, we would get to buy. We had a couple of near bombings there, where the Americans started attacking the engines--try to catch an engine somewhere and strafe it.

Marcello: The Japanese never marked any of these camps in any way, did they?

Taylor: No, they never would. We asked them to let us mark them. We asked later of some of the people that were on bombing raids over there, and they said, "Yes, we knew that you were there. It was just a darn accident. It certainly wasn't intentional because we could have wiped the thing out. That wasn't our target at all. It was just an oversight." You could sort of understand it, when they were coming in the treetops with the ack-ack battery shooting at them, why it was kind of hard without instruments to bomb that thing.

They finally came in while we were over at this camp. The bombers came in real high and finally knocked that damn thing out. They got up to precision bombing when they knocked it out, not low bombing. It seemed like they tried to bomb it--six times while we were there.

Marcello: How long were you at this little camp altogether?

Taylor: It seems to me like at least a month-and-a-half, two months. Then came the movement. They started moving them out in groups. They said they had another camp for us. Well, we didn't know it was on the front line. Finally, this "Black Sergeant" told us.

Marcello: Why was he called the "Black Sergeant," incidentally?

Taylor: He was dark-skinned. I guess that's the reason--real black hair. He wasn't light-complected like a lot of them. He was real dark. Probably sunburn did it. I've forgotten what the English did one time to make him unhappy. Anyhow, I know they put the interpreter and the highest-ranking English officer down in a little dungeon area, and they kept them down there several days.

Marcello: You mentioned they were going to move you out here again.

Taylor: Yes. Okay, another thing happened to me there that really got to me. I was still sick and weak. We would line up in fives, five-deep, not so very long but maybe to where you could still count (chuckle) in Japanese. The way they'd do that counting, we would count off first in English. Then we would get that number in our head. If we couldn't get it, then we would ask somebody else what it was in Japanese. Well, that particular day we were lined up out there, and I squatted down, about two rows back, because I was weak, tired. So I squatted down and about that time here came that big "Black Sergeant" giving me hell. What had happened, he had gotten up on that dirt mound, and he was counting them himself, and he kept coming up one short. Here I was, squatting down there taking a yasumi, break.

He hit me in the darn groin with that saber. It was still sheathed, but he hit me in the balls. I'll tell you,

it wasn't a physical hurt, but the mental hurt was real bad, especially after I got back inside of that damn hut. You want to kill him, but you've got to hang in.

Anyway, we started this move. What they were doing was moving the officers into where they expected the invasion of the Allies. Several bridges had been bombed out, so we had to be barged across. Another train would pick us up to go down in.

Marcello: Where were they taking you?

Taylor: Well, at that time we were going to Bangkok. From Bangkok we were supposed to have gone on to somewhere else, but the war ended. The natives kept trying to tell us that the war was over.

Marcello: This is while you were on this train heading to Bangkok?

Taylor: Yes. We had learned not to have anything to do with the natives. They would say it, but it was hard to believe it. We got into the station there, and that's when we got the message. The Japanese officer got up on the platform and said, "The war has ended," that the Americans had won.

Marcello: What was the reaction?

Taylor: There were Japanese in that depot, and I tell you, they were a sick sight. They were totally dejected. Well, I couldn't believe it.

Marcello: What was your reaction?

Taylor: You know, some of them sang, "God Save the King." Of course, the English and the Dutch have about the same sounding national anthem. It got down to the Americans, and, hell, we couldn't even begin to carry a chorus on the "Star-Spangled Banner." But it was terrific! I couldn't believe how it could end so fast.

Then, we heard about the atomic bomb. That word got to us. Whether they told us or how, we learned it had ended so quick because of the atomic bomb.

He said, "We have been ordered by the Americans to get you to the nearest airport. You will be picked up very shortly." He said, "It is about five kilos to the place where you are to stay." This is getting on about ten or eleven o'clock at night. So, we started walking on concrete for the first time . . . light bulbs. Bangkok itself is a beautiful city. Half of it is old, and half of it is new. The King of Siam got ambitious one time and went over and got some real design on how he wanted his model city to be. Terrific boulevards!

Anyway, we started walking, still not wanting to throw away anything we had. We were hanging on to our old mosquito nets and everything else. That concrete, by golly, it was hell on your feet. All night we walked. Instead of five kilos, it must have been ten or fifteen kilos.

Marcello: You had Japanese or Korean guards with you?

Taylor: We still had the Korean guards.

Marcello: I'm surprised they hadn't disappeared.

Taylor: No. They were following out their orders, I'm sure. They told them were they were going to take us.

Marcello: And these are all officers in this group.

Taylor: Yes. These weren't the same guards that we had with our other group.

Marcello: Oh, I see. They were not the same guards that you had in the jungle?

Taylor: No. The little markets began to open up along the way--Chinese with their bananas--and were we happy! They were charging us very little for what we got. I remember Clyde Fillmore got a canteen full of goat's milk. God, it tasted wonderful to have a little milk! Anyhow, we finally wound up at the dock area. That's where they were keeping everybody. There old Parker was--Captain Parker, Major Rogers.

Marcello: Now, these are the two guys that the Kempei had taken away?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Why had the Kempei taken them?

Taylor: Because they were buying a Thai newspaper and distributing news in camp. By the way, we were still getting news of some form back there at Kanchanaburi. They were putting that radio together and bringing out the news. We would

get the Thai news. We were getting some newspapers there-- the Nippon Times, Tokyo Times. I remember seeing a picture of a jet, and I believe that's where we read about the military funeral, too, in Australia. I said, "That's the biggest lie that ever happened! That jet can't fly without a prop." Of course, the Navy and all of us chewed that up, and they said, "Well, it's supposed to be." Of course, they had heard the word about the atom at Annapolis. You see, they were Annapolis graduates, so they knew more about this stuff than we did. "One of these days you're going to cruise a battleship around the world on one spoon of it."

It was a happy reunion. And we got some Red Cross supplies. We had gotten a few of them back up the road there, but just a smidgen of cigarettes and a little medicine. But there we really got into the Red Cross supplies. I've forgotten what camp it was. Okay, the first one . . . I believe that's where we got our letters from home.

Marcello: Kanchanaburi?

Taylor: I believe that's where it was.

Marcello: Did you get a bunch of letters from home?

Taylor: Oh, yes. I got twenty or thirty at one time, maybe more. I had to go through their censoring, and then they would put it on a little thing. I have some at home.

Marcello: What did that do for your morale?

Taylor: Oh, wonderful! Pictures, and they could write twenty-five words. These were letters . . . one a month, I believe,

Marcello: How many times did you read those letters?

Taylor: Oh, God, I don't know how many! The Japanese were real . . . they wanted to see the pictures of the kids and pictures of my car. "Oh, you have a car?"

There was one incident I wanted to tell about--this Japanese engineer sergeant that came to me one day.

Marcello: Did this occur up in the jungle?

Taylor: Yes, on the work party. He said there was something wrong with his hands. I said, "Well, let me have it." So I took his hand, and I told him to squeeze. He squeezed with all his might, and I couldn't even feel it. This was at the 100 Kilo Camp. I said, "Do you have vitamins?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, go get some vitamins." He went to the camp, and he got a bottle of vitamins. He took half of them and gave me the other half.

That same one, later on, a day or two later, I heard him whistling. He was whistling the "Red River Valley." I looked over at him, and he kind of whistled a little more and looked back. I finally said, "Do you know what you're whistling? You tell me." He said, "The Red River Valley." He just laughed. He could speak quite a bit of English. He was really a nice guy.

Marcello: So, where did you fly out of when you left there?

Taylor: Now the King of Siam sent razors and a bunch of stuff to us. The only incident that happened was that one night when Parker and I were sitting out on the dock area, and here came some Chinese junks spraying with machine guns. I guess they were trying to get loot out of some of these places or something. God, there was a little step there, and we dropped down on it with machine gun bullets scooting down that thing.

Anyway, still being the S-4, I got to do things, like, go to town and try to make contact there. Finally, we were ordered out. I believe I was the only one to go. I believe there was a Navy man. But we had Lieutenant Stivers, Navy pilot, who had had an operation. He almost had two heads. They had to cut a hole in his head to release that pressure. So, I was supposed to make arrangements for them to either bring the oxygen equipment in a low-flying plane or something because he just couldn't take any altitude at all. His head would pop right open.

Marcello: You said he had almost like two heads. You mean he kind of had a growth or a tumor or something like that?

Taylor: Yes, yes, a tumor. So, luckily, I got on the first Red Cross plane. A beautiful flight! I believe Canadians were flying that one. They had brought sandwiches--ham and cheese.

That ham and cheese sandwich, oh, boy, was that ever great!
We got to Rangoon, and that was our first contact with
Americans, and, boy, was it a happy one!

Marcello: Incidentally, did you have on your good uniform?

Taylor: I sure did. I still had my hat on. That was one of the
first things the guy said: "How much would you take for
that hat?" He couldn't drag that thing off of me. Anyway,
they said, "Where in the hell are the rest of the Americans?"
I said, "There wasn't enough room. Why don't you go on
and get them?" He said, "Well, we haven't had plans to
go in." I said, "Well, everything is okay, and they're
waiting for you to go in there." He said, "Okay. We'll
see that it's done." So, it wasn't another day or two
before they flew in there and picked them up with a bomber
escort.

I ran into this colonel that had come from Calcutta,
this surgeon. He and I were the only passengers, except
for the pilots and maybe another crew member. We headed
out to Calcutta, and there were still more of those good
ham and cheese sandwiches, coffee, even some candy.

I got up in the cockpit, and the pilot says, "Where
are you from?" I said, "Hell, I'm from Texas." They said,
"Goddamn, we know that! I mean where!" One of them was
from Lubbock, and I think the other one was from Big Spring.

I'm sure that that's been told a lot of times, but that really happened. This colonel, I sat down with him, and he kind of brought me up-to-date with what the hell the war was all about. What a terrific supply job! We had gotten the computers going that we didn't have before and were finely developed in there where they could find out what they had, where it was, and how to punchcard it and get it there. We said, "Hell, that's what won the war, the logistics."

Marcello: So, did you go to Calcutta then?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: I assume it was more rest and recuperation here.

Taylor: Yes. There was a jeep waiting . . . several actually. They didn't know how many were coming in on our plane. That colonel said, "What in the world can I do for you? Anything you want." I said, "Well, how about sending me a little Coca-Cola over here." He said, "It will be done." By the time I got there, there was a six-pack of Coke. I mean, that tasted better than anything I can ever think of.

Marcello: Did you have any problems getting your system adjusted to decent food again?

Taylor: Well, yes. You just couldn't eat very much. Your stomach had shrunk. The orders were for us to be able to eat any time of the day or night.

Marcello: What food did you crave the most, other than Coca-Cola?

Taylor: Liver and ham and cheese. The beef didn't hardly get into us until later on--the hamburgers. Those had a distinctive taste. You would say, "I want something that tastes good," and it was liver and ham and cheese.

Of course, the first night they gave me Atabrine. I should have known better because it made me sick before. So, that first night in there, I ran all night long. They said, "Why didn't you say something? We have quinine." I figured they didn't have quinine. Anyway, that was my first introduction.

They were beautiful to us. They put us through the mill. That's when they started pulling my teeth, in Calcutta. They were just about shot.

Marcello: Did they ever give you any sort of psychological tests or anything like that? Were you ever interviewed by psychologists or psychiatrists?

Taylor: Just routine work. Mainly, I would say a neurosurgeon examined me more than any, because I had this condition of the eyes and my feet were so extremely tender. I was one of the ones, when the rest of them flew away, that stayed behind. We had leave. We could go to town any time we wanted to. It was beautiful going to town. I finally bought a new wool uniform with wintertime coming, and a watch.

Marcello: Where was this?

Taylor: Calcutta. They had a place there that served the most beautiful hamburgers and Coca-Colas you could ever imagine! They had Sikhs driving touring cars or taxis. Oh, it was great! Then the Wacs put on the feed for us and had us all out for that.

Then they all left again, and I stayed behind with the ambulatories. I was ambulatory and they knew that they were going to retire me, so they needed to get up their facts altogether.

Marcello: When was it that you finally got home?

Taylor: It was in November.

Marcello: Of 1945?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Everything was still happening in November.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: When you became a civilian once again, did you have any problems adjusting to civilian life, so to speak?

Taylor: No, I don't think I did. Of course, I was in the hospital for two years nearly. All they did was load me up with vitamins in a syringe, and I would get to come home for thirty days. I would usually wire and get a thirty-day extension and then go back to the hospital. I settled in Temple, which is closer to home than anywhere else. My wife was still in Brownwood. We finally had to buy a house

in Waco. We didn't any more than buy it than when they sent me to San Antonio.

Everytime I would go to a hospital I would get this complete routine--the X-rays, the examination. Every eye doctor that ever existed wanted to look in my eyes to see what he could see in there. I'm afraid there wasn't very much for him to see. They would test me on the curve deal to make sure I wasn't faking. They would look at this pattern before and look at this pattern, and they could tell that I wasn't faking, because you would have blind spots already and they would check you for other blind spots. So, I went to San Antonio and went through the same darn testing out there.

Then I went to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. That's where the eye center was. Then we traveled back and forth. I'm pretty sure it was close to two years. I don't know to the month. I wish I did. I'd tell you. I'll write you if it happened in November. I'll let you know.

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

Taylor: Love of country, I would say. Family, soldiers. We were soldiers. I started at thirteen, so you've got to have some military pride in you. Well, keeping up hope, don't look too far down the line. Take a day at a time, if you come to take that much at a time. Confidence that one of these

days we're going to be out of the damn thing.

One of the Japanese commanders told us that if we would be good soldiers that we could bring our families over after the war (chuckle). We thought that was real nice of him, but I couldn't dream of a situation like that.

Marcello: Captain Taylor, I want to thank you very much for having taken time to talk with me. You've said a lot of very interesting and important things, and I'm sure that scholars will find your comments most valuable when they are able to examine and use this material.