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PRESTON E. STONE
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Oral History Collection

Preston E. Stone

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: February 20, 1980

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Preston E. Stone for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on February 20, 1980, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Stone in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a member of the "Lost Battalion" during World War II. The "Lost Battalion" was a National Guard unit, and its proper designation was the 2nd Battalion, 131st Regiment, 36th Division, which was the Texas National Guard division. This particular unit was captured on the Island of Java in March of 1942 and subsequently spent the rest of the war in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps throughout Asia.

Mr. Stone, 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. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Stone: Well, I was born in Lamar County, Texas, near Paris in

1916, and I lived in that vicinity until I was about twelve years old. We moved to Lubbock, Texas, and I lived there up until the time that I joined the National Guard unit in Lubbock, Texas.

Marcello: What made you decide to join the National Guard, and when did you join?

Stone: Well, I don't know the specific date, but it was sometime in 1940, just before they mobilized. The reason I joined it is that I knew that I was eligible for the draft. I didn't know anything about joining the Army. I had heard that I could go to California and get in the Army. I didn't want to wait until the draft, so my intention was to go to California and join the Army. But I was working for a construction company, and one of the guys I was working with did belong to the National Guard. So he persuaded me to join the National Guard in Lubbock, that I'd have a chance to get to do what I wanted to, and that's where I joined the National Guard in 1940--in Lubbock, Texas.

Marcello: You mentioned that you joined just prior to mobilization, so probably you joined in either October or November of 1940. Would that be about right?

Stone: Yes, that's about right. That was the 1st Battalion, and I was in Battery C of the 1st Battalion. That's what I was in when we mobilized and when we moved to Camp Bowie.

Marcello: And then it was after you moved to Camp Bowie that eventually

that was moved into the 2nd Battalion?

Stone: No, I was still in the 1st Battalion during the Louisiana maneuvers, and after the Louisiana maneuvers, why, word came down that they were asking for volunteers to go from the 1st Battalion to the 2nd Battalion to make up wartime strength to go overseas, and I volunteered to transfer to the 2nd Battalion.

Marcello: We'll come back and talk about that a little bit later on, although we do want to remember it. Describe what happened to the unit after it mobilized in November, 1940. More specifically, I believe it mobilized on November 25, 1940. What did mobilization mean? In other words, what did you do at that point?

Stone: Well, we were still in Lubbock, and it meant at that time that we were all brought together and started training on a daily basis.

Marcello: What kind of training did you undergo there in Lubbock?

Stone: Well, mostly close-order drill, and they taught us how to soldier, and we did a few field maneuvers with our cannons. It was basically just how to soldier.

Marcello: Now I assume that Battery C was a firing battery, and it probably had the French 75-millimeters.

Stone: That's right, yes.

Marcello: Did you stay there at the armory, or were you able to go home in the evenings when the day's training had been completed?

Stone: Oh, no, we were stationed at the fairgrounds there.

Marcello: At the fairgrounds?

Stone: Yes. We stayed right there. We slept there, and we ate there, and it was just like an Army camp.

Marcello: How seriously were the men taking this training at that time, that is, while you're still there at the fairgrounds in Lubbock?

Stone: Well, I think basically they were taking it quite seriously. I was, I know. Yes, I was trying to learn how to be a good soldier.

Marcello: When you thought of the country possibly entering the war, is it safe to say that your eyes were turned more toward Europe than they were toward Asia at that time?

Stone: Oh, definitely, yes, because we knew of the conflict going on in Europe. We had no idea that we would be in an Asiatic war. I didn't, at least.

Marcello: Now at the time the unit mobilized, you would have been about twenty-three or twenty-four years old.

Stone: Yes, I think I was twenty-four.

Marcello: That probably would have you a little bit older than the average person in that unit.

Stone: That's true, that's true. I was older than any of the guys in the unit unless it was some of our officers or maybe some of our non-commissioned officers.

Marcello: You would have to estimate this, but what do you think was

the average age of the people in the unit?

Stone: Well, the average private, I would say, was somewhere around eighteen and nineteen years old.

Marcello: What was your particular function within Battery C? What did you do?

Stone: Well, at that time I was just an ordinary private and, as I say, doing close-order drill, but later on I was promoted to a first class private with a fifth class specialist in the truck maintenance division.

Marcello: Gradually, the 36th Division assembled in Camp Bowie near Brownwood in December and January of 1941. I think various units moved there at different times.

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Do you recall when Battery C went to Brownwood?

Stone: Well, I don't remember the date, but I remember the conditions when we moved there.

Marcello: Do you recall if you moved before Christmas or after Christmas?

Stone: I'm sure it was before Christmas, yes.

Marcello: How did you get there? By truck?

Stone: Yes, we loaded all of our gear in the trucks and drove down in convoys.

Marcello: Did you get any sort of a welcome out of town or anything of that nature by the civilians?

Stone: I don't recall if we did (chuckle).

Marcello: Evidently, you do have some memories of what Camp Bowie was

like when you first got there, so why don't you describe them?

Stone: Oh, yes, I sure remember because it was just mud about ankle-deep all over the place, and the civilian carpenters had thrown up these wooden frames for tents, and we put the tents on, and it was just a slogging around in the mud every time we had to fall out for any kind of a formation. But we eventually improved the camp by hauling in gravel and putting in the streets, I remember it was cold and wet and kind of miserable at that time (chuckle).

Marcello: How many men were there to one of these tents?

Stone: Well, I believe there was . . . in the one I was in, I believe there was four.

Marcello: What sort of training did the unit undergo after you got to Camp Bowie?

Stone: Well, that was quite extensive training. We sure did a lot of close-order drills. We learned how to march, and we did a lot of calisthenics every morning before breakfast, and we did a lot of field maneuvering.

Marcello: Did you actually ever fire those weapons at Camp Bowie?

Stone: Oh, definitely, yes. We'd go out on the field maneuvers, and we would fire the French 75's, and we also had a little 37-millimeter cannon that we'd strap on the tubes of those French 75's. It was smaller--the shell was smaller--so consequently it was less expensive to fire. But we'd get the same results in training as we fired those 37-millimeters.

Marcello: Now you actually were not a part of one of the firing batteries, is that correct? Did you have a function on any of the artillery pieces?

Stone: The guns?

Marcello: Yes.

Stone: No, I was in, as I say, in the maintenance section, and I took care of the trucks.

Marcello: By this time, that is, by the time you get to Camp Bowie, are things being taken even more seriously now, or is the attitude and the morale of the men about the same?

Stone: Oh, the attitude and the morale was good among the men. Actually, we was really having fun. As far as I'm concerned, we were. It was quite an outing for me, and I enjoyed it. I wasn't even thinking about war seriously because I doubt that anyone that age knows much about the seriousness of war.

Marcello: I guess that's why they want eighteen and nineteen-year-olds to fight.

Stone: I believe so, yes (chuckle).

Marcello: In some of our earlier remarks, you were saying that you were eligible for the draft and were about to be drafted, and that was one of the things that made you decide to join the National Guard. Was the fact that you were around friends and people you knew also important in terms of the morale and having a good time and so on?

Stone: Oh, yes. Yes, that was very important because I mobilized with all these guys and got acquainted with them. They were a real great bunch of guys, and I sure wouldn't have wanted to have been transferred to a strange unit. Yes, it was very important to be with the fellows that you knew.

Marcello: In the summer of 1941, the division went to Louisiana to take part in the 3rd Army maneuvers there.

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Describe exactly what your unit was doing during those maneuvers.

Stone: Well, I don't even recall whether we were the "Red" or the "Blue," but, anyway, well, we were doing Army maneuvers. Of course, we had some inclement weather down there, too. We had a hurricane while we was down there and a lot of rain, a lot of mud. I remember one time we were supposed to be camouflaged so we couldn't be seen from the air, and this truck that I was riding in was supposed to have been driven up under some trees and camouflaged. But pretty soon here comes a plane over, and it dropped a sack of flour right in the bed of that truck, and it splattered all over everything, so we knew we'd already been bombed (chuckle). In fact, my unit was even captured down there by the other unit, and that was pretty good because we didn't have to do anymore maneuvers, so we could just sit down and play cards. That was a pretty good deal.

Marcello: When you got back to Camp Bowie at the conclusion of those maneuvers, the Army went through a reorganization from the square to the triangular divisions. Do you remember that? Do you remember that process taking place?

Stone: No, I don't recall what the officials were doing. Really, all I remember was that they just asked for volunteers, you know. I didn't know what was going on up at the top, and I don't know how that was done.

Marcello: Why did you volunteer to go from the 1st Battalion into the 2nd Battalion?

Stone: Well, it was rumored that the 2nd Battalion was going overseas, and I wanted, I guess, adventure. That's the only way I can explain it. I just maybe wanted adventure. Of course, still a lot of my friends were transferring over, too.

Marcello: Oh, there were other people out of Battery C that transferred?

Stone: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! There was a lot of people out of Battery C who transferred to Battery F.

Marcello: Okay, you went from Battery C to Battery F, which was in the 2nd Battalion. I assume that you were not married at that time.

Stone: Oh, no, no.

Marcello: And I also assume that this was probably true for just about everybody else in the unit, certainly among the enlisted men.

Stone: Yes. Maybe some of the non-commissioned officers were married--I don't recall--but most of the enlisted men were

single.

Marcello: Is it not true, however, that around that time, that is, when this reorganization was taking place, that the married men did have an opportunity to get out of the unit and stay home rather than go overseas?

Stone: I think that's right. Yes, they might have.

Marcello: And I think that it was also true for men over a certain age, maybe over twenty-eight or something like that? Do you recall that?

Stone: No, I sure can't recall what that was like.

Marcello: Okay, so what changes did you detect or note when you went from Battery C of the 1st Battalion into Battery F of the 2nd Battalion? Was there any difference in your routine or anything of that nature?

Stone: No, not really. Our first sergeant from Battery C transferred to Battery F and became our first sergeant of Battery F, so actually there wasn't much difference--just a few new guys that we didn't know, you know, kind of strangers, but we eventually got acquainted with them.

Marcello: And I assume that you were still in vehicle maintenance?

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: On November 11, 1941, the unit was involved in an operation code named "PLUM," and you left Camp Bowie for San Francisco. Before you actually left on November 11th, what were the rumors going around as to what "PLUM" meant? Do you recall?

Stone: Well, if I remember, the rumors were that we were going to the Philippines, but we had no idea why we were going to the Philippines, which . . . well, it indicated that we would have a little adventure going overseas, and there wasn't any hostilities in that area, so it sounded like it'd be pretty good duty.

Marcello: Incidentally, I've heard all sort of stories as to why the 2nd Battalion was detached from the 36th Division. What did you hear about that? Do you have any idea why the 2nd Battalion was detached as opposed to one of the other units?

Stone: Yes, I know what you mean. Well, I've heard . . . of course, I didn't know at that time because I really wasn't concerned about what was going on in the top echelon, but I heard that we were going over there to strengthen Corregidor, the defense of the Philippines. That was what I heard.

Marcello: But I guess what I'm asking is, why was the 2nd Battalion selected rather than some other battalion in the 36th Division? Was it just the luck of the draw?

Stone: Oh, well, yes. I guess the 2nd Battalion really did do a good job on the Louisiana maneuvers, and they were chosen as the top outfit. That was a pretty good thing to be transferred into a top unit.

Marcello: Was this the first inkling that you had that overseas duty meant the Far East rather than Europe? Were you still looking

toward Europe up until that time?

Stone: That's right, that's right. Yes, when the rumors came that we were going to the Philippines, why, that was really better than going to Europe, really.

Marcello: Why was that? Because there was no war going on yet?

Stone: Yes, there was no war going on in the Pacific at that time.

Marcello: Okay, so you went by train from Brownwood to San Francisco. Was this as far away from home as you'd ever been, that is, when you got to San Francisco?

Stone: Yes, yes. Yes, that's the first time I'd ever been to California or that far away.

Marcello: How long did this train trip take?

Stone: Oh, it seemed to me like it took about two weeks (chuckle). I'm not sure. But I know when we started over those mountains-- the first time I'd seen any mountains like that--we had to have a lot of engines in front and some engines behind to get us over the mountains. That was really an experience to me.

Marcello: What did you do during this train trip? What did you and the rest of the men do?

Stone: Oh, we played a few cards and looked at the scenery. That's what I looked at mostly, was the scenery out the window.

Marcello: I guess most of you had never been that far away from home before.

Stone: Well, I can't speak for the other guys, but I can sure speak

for myself. No, I think you're safe in saying that most of the guys hadn't been that far away.

Marcello: Okay, you got to San Francisco, and you were sent to Angel Island for a short period of time.

Stone: I sure remember that, yes.

Marcello: Why do you remember Angel Island?

Stone: I never saw so many soldiers in all my life. I don't know how many people was on that island, and I remember that was the biggest mess hall I ever saw. They used a whole battalion, the enlisted men from a whole battalion, to do KP in that mess hall. I remember the old mess sergeant was asking for volunteer truck drivers. Well, everybody was a truck driver and held up their hands, so he took them back in the kitchen and gave them little carts and said, "Now you'll drive this little truck and serve the tables."
(chuckle)

Marcello: How long were you at Angel Island altogether?

Stone: I think only about a week, as well as I remember. It wasn't too long.

Marcello: Did you get to go into San Francisco?

Stone: Yes, I had a pass to go to San Francisco, and me and one of the guys went in together, and we had a pretty good time on leave in San Francisco.

Marcello: Did you know Eddie Fung at that particular time?

Stone: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Now he was in that Lubbock unit, wasn't he?

Stone: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Of course, his home was San Francisco.

Stone: That's right, yes. Yes, I knew Eddie. He was a great guy, and still is.

Marcello: On November 21, 1941, the unit boarded the USS Republic for the trip overseas. Not only was the 131st Field Artillery on the Republic, but also there was the 26th Brigade and the 22nd Bombardment group. I gather that that ship must have been pretty crowded.

Stone: Well, I think there was something like 3,000 servicemen on there, not including the crew of the ship, so there was a lot of people on the ship.

Marcello: Describe the initial leg of that journey from San Francisco to Honolulu.

Stone: Well, when we started out, I know I was looking at the Golden Gate Bridge. I was looking at the mast on that old ship, and I says, "It will never go under that bridge," but, sure enough, it did go under with plenty of room to spare when we got under it.

Marcello: Did you get seasick?

Stone: Oh, did I get seasick! I don't know of anybody that didn't get seasick! We got outside of San Francisco, and we hit those ground swells, and I never saw anything like it in my life. There was a little corvette sailing along the

side of us, and sometimes you couldn't even see that corvette for a wall of water between us and that corvette. That ship was pitching and tossing, and everybody started getting sick. Well, you'd start down one of those . . . I call them stairs, but the sailors call them ladders, you know. And somebody had heaved all over the steps, and you'd slip so you'd grab the handrail to hold on, and they'd heaved all over the handrail (chuckle). You'd go to the water fountain to get a drink, and somebody had heaved in the water fountain, and the drain was stopped up. So that'd just make you sicker, and it was quite a mess. I know someone was up on an upper deck and one of the officers was on a lower deck, and the guy up on the upper deck heaved, and it went on this officer down below. This officer down below looked up and said, "Hey, call your shots up there!" But that was sure a mess.

It seemed like all they fed us was cabbage, and you could smell that cabbage cooking all over that ship, and that didn't help you any, either. That was a very, very sick bunch of people.

We soon found out that the smoothest place on that ship was right in the center, and everybody tried to congregate right to the center of that ship (chuckle).

Marcello: Evidently, the Republic must have been a rather slow-moving vessel, too, because it took a week to get to Honolulu. I

don't think you got there until November 28th.

Stone: Yes, it was a slow-moving ship. Of course, it was an old ship. I don't know how old it was, but I understand they used it for troop transport in World War I. At least one of the ships in the convoy was slow, so it probably was the Republic that was holding up the deal.

Marcello: When you land in Hawaii at Honolulu, I think you did get some shore leave, did you not? Maybe about four hours?

Stone: I did, yes. And I think most of the guys did,

Marcello: What did you do when you went on shore leave in Honolulu?

Stone: Oh, I went to look for those hula-hula girls, but I didn't see many Hawaiian girls (chuckle). Well, I saw a lot of Asiatics, or that looked like Orientals, but I didn't see too many Hawaiian girls. Now I think I did go in one night spot where there was an Hawaiian girl doing the hula-hula dance. Yes, it was a good leave, though.

Marcello: I guess you didn't really have too much money at this time. I don't believe the unit had been paid for a while, had it?

Stone: Well, I never did have any money because when I got my twenty-one dollars a month, why, it didn't last very long to begin with. No, I didn't have any money.

Marcello: Did you notice any wartime atmosphere or tenseness in Honolulu when you were there?

Stone: No, everybody was happy-go-lucky. Everybody was just having a good time, as far as I could see. No, I didn't see any

kind of preparations for war when I was there.

Marcello: Okay, the next day, on November 29, 1941, you are back aboard the Republic again, and you're taking off on your way to the Philippines. Now at this time you're part of a convoy, are you not?

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Do you recall some of the other ships that were a part of this convoy?

Stone: I don't recall their names, no.

Marcello: I know you had the Pensacola, which was your escort.

Stone: Right. That's right, yes. That was a cruiser.

Marcello: And I believe there was a corvette, and I believe even the Bloemfontein was a part of this convoy, plus some other ships.

Stone: It could have been. I don't know. You see, I wasn't too aware of what was going on around me at that time.

Marcello: I forget exactly how many ships there are as a part of this convoy. I believe Clyde Fillmore mentions it in his book, and it seems to me like he says there were either seven or nine ships, something like that.

Be that as it may, you leave Honolulu, and you're somewhere in the Pacific, maybe around the Gilbert Islands, when you receive word of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Describe how this news was relayed to you and what the reaction was of you and your buddies when

you heard it.

Stone: Well, it was relayed to us over the PA system on that ship, and I know that a strange feeling came over me. It was a kind of a sober feeling, and I really didn't know what to expect. But I'll tell you what most of the guys said, and this is their reaction. Whether they really thought this or not, I don't know, but their reaction was, "We'll whip them little yellow-bellies in thirty days, push them out in the sea." That was what everybody was saying, and I suppose that was the general feeling of everybody--that it'd be no problem and we'd take care of them.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese--at that time--what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind? Now I'm sure you hadn't seen very many Japanese except maybe what you had seen in San Francisco or Honolulu.

Stone: No, no, not too many. Well, I just figured they were little short people with slant eyes and most of them with glasses because that's the picture that I had of them, and that was about right.

Marcello: What was the reaction of your officers to this news? Do you recall?

Stone: Oh, they were kind of sober, too. We did some things on that ship after that, but I don't want to get ahead of your questions.

Marcello: Well, that's okay. I think this is probably a good place to bring those in. What did you do?

Stone: Well, there was four antiaircraft guns on that, and I forget what the caliber was, maybe a 20-millimeter or something. And there was a 5-inch surface gun mounted on the stern of that ship, and if we'd ever fired that old gun, it'd probably jump completely off its mount and out in the ocean--that's the way it looked to me. But the antiaircraft guns looked in pretty good condition. So us being the artillery, it was our duty, our assignment, to man those antiaircraft guns, so we began a series of training on those guns. Also, we brought one of our French 75 cannons up on board, and we nailed it down and strapped it down. The idea was that in case a submarine surfaced, maybe we could get a round off or anything. Well, it seemed to be something to do, something for the men to do, that would occupy their time and make them feel that they were doing something.

I remember when they fired that cannon. I was on deck, and I watched them fire that cannon. I was looking over on the horizon to see that shell burst because when we fired it on land, you could look way over on the hill and see that shell burst. I was looking way over on the horizon to see that shell burst, and when it hit the water, it was only about . . . it seemed like about a hundred yards from the ship. Distance on water is very deceiving, and I sure got a rude awakening there about distance on water.

Marcello: But generally speaking, you could really detect no fear among

the troops and so on.

Stone: Oh, no, no. There was no fear. There was a little bit of apprehension, it seemed, but no fear--no. Now I know in my bunk . . . I was supposed to have had a bunk in one of the holds down below, which I did, but I didn't spend any time in there anymore than I had to. I wanted to be on top where the air was fresher. But my bunk was right at the end of the waterline, and I could hear the waves lapping the side of the ship. But I did think about torpedoes, and I figured I'd be right in line for one in case it came (chuckle).

Marcello: What evasive actions did the ship take? Did it alter course or anything of that nature?

Stone: Well, I know we had to have radio silence because I guess they were afraid that signals would be picked up, and we might be spotted or detected by the Japanese Navy or Japanese aircraft.

It seemed to me like we sailed around in circles out there for a week. I think we crossed the equator about twice and the International Date Line about twice, is the way it seemed to me.

Marcello: Did you have the usual ceremony when you crossed the equator?

Stone: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Even though the situation was serious, they still had that ceremony--the initiation.

Stone: Oh, yes, we had the initiation ceremony, yes, yes. And that was quite an ordeal. There was a lot of soldiers who just got initiated the Navy way. We would go through those big ol' sacks, and the guys would have those old sock clubs--I don't know what they were stuffed with, kapok or something--and they'd beat you on the back as you're going through those ol' wind sacks and spray water in your face when you came out. It was fun. It wasn't too rough. I don't think anyone got hurt too bad.

Marcello: It's interesting that there was still this levity with the situation as serious as it was. You did stop very briefly at Suva in the Fiji Islands for fresh provisions.

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Did you get off the ship at all?

Stone: No, no. I didn't get off the ship at all. I remember that's the first time that we saw anyone wearing a sarong, and it was this guy who . . . the Fijis belonged to the British at that time, and this boat came across the water, and they were flying a British flag, and this dark-complected person was standing up on the bow and had a skirt on. Some of the guys were wondering if that was a woman or a man, and finally they got close enough, and one of the guys hollered down and said, "Hey, are you a woman or a man?" He said in a crisp British accent, "Why don't you blokes come down and find out?"
(chuckle)

Marcello: Okay, so obviously you were not going to the Philippines at this stage because the Philippines were also in the process of being overrun by the Japanese. You went to Brisbane, Australia, and I think you landed there on December 21, 1941. Describe the reception that you received from the Australians when you got to Brisbane.

Stone: Oh, that was great! Those Australians are a great bunch of people, and they seemed to want to do anything to help us. It was a good reception by the Australians when we got there.

Marcello: Did you note, like most of your buddies, that there weren't too many young men there at the time?

Stone: Yes, we noticed that. Yes, we noticed that. It seemed to me that there was sure more women than there were men; the ratio of men and women was lopsided there.

Marcello: Where were you bivouacked when you landed at Brisbane? Do you recall?

Stone: Well, I was in sickbay on that ship by the time we got to Brisbane, and they was going to ship me back to the States, They were going to leave me on that ship.

Marcello: What was your problem?

Stone: It was maybe just seasickness more than anything else. But they was going to ship me back with that ship, and I didn't want to go. I wanted to stay with my unit, so I approached my captain, and I told him that I didn't want to go back to

the States, that I wanted to stay with my unit. He said, "Well, go get your gear and get off." So, as I recall, we went to a racetrack.

Marcello: Ascott Racetrack,

Stone: Yes, and we didn't do any soldiering there, not very much. But I remember that on Christmas Day, we . . . I remember what we had for Christmas dinner, and that was mutton. There must have been some old ewes that they was about ready to slaughter, anyway, and then that was the worst meat I ever tried to eat in my life.

Marcello: And they usually boiled it, too, did they not?

Stone: Yes, they boiled it, and it was tough, and you couldn't eat it and there wasn't many guys who ate much of that mutton. But we were invited out to different homes . . . the Australians invited us out to their homes to eat.

Marcello: I understand that when you went into the local pubs and so on, you never had to buy any booze, either, did you?

Stone: Oh, no, no. You never had to buy any booze. In fact, I remember that's the first time I ever ate steak and eggs. I always ate ham and eggs or bacon and eggs. This Australian introduced me to a meal of steak and eggs, and that was pretty good. I had some Australian money. I don't remember how I got it, but I had Australian money, and I didn't know how to count in it--pence and shillings and pounds--and when I got ready to pay for anything, I just threw all my money

out and held it out and said, "Take out what you want."
(chuckle) No, they were very good. You'd go into the bars, and you didn't have to buy anything.

Marcello: Were you one of the lucky ones who did get to be invited to the homes of the Australians?

Stone: Yes, I did. I was invited to a home, but I didn't go and I don't remember for what reason. I think I was working . . . well, I know I was working, helping unload that ship-- something on that ship. I know that there was a man and his wife, and they had a young daughter about my age; and I was talking to them, and they invited me to their home, but I didn't go.

Marcello: On December 28, 1941, you boarded the Dutch motor transport, the Bloemfontein, for the next leg of your journey.

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what kind of a ship the Bloemfontein was.

Stone: Well, it wasn't near as big as the Republic was, but it was a sleek ship, and it was fast. I don't know who built it, but I suppose it was the Dutch.

Marcello: Were you part of another convoy, or were you on your own on this leg of the journey?

Stone: Well, we were on our own as far as troop transports, but we had a lot of warship escorts. If I remember, there was about three cruisers, and I don't know how many destroyers was escorting us.

Marcello: Was the 26th Brigade on the Bloemfontein with the 2nd Battalion?

Stone: I think so, yes.

Marcello: Did anybody ever tell you where you were going at this stage or why you were going to Java?

Stone: Well, we were still on our way to the Philippines as far as I knew, and I think this is what everybody thought--we were still trying to get to the Philippines.

Marcello: Okay, describe the trip from Brisbane to Surabaya, Java, which is where you were going to be landing. Describe the trip.

Stone: Well, my memory fails me here. I just remember the good things, I guess. I remember that one of our guys was in the bakery baking bread, and in some way or other we'd get hold of that hot bread, and I know it was really good eating.

Marcello: I've heard some other people talk about that.

Stone: I suppose that we had some pretty narrow escapes as far as submarines and torpedoes. At the time I didn't know about it, but I found out later that we had some pretty close calls with some torpedoes in that area. But like I say, I really wasn't concerned about the war; I was just more or less carefree and taking things as they come, and I wasn't afraid about it.

Marcello: Evidently, the Bloemfontein must have taken a zigzag course because it didn't land in Surabaya until January 11, 1942.

You left Brisbane on December 28, 1941, and you didn't land in Surabaya until January 11th of the following year, so I suppose it must have taken some sort of evasive course or zigzag action or whatever,

Stone: Well, I'm sure you're right because I understand after we got there, there were other ships that tried to come the same route that we did, but there was a lot of them that got sunk.

Marcello: Okay, what happens when you get to Surabaya? What happens at that point?

Stone: Well, we went to an airport.

Marcello: In other words, you went from Surabaya to Camp Singosari, which was near Malang, is that correct?

Stone: Yes, that's right. Now I remember the names of those that you mentioned.

Marcello: How did you get from Surabaya to Camp Singosari? Do you remember? Did you go by train or by truck, or how did you get there?

Stone: I don't recall. I don't recall how we got there.

Marcello: Describe what Singosari looked like. Describe it from a physical standpoint in terms of the barracks and the grounds and all that sort of thing.

Stone: Oh, yes, there was Dutch barracks. They were very comfortable barracks. I remember the tile roofs on them. Of course, that's about the first time I'd ever seen any tile roofs,

was over in that country. Yes, they were very comfortable barracks. There was a lot of concrete sidewalks and paved streets. There was a fair-sized airport. It wasn't big enough for our bombers, although our bombers did use it.

Marcello: I assume it had grass runways. Do you recall?

Stone: Yes, it did. Yes, it did.

Marcello: What were the barracks like on the inside? Describe what your quarters were like.

Stone: My memory fails me here.

Marcello: Were they large rooms, or were you in cubicles? Do you recall?

Stone: No, I don't. I sure don't.

Marcello: What did the unit do when it got to Singosari? What sort of activities did it undergo?

Stone: Well, here again, for some reasons or other, I landed back in a hospital in Surabaja, and I spent a lot of my time there when I first got there. But the guys would come in and out, and I would ask them what they were doing and everything. They said they were loading bombs and ammunition on those B-17's that flew out of the Philippines. They were loading bombs and ammunition and doing maintenance on those airplanes.

Marcello: This was from the 19th Bomb Group.

Stone: Yes, it was the 19th Bomb Group that escaped the Philippines.

Marcello: Now do you recall whether that 19th Bomb Group was there at Singosari when you arrived, or did it come in there after

you got there? Do you recall that?

Stone: I don't know. Like I say, I was in Surabaya in the hospital, and I don't know if it was there when we got there or not.

Marcello: About how long were you in the hospital there at Surabaya?

Stone: I guess at least two weeks . . . two or three weeks.

Marcello: And what was your problem at this point?

Stone: Well, it was the same thing I had on that ship. I just wasn't feeling too good, and I guess the medics thought I ought to be in that hospital. But I didn't stay there all the time. I eventually got out and went to this airport and started back on my duty.

Marcello: On February 3, 1942, the first air raid occurred at Singosari. Were you there when that took place?

Stone: Yes, I was there, yes.

Marcello: Describe that first air raid from beginning to end.

Stone: Well, the guys said they'd been having air raid alarms all along--sirens would go off--and this time it was the real thing because we saw the planes coming in. Most people headed away from the barracks and went out in the jungle. I know I did. I took off for the jungle, and I finally got out there what I thought was a safe distance. I found a depression, and I laid down in this depression.

But those Zeros came over, and they were shooting at the planes and the barracks on the airfield. Just as they got over me, they would open up those machine guns and those

20-millimeter cannons right over me, and I could just feel those bullets going through my back. Actually, they were shooting at the airport, but the noise was right over me. They blew up one of the bombers on the field that was loaded with bombs and fuel and ammunition. It blew up, and it made such a noise and such a concussion that it seemed like I raised about three inches off of the ground when it exploded. All of a sudden I woke up and realized that we were in a war, that somebody was trying to kill me, and I began to have a different outlook on the thing then. It was pretty scary.

Marcello: About how long did that raid last? You would have to estimate this, of course.

Stone: Oh, it seemed to me like it lasted for an hour. It might have been thirty minutes, but it seemed like it was a very long time before those planes left.

Marcello: Did the base put up any resistance?

Stone: Oh, yes. Well, I remember one of our guys. He had a Browning Automatic Rifle, and, boy, he didn't take off to the jungles. He stayed in the barracks, and he grabbed this Browning Automatic Rifle. When the planes would come in from the north, he'd get on the south side of that building, and he'd fire that automatic rifle at them, and when they came from the south, why, he'd get on the north side of the building (chuckle). He was doing his best.

On this particular raid I don't think we had our guns in position to fire, but later on we did get our guns in position to fire. We had some shells with us at that time that were fused, and we could set the fuse for the shells to explode at a certain time after they left the cannons. Now I didn't do this; our gun crews were doing it. I was in the maintenance section, but our gun crews were doing this. They would dig a hole to drop the trail of the gun down in to get as much elevation as they could, and they would set the fuse on these shells. When they would fire them, they would burst in the air. I'm sure that we didn't knock down any planes, not that I know of, but it gave you a pretty good feeling if you can fight back. Whether you're doing any good or not, it gives you a better feeling to fight back than to do nothing.

Marcello: What would you have been doing on the vehicle maintenance department at this time? What sort of work had you been doing there? Just the same thing? Routine maintenance of vehicles?

Stone: Yes, routine maintenance. I remember I had this maintenance truck that I had. I had it out in the jungle--camouflaged, I thought. When I came back from that air raid, there was about two or three holes in the old ground . . . it was muddy and wet, and there was about two or three holes in the ground around that truck about, oh, I'd say, about six inches in diameter, where those bombs had gone right down in that ol'

mud and hadn't exploded. They were still in that ground. But there was some that had exploded, and there wasn't a glass left in that truck, and there was holes all in that truck, through the block and through the body, and it really messed up my maintenance truck. I was glad I wasn't in it.

Marcello: After that initial raid on February 3rd, with what frequency did the subsequent raids occur?

Stone: Oh, it seemed to me like it was everyday after that--it seemed like they were coming over everyday--and we'd have to take to the jungles. As I say, our gun crews eventually went out in the jungle and prepared these cannons like that to fire at the planes. Well, I don't know whether it was a Japanese aerial reconnaissance or whether it was a spy at work in that country, but they discovered where our guns were, and they were . . . I remember the day that they bombed our gun emplacement. Now the Japanese bombers flew in formation, and I understand they only had one bombsight, and all the other planes dropped their bombs from orders from the plane that had the bombsight. But I saw those planes come over, and . . . you could see them; you could see the bomb bay doors open, and you could see the bombs fall. They hit our gun emplacement, but fortunately it didn't hurt anyone because they had slit trenches dug, and they were in it. Of course, I was way out in the jungle, you see. I wasn't near the gun emplacement.

Then after they dropped the first string of bombs, they made a 180-degree turn and came back and dropped the second string of bombs on our gun emplacement. It's fortunate that no one got hurt that time because they really did bomb that gun position. Those bombs, when they would hit in that soft ground, they would explode and just blow out a great big crater. If they didn't explode, they'd just make a hole in the ground about six inches in diameter. But if they hit on a hard surface . . . evidently, they were loaded with those nuts and bolts from our scrap iron that we'd been shipping those Japs. We had some old guns, old wooden-wheel guns, that we had parked around on that airport for decoys, and when those bombs would hit on a hard surface and explode, they'd go through that metal on those guns just like you'd taken a blow-torch and cut a hole right through both sides of the barrel on those old guns. They were called, I guess, anti-personnel bombs because they were certainly loaded with a lot of shrapnel.

Marcello: I gather through all these raids, however, that there were no fatalities.

Stone: No, no, there was no fatalities.

Marcello: That's almost surprising or amazing.

Stone: Yes, it is. But I guess everybody was so scared that they just found a hole to get into (chuckle).

Marcello: I guess the only casualties were just a few volunteers that

had gone up in the bombers and had been killed when the bombers were shot down, isn't that correct?

Stone: Yes. Some of our guys had an opportunity to transfer to the Air Force because they were . . . well, when they flew in from the Philippines to Java, they just flew in with a flight crew, and we were acting as ground crew for them. Those Air Force boys was doing a great job. They were just living in those planes, and just as soon as they could come in and get refueled and bombs loaded and their machine guns loaded with ammunition, they'd take right off again. They were short of people, and some of the guys had an opportunity to join up with them. I know one of our guys, Barnes, he'd been working on this plane, and they had gone up for a test flight after they had been working on it; and while they were up, well, the Jap Zeros came in and shot it down, and we lost that Barnes kid there.

Marcello: I assume that the Japanese were most interested in destroying those planes. Is that correct?

Stone: That's the way it seemed to me, yes. They were interested in destroying the planes, all right.

Marcello: I guess the primary targets, then, were the runways.

Stone: Yes, and the planes themselves that were on the ground.

Marcello: Did they destroy quite a few planes?

Stone: I don't know how many, but I do know they destroyed several. But that little field wasn't built for big bombers to operate

off of. I remember a plane came in one night--one of those B-17's came in--and tried to land, and he ran off the end of the runway and got stuck in the mud. I went out there with one of those six-by-six trucks with a winch on it, and I was going to pull him out of that mud. I couldn't pull that plane out of that mud with that truck, and the pilot had to get up in there and crank the engines up and rev the engines up and help me. We finally got him back on the hard surface.

A lot of them wrecked when they tried to land there and were beyond repair--at least we couldn't repair them--and when they did, then we'd strip everything out of them. We got a lot of those twin .50-caliber machine guns off of those. I remember Eddie Fung got a twin .50-caliber machine gun, and he wanted me to mount that in the back of that maintenance truck for him. I remember the only drill I had was an old hand drill and some bits, and I tried to drill some holes in that mounting on that gun. It was some kind of aluminum alloy, and that was the toughest metal that . . . it seemed to me like it took me about two days to get a hole through that metal where I could mount that gun in the back of my maintenance truck. But I finally got it mounted, and Eddie Fung manned that gun. That was his gun.

We lost a lot of planes there--running off the end of the runway and the Japanese strafing them and bombing them.

I don't know how many we lost, but I know we lost several.

Marcello: By this time is the reality of war beginning to hit home to just about everybody?

Stone: You better believe it! Yes, everybody realized that somebody out there is trying to kill them. I know I did. I realized that somebody was trying to kill me, and that's when a lot of kids grew up--right there. They left childhood and went to manhood right there.

Marcello: But at the same time do you still think at this stage that it's going to be a short war? Are you expecting help to come?

Stone: Yes. In fact, when I was in the hospital . . . this is an incident I remember. When I was in the hospital, why, of course, different guys would come and visit me, and they'd tell me what was going on. The rumor was that there was 40,000 Americans on their way to reinforce us on that island. I remember this woman, a young woman, came in there, and she looked like a native, but she wasn't a true native. She was dark-skinned, very well-educated, spoke good English, and she was talking to me. I remember telling her that we had 40,000 troops on the way there, and when I look back I am sure that she was a spy for the Japanese. I guess this is the kind of rumor that everybody wanted us to believe so that we could spread it around, I suppose. That was the object of us being on that island in the first place, was

to deter the Japanese from going farther or deeper down and landing on Australia. I didn't know it at that time, but I found out later that that was our mission on Java, was to stop the Japanese--as many we could there.

Marcello: In other words, when you say your mission was to stop the Japanese, you are referring to the fact that you were trying to give the Japanese the impression that there were thousands of troops on Java that needed to be taken care of.

Stone: That's right, that's right. That's why they diverted about 120,000 of their troops and sent them to Java instead of going on to Australia. That's the way I understand it. In other words, this was a tactic that our military was using to divert the Japanese.

Marcello: But officially, you were never really told why you were on Java.

Stone: Oh, no, no. We were there to act as ground crew for the Air Force because they didn't have any ground crew. That was our mission, as far as we knew, yes.

Marcello: While all this was taking place, do you ever have time to go on leave into Malang?

Stone: Well, I was on leave only one time after I got out of the hospital. I got leave to go into town, but after that, when we started having those air raids, leaves were discontinued. No, I only went in one time.

Marcello: What was there to do in Malang?

Stone: Oh, well, there was a lot to do there. You could go to a

movie. I remember I went to a movie. And you could go to those . . . well, I'll call them honky-tonks. I guess that's what they were. I know there was one Spanish guy in our outfit, and he was a good singer. He would get up there, and he'd do all the entertaining. There was a lot of those girls who were what we'd call half-castes, you know. They were pretty women.

Marcello: Did you ever hear of the expression "mac-mac?"

Stone: Oh, yes! Oh, yes (chuckle)! But those old women were chewing that betel nut and the juice was running out of the corner of their mouth, and it looked like blood, and they didn't have a tooth in their head. It wasn't very . . . those were the kind of women that you didn't want to fool with, but there were some good-looking young women there.

Marcello: I gather this term "mac-mac" was an expression that the prostitutes used in order to drum up business. Is that correct?

Stone: Yes, that's right. They'd walk up to you and say, "Mac-mac?"

Marcello: On February 27, 1942, the 19th Bomb Group evacuated. Describe this event. What effect did it have upon the morale of the 2nd Battalion?

Stone: Well, we didn't think that was too good. Some of the guys, as I say, that transferred to the Air Force flew out with them, which was a good deal for them. But the morale of the group wasn't too good because we knew that the Air Force had gone out, and we were there by ourselves. But we were

still expecting these reinforcements--these 40,000 troops--so it didn't bother me a whole lot. At that time I had no idea that we weren't going to win the war or that we were going to get into the problems that we did get into.

Marcello: In the meantime, did you have any British troops or Dutch troops there at Singosari? Did you run into any British or Dutch troops?

Stone: Yes, there was a British antiaircraft battery there. I remember they were there, and they had some antiaircraft guns. But I never did know of anybody shooting one of those Jap planes down, and that's what I couldn't understand, is why somebody couldn't hit one of those planes. We had machine guns firing at them; the British had their antiaircraft guns; and we were firing those 75's. I never knew of one being hit.

Marcello: Now very shortly after the 19th Bomb Group left--in fact, it may have been the next day--the base was evacuated. The 2nd Battalion left.

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: I think that Battery E was separated, however, about this time, and it went east toward Surabaya. But the rest of you went in a different direction. Is that correct?

Stone: Yes. We went north, if I remember. We went up to the north end of the island. Yes, I remember that.

Marcello: Okay, describe what happened during this maneuvering around, as you were going toward that north end of the island. What

was the unit doing? What contact did it have with the Japanese?

Stone: Well, I know that we did a lot of driving around on that island from town to town, and it seemed like we were just driving around and around in circles. But we did this before the Air Force left--we were doing this. We were driving around all over the island, and I couldn't understand why. But I found out later that that was the idea of us showing ourselves as much as we could around the whole island--to give the impression of a large American force on that island.

But when we went to meet the Japanese, after they landed . . . we went to the north end of the island where they had landed. There was some Australians who had already . . . well, they were engineers out of the Middle East on their way to Australia when they were ordered to stop off at Java. They were the infantry, you might say, that contacted the Japanese. After they contacted them they needed some artillery support, so they asked us for artillery support.

We went into position, and I remember Lieutenant Stensland grabbed a telephone and a reel of wire. I don't know why we didn't have walkie-talkie radios in those days, but we had to use a wire and a telephone, string that wire out. You know, to stop to think of it, that's a kind of antique way to wage war, isn't it? But, anyway, the way we did it, when we set up our guns, we might place our guns behind a hill

from our target. Then we'd send someone up at an observation post that can see the target, and then he calls back the orders to the guns and how to set the guns to hit the target. That's what he was doing, and he said when he crawled up there, he never saw so many Japs on the other side of that river . . . the Dutch had blown the bridge, and the Japs were swarming on the other side of the river to cross the river, He said he never saw so many Japs in all his life-- and old trucks and bicycles .

So he called in a barrage of artillery on them. I think he had to make two corrections to the gun crew to hit the target, but when he hit that target, he said he didn't see anything but arms and legs flying everywhere and old trucks blowing up and . . . but there was just too many of those Japs, and they were really cutting those Australians to pieces.

Marcello: And I gather there was always a problem, too, of the Japs infiltrating your own lines or out-flanking you and things of this nature, mainly because there were so many of them, I guess.

Stone: Oh, yes!

Marcello: They were always working behind you.

Stone: Well, that was a tactic of the Japanese, was to out-flank you, to get behind you using that pincer movement. Of course, there were so many of them. I know there was one wounded

Australian that we brought out on a jeep, and he said, "They're hatching them out in incubators!" That's the way he looked at it.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned this Lieutenant Stensland. He was something of a mystery man, wasn't he? Didn't he come in somehow from the Philippines?

Stone: I don't know where that guy came from, but I understand he was an ex-pro football player. I know he looked like an ape; I mean, his build was like an ape. He was a real swell guy; I really liked him. He was tough, and he was nervy. He had real short legs; real long arms; and real long, hairy body. He was a very courageous man. I don't know where he came from.

Marcello: When you say he was a very courageous man, I think in part you're going to be referring to his courage later on after you're captured, are you not?

Stone: That's right, yes.

Marcello: And I hope we get back and talk about him later on. Okay, so the Japs are continually infiltrating behind you; they're out-flanking you; and the unit is continually on the move, like you mentioned awhile ago.

Finally, on March 8, 1942, the word comes down that the island has capitulated. I guess this was a Dutch decision, was it not?

Stone: Yes, yes.

Marcello: The Dutch theoretically were in command since it was their territory.

Stone: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Describe the reaction of you and your men, and then what you did, after you received word of the surrender.

Stone: Yes, I remember that. I remember that.

Marcello: How did you get the word?

Stone: Well, our officers told us. Colonel Tharp is the one that gave us the message, and he said that the Dutch had surrendered the island to the Japanese, and we were ordered to surrender.

Marcello: Were you given a choice as to whether you wanted to surrender or head for the hills or try and get off the island?

Stone: I don't remember exactly the details at this time. I do know that on our way to the north of the island, we had gone through a mountainous area, and we had passed some emplacements that the Dutch had made in those mountains. It was my theory or my thought that we would go back into those mountains and make a stand. That was what I thought that we would do. Of course, I had nothing to do with the decisions that were made, but it seemed to me at that time that that would be the logical thing for us to do; and I thought that that's what we would do, but we didn't. Our orders came down that we were to lay down our arms and surrender.

Back in those days, we were taught that when you was given an order, you obeyed it; but that was a pretty hard

pill to swallow. Some of the guys didn't want to do it. In fact, some of the guys . . . I don't know how many, and I don't recall who it was. They had laid down their arms in this pile, but they went back again and picked them up and all the ammunition that they could get and about all the armaments they could carry, and they took off. I didn't go with them, but I know that there was a group that did go. But they weren't gone very long because they had met some opposition from the Japanese there somewhere, so they came back.

I remember we started destroying equipment. We had an almost new Plymouth automobile and a new Chevrolet automobile, and where they came from, I don't know. Evidently, we had brought them with us. I'm not trying to be partial to any kind of a brand of vehicle, but I know that there was a difference in how long those two cars lasted. What we did was, we drained the oil out of them and drained the water out of them. In those days you had a throttle on the inside, and you could control the speed of the engine from the throttle. So we drained the oil and the water out of them and got inside and pulled the throttle out wide-open. If I recall right, and I think I'm right on this, that Plymouth lasted about seven-and-a-half minutes before it locked up and blew up, and the Chevrolet lasted about twelve minutes. Then when they blew up, we took our axes and beat the radiator out and

chopped all the tires up and just completely destroyed it.

Marcello: What did you do with your weapons and so on?

Stone: Well, we had to turn them over to the Japanese.

Marcello: In other words, you had specific orders from the Japanese that the weapons were not to be destroyed?

Stone: Yes, yes, that's right. But I know some of the guys took the firing pins out and threw them away and things like that.

Marcello: I've also heard some of the people say that they were kind of ashamed over the fact that they had surrendered mainly because they really hadn't done too much fighting and hadn't seen too much action.

Stone: Yes, I felt real bad about it because I figured that we could do more. It seemed to me that we could have done a lot more. I know that after we'd engaged the Japanese up there in the north, well, I was on guard duty that night. It was raining. It was raining right down; it rained all night long. I had an old poncho on, and I had my rifle up under this poncho, and I was leaning up against a rubber tree. I stayed there all night long, and it was so dark that a Jap could have passed within ten feet of me and you'd never have known it. But the next morning when it got daylight, they slipped up and set fire to one of our command cars. I could see that command car burning, so I knew that they was pretty close.

Marcello: But I guess a great many of you had never even seen any Japanese up until the time of the surrender; had you?

Stone: No, no, I hadn't. I hadn't seen any Japanese.

Marcello: Let me ask you this question. By this time I think the attitude of the natives had also changed, had it not? They knew that the Japanese were going to be the winners.

Stone: Oh, yes. That was the strangest thing. You know, when we first got there, you'd drive down those low roads and highways, and all the little ol' native kids would be waving miniature American flags. Well, after the Japanese got there, they was waving those miniature rising suns (chuckle). But I think that's human nature; you're going to go with the winner. Yes, they had changed their attitude.

Marcello: What were some rumors going around relative to what the Japanese would do with any prisoners-of-war? Now most of you perhaps had read in the newspapers about the rape of Nanking and some of the atrocities that the Japanese had been committing in China. Did you fully expect the Japanese to do the same thing to you?

Stone: Not really. Now I didn't. I don't know about the other guys. We had a lieutenant, Lieutenant Ilo Hard, and he gave us a good pep talk. Now whether he really believed this or whether he was just trying to make us feel better . . . he painted a beautiful picture that we were going back in those beautiful green mountains. We was going to have a camp back there, and we was going to be allowed to run our own camp; and the water situation was a little bit bad, but

we could get some bamboo and make a waterline out of it and pipe some water down to the camp. I don't really think that he believed this, but he was trying to make us feel as good as he could about that, and it had its effect. Personally, I didn't have any idea of what was ahead of us at that time.

Marcello: I believe that after the surrender did come down, that is, after the word of surrender had come down, you ultimately went to the racetrack again. Did you not go to Garoet?

Stone: Yes, yes, we were bivouacked on a racetrack, and we were there for quite some time.

Marcello: Well, describe what happened there.

Stone: What happened there? Well, the main thing that I remember that happened there is that there was a lot of Chinese people on Java. They were the merchants; they were the people with the most money, other than the Dutch, of course. These Chinese merchants would come around, and we'd buy things from them, you see, as they came around. I remember that they tried to get Eddie Fung to come with them, that they would pass him off as one of them, you see, and he wouldn't have to be taken a prisoner. Eddie chose not to do that, but that would sure have been, I believe, a good "out" for Eddie. I was kind of hoping that he would, but he didn't.

Marcello: Well, while you were there at Garoet--you mentioned that you were there for a long time--were you staying in tents, or

out in the open or what?

Stone: Well, if I remember right, we were just sleeping in those old trucks and on the ground because it was warm weather and it wasn't the rainy season at that time. I think I was sleeping in the maintenance truck if I remember right.

Marcello: What were the food and provisions like?

Stone: Well, it wasn't too bad. We still had some rations, except I remember we had some flour that the weevils had gotten into. So we had to eat pancakes made out of that weevilly flour, but that wasn't too bad. We had plenty of food from our own rations at that time.

Marcello: Now did you actually come into very much contact with the Japanese here at Garoet?

Stone: No, not really. I think we did see some of them driving around the track, looking around. We just saw them at a distance.

Marcello: So I assume that you were not harrassed in a physical sense or anything at this time.

Stone: No, no, we were still under the command of our officers.

Marcello: What did you do while you were there?

Stone: Oh, just sat around, played cards, did a lot of talking and a lot of wondering of what was going on, discussing what was going to happen to us. It was kind of nice not to be bombed and strafed everyday; that felt pretty good, you know.

Marcello: From what you could observe, were the Japanese more or less

trying to mop up on the island? They evidently weren't paying too much attention to you any longer.

Stone: No, they didn't seem to be paying a whole lot of attention to us. No, I don't remember a whole lot about that racetrack. I just remember us being there, and we were there for quite awhile. Everything was just kind of calm and peaceful at that time.

Marcello: Well, from the racetrack you then went to a tea plantation for a while, did you not? Do you recall that?

Stone: Well, yes, yes, I remember that we were in that . . . yes, that's where we had to eat the pancakes with the weevilly flour.

Marcello: So when you're talking about a period of weeks, then, you may be referring to both Garoet and the tea plantation?

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Well, where was this tea plantation located? I think you went there sometime after you were at Garoet. Where was this tea plantation located?

Stone: I have no idea. My memory . . . too many years have passed, and I can't recall.

Marcello: Well, was Garoet right there in Batavia?

Stone: In Batavia? I believe it was. I believe it was, yes. That's where that racetrack was. It seems like it was.

Marcello: Anyway, you were at Garoet and at that tea plantation for a period of weeks, and during this time you really didn't

do too much of anything except play cards and lie around and so on and so forth,

Stone: Yes, yes.

Marcello: On March 31, 1942, you are sent to . . . I guess what you would call your first POW camp, and this was at Tanjong Priok, which was the port for Batavia, I guess.

Stone: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Okay, how did you get to Tanjong Priok? Did you march there or go by train?

Stone: Yes, I remember . . . well, we marched somewhere. I know we gave up all of our weapons, but we were allowed to keep our personal gear, which was a haversack and a barracks and, oh, two or three pairs of shoes in that barracks bag and several pairs of khaki pants and a lot of stuff--a lot of weight to carry.

Marcello: And I guess you had your mess gear and toilet gear and things of that nature.

Stone: Mess gear, yes. But us being artillery, we weren't used to having to carry that stuff, you see, because we rode in trucks. Then when we had . . . now we had a march one night, and I don't remember where it was from or where it was to, but I remember we marched all night long to a railroad station. On that march some of that gear got so heavy that some of the guys began to chuck it. Now they didn't throw it out to the side of the road; they'd wait until we came across a

river, and then they'd pitch it over in the river. So when we got to this railroad station, a lot of the guys didn't have near as much gear as they started out with. I remember that we came to this railroad station, and it was at night, and that was the first contact that we'd had with the Japanese.

Marcello: Describe that contact.

Stone: Well, they lined us up on this old dock of a thing, and it had real dim electric lights. Of course, the guys would give out, and they started to sit down, and those Japs started yelling and screaming and hitting them with gun butts. That's where we were first introduced to Japanese brutality. That was a little bit hard to take, you know, but there wasn't a whole lot you could do about it.

Marcello: What did those Japanese soldiers look like? Describe their physical appearance.

Stone: Well, as well as I recall, they seemed to average about 5' to 5'4." They had on these kind of an olive-green uniform with wrap-around leggings and hobnailed boots--and to look at those boots, you'd think they'd wear blisters on your feet, top and bottom, the way they looked--and then they had on these little green caps with the bill in front. When they put their bayonet on their rifle, and they stood at attention with their rifle, well, the bayonet would reach way up above their head; their rifle was taller than they were. Most of them wore glasses, and a lot of them had gold teeth. They

were just little yellow men, that's what they were.

Marcello: Evidently, you boarded this train and went into Tanjong Priok, is that correct?

Stone: Yes, yes.

Marcello: It must have been a fairly short ride,

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, describe what Tanjong Priok looked like from a physical standpoint, and, like I said earlier, you got there on March 31, 1942.

Stone: Are you talking about Bicycle Camp?

Marcello: No, I'm talking about Tanjong Priok. This was a camp located close to the docks, and I believe there were even some British and maybe even some other nationalities in this camp. It was the camp that you went to before you actually got to Bicycle Camp. Do you recall anything from Tanjong Priok?

Stone: No, that seems to be a blank at this time.

Marcello: Okay, well, we'll move on and talk about Bicycle Camp because you did spend a great deal of time there. On May 14, 1942, you go into Bicycle Camp. Now you may have been at Tanjong Priok probably about six weeks or something like that. Describe what Bicycle Camp looked like from a physical standpoint. Describe it in terms of the barracks and the grounds and so on.

Stone: It was a good barracks. Now here again they had tile roofs-- I remember that vividly--and they were built out of wood.

They were Dutch barracks. If I remember there were three long barracks, and between two of them there was a big, wide, paved street. But the Japs eventually put a fence up. They fenced off this street. But the part of the street between the two barracks was part of our compound, and I know I was stationed on . . . well, they put F Battery in one area and Headquarters Battery in another area.

When we got there, I remember there was some sailors across the street--survivors off the Houston that was over across the street.

Marcello: Before we get to them, describe your barracks just a little bit more. What were they like in the inside?

Stone: The inside? Well, they were just little cubicle things--concrete floors and little cubicles--and we were assigned to these cubicles.

Claude Thomas and I were kind of buddies. We had gone into the National Guard at the same time. In fact our serial numbers . . . mine was twenty-three and his was twenty-four--the end numbers on it--and we had the same specialist rating. We got promoted at the same time, and we kind of buddied-up together.

Marcello: By this time are the men already beginning to buddy-up, so to speak?

Stone: Yes, we began to buddy-up and began to share their food. If one guy got something, he'd share it with his buddy, you

see, and kind of pool it together. We began to share everything like that.

Marcello: Were you sleeping on the floor in these cubicles?

Stone: On the concrete floor. If I remember right, I had a shelter-half and a blanket. That's about all I had left at that time.

Marcello: Okay, awhile ago you mentioned that this is where you encountered the survivors off the USS Houston. Describe what they looked like.

Stone: Oh, they were a motley-looking crew! They had blisters on them--sunburn--where they'd been in the water, and they had oil on their bodies. They didn't have any clothes. I don't know . . . they just looked like a bunch of shipwrecked people. They didn't have any clothes, and we started dividing the clothes that we had with them and giving them a pair of khaki pants or a T-shirt or something like that. I think some of the guys had some extra shoes and gave them some shoes--the ones that didn't chuck their barracks bag over in the river on the way up there. But they were pretty . . . their morale wasn't too bad.

Marcello: Was this sharing a rather spontaneous thing? In other words, nobody had to tell you to do this. It was just done automatically.

Stone: Oh, no, no. That was an automatic thing. When you saw those guys and saw how destitute they were, you wanted to share with those guys. No, there was no orders to do that.

- Marcello: It is interesting in that I have heard some of the people remark that probably this would not have occurred among the English, for example.
- Stone: I'm afraid it wouldn't.
- Marcello: One group of English would not have shared with another group of English.
- Stone: No, I don't believe they would have; no, I'm sure they wouldn't.
- Marcello: In other words, most of the 2nd Battalion people that I've interviewed seemed to think that this was maybe an American characteristic.
- Stone: I agree, I agree. Yes. I will say this, though. I think maybe the Aussies would have--Australians--because the Australians and the Americans are just as much alike as any two nationalities that I know of. The Australians in my opinion was good people.
- Marcello: You mentioned the Australians, and I assume there were other nationalities in Bicycle Camp.
- Stone: Yes, yes. Yes, there were Australians there; there were English there; and there were Dutch there; and there were Americans.
- Marcello: Did this camp have any sort of a barbed wire fence around it or anything like that?
- Stone: Oh, yes, it had a fence around it. It had Japanese guards on the outside, and it had a guardhouse at one end. I remember one guard. He was ready because he not only carried

his rifle with a fixed bayonet, but he had about eight or ten hand grenades strapped to his belt. He was ready for any event (chuckle). Of course, they put guards on the inside--roaming guards on the inside, see, at Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: At this time you still have Japanese guards, is that correct?

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: You don't have your Korean guards yet?

Stone: No, no Koreans yet. No, they were still Japanese guards.

Marcello: Describe the treatment of the Japanese guards here. In other words, what was the relationship that developed between the guards and the prisoners here at Bicycle Camp?

Stone: Oh, the guards and the prisoners? (Chuckle) Well, I guess there was some comical things that happened there if you look at it in one way. You see, the Japanese guards were disciplinarians, and they wanted the prisoners to be disciplined just like they were. We had to adhere to their rules and their regulations. One of the regulations was that when you were encountered by a superior . . . when the Japs were encountered by a superior officer, well, then they would have to bow--come to attention and then bow. Then that's what we had to do to them.

Marcello: But you had to do it to all Japanese, right?

Stone: To all Japanese, regardless of what rank. When they approached us, we were to come to attention and then bow to them. Well,

that's pretty tough for an American to have to do, but when you have to do things, you have to do it. If you didn't bow just right or come to attention just right, then you'd get slapped around.

I remember we had one guy, and his name was Steve Miller. He was a boxer, a fighter, and he was a good one. I remember one incident. This little Jap guard inside came up to him, and he didn't bow just right to him, So this Jap was going to slap him around. Well, this guy was too tall; he couldn't reach him. He'd jump up and try to slap him, and that was comical to me because I knew that old Miller, if he wanted to, could have flattened that guy with one blow (chuckle). But some of those things were really comical.

Marcello: Did you notice that physical punishment was a way of life in the Japanese Army?

Stone: Yes, I did because they punished each other. If a Japanese was a lower rank than the other one, then the higher rank had the authority to slap him around. If you was a sergeant or the equivalent of a sergeant, you could slap these Japanese privates around. Okay, when you come down to the lowest private, then he didn't have anybody to take his frustrations out on except the prisoners, and so he'd take his frustrations out on the prisoners.

Marcello: Everybody had to save face, in other words.

Stone: Oh, yes; oh, yes.

Marcello: Did you find it best not to try and strike up any friendships with these Japanese guards?

Stone: Well, I didn't. I found out it was best to just not have any more to do with them than you absolutely had to. That wasn't true with some of the guys, I mean, later on down the line. But I tried not to have anything at all to do with them, and maybe that was one reason that I didn't get near as many bashings as some of the other guys did.

Marcello: Would the Japanese frequently conduct sneak inspections of the barracks and things of that nature?

Stone: Oh, yes! Oh, yes!

Marcello: Describe how they would take place.

Stone: Well, they would call us out for what they called a tenko. They'd muster us out and make us stand at attention, and, boy, they'd run in a swarm of those guys and go through our things to see what we had. If there was anything they wanted, they'd take it, and, of course, they'd make us stand at attention out there while they were doing all of that.

Marcello: What sort of items were you not supposed to have?

Stone: Well, of course, we weren't supposed to have any radios; we weren't supposed to have any guns, naturally. I understand that some of the guys had smuggled a gun or two in there, and how they got by without getting caught, I don't know. Some of those guys were very . . . they used a lot of ingenuity in hiding that stuff in different ways.

We certainly wasn't supposed to have any radios, but there was some Australian who put a radio in his canteen. They had a different type of canteen than we did. It was kind of a square, boxy-looking thing. They had cut the bottom out and mounted this radio in this canteen and then put the bottom back in. They would operate a radio in that camp.

Marcello: I assume you had never seen the radio.

Stone: No, I hadn't. Not to this day have I seen it.

Marcello: Did you know about Jess Stanbrough and the short-wave radio that he had? Are you familiar with him?

Stone: No, I didn't know about him. Of course, I heard he had one later on, but I didn't know about it at that time.

Marcello: We talked about Japanese discipline. What sort of discipline was being maintained among the American troops, that is, in terms of the relationship with your own officers and so on and so forth here in Bicycle Camp?

Stone: Well, of course, the Japanese held the officers responsible for our conduct, and, of course, we were loyal to our officers. Whatever they said, we tried to do.

Marcello: I'm sure that such formalities as saluting and so on was stopped, however.

Stone: I know we had a Lieutenant Lattimore, and I said something one day . . . I called him Lieutenant Lattimore, and he said, "Don't call me 'Lieutenant.' I'm a prisoner just like you

are!" So we forgot rank among our officers, really. We didn't forget it, but we didn't use their rank that much.

Marcello: Describe what a typical day was like here at Bicycle Camp from the time you get up until lights out in the evening, What was a typical day like? What time did you get up?

Stone: Well, we got up, it seemed to me like, before daylight every morning. It was real early.

Marcello: But you didn't necessarily have anything to do here, did you? There were some work details.

Stone: Yes, there was some work details. There was some work details. I remember that when the Japanese first started issuing the food, they issued us rice that looked like the sweepings off of the warehouse floor.

Marcello: Now this is the sort of thing that started back in Tanjong Priok. Do you remember that we were talking about that camp awhile ago?

Stone: Yes, yes, yes. I remember the reaction of all the guys when they first got that stuff. Okay, it had burlap strings in it, and that had dirt in it, and it had big old long rice worms in it, and it had "rat pills" in it. I remember I did the same thing, and I watched the other guys do it, too. The first mess kit full of that rice they got, they looked at it . . . or I did. I looked at that stuff and went and dumped it in the garbage pit. Well, after about three or four days of this, you begin to get a little bit hungry now, and

so you'd see the guys take their spoon, and they'd dip all that stuff out and throw it out on the ground that they could, and they might take a bite or two and then go dump it in the garbage pit. Well, after about two or three weeks of that kind of food, you'd see them . . . whatever they'd see, they'd throw it out on the ground and keep eating. If something came up in sight, they'd pitch it out on the ground and eat the rest of it. But after awhile it got to where it didn't make any difference. Worms, "rat pills," anything-- it all went down. When you chomp down on one of those "rat pills," you knew you had one, but it didn't make any difference. And we decided that the worms was our meat ration; that was our meat ration.

But when we was in that camp, we did have a chance to get hold of food because the Japanese hadn't completely stripped the island that time. Every once in awhile you'd be able to get a can of condensed milk or something like that.

Marcello: Well, the Japanese are obviously winning the war at this stage, and you're also near civilization.

Stone: Yes, yes, that's right.

Marcello: Did it take your cooks awhile to learn how to cook that rice?

Stone: Yes, they didn't know how to cook that rice; they'd never cooked that rice. It's cooked in big ol' cauldrons, big round pots. I guess the Dutch . . . I don't know who taught them, but I suppose the Dutch taught them how to cook

it. Boy, when they first started to cook it, well, they didn't have a very good base to begin with, but they eventually learned how to cook it.

Marcello: I guess you were always looking for something with which to flavor that rice, were you not?

Stone: Yes. In fact, when we could get hold of a can of condensed milk or something, you'd pour that on there and get on some chili peppers or anything, just anything, to put in there . . . a little bit of salt . . . if you could get a hold of that, that would just make it taste a little better.

Marcello: How much rice did you get per meal?

Stone: Well, at that time, when we were there, we were getting about, oh, I guess, about a mess kit full. We was getting all that old rice that we wanted at that time--the kind it was. We could get a mess kit full of rice.

Marcello: Could you go back and get seconds?

Stone: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! You could get seconds if you wanted it (chuckle), but not many people wanted it at that time.

Marcello: What were the work details like here at Bicycle Camp?

Stone: Bicycle Camp? Okay, we'd go down on the docks, and the Japanese are stripping the island. All the oil is put in the oil barrels, oil drums, and we were mostly rolling those oil drums onto barges to be taken out and loaded on ships. That was our job--to load those barges with those oil drums.

Marcello: Was this fairly hard physical work?

Stone: Not really because at that time, why, we were still in pretty good physical condition, so we could do it all right.

Marcello: How much did you weigh when you went in the service?

Stone: I weighed 175 pounds.

Marcello: Like you say, at this time most of you were still in pretty good shape.

Stone: Oh, yes, we were in good physical condition at that time, when we were captured then.

Marcello: Now were these work details voluntary, or were you assigned to them?

Stone: Well, I don't think they were voluntary. Well, the Japanese says there's so many men that got to go on a work detail . . . now there might have been a lot of volunteering between the guys, the ones that wanted to stay in and the ones that wanted to go out, yes, but the Japanese says, "We need so many men for a work detail."

Marcello: But you would not necessarily have to go out on a work detail everyday.

Stone: No, no. In fact, you started looking for something to do to occupy your time when you wasn't on a work detail. I know I started a project that I didn't get finished, but, me being in the maintenance section and automobile-oriented, I started making a V-8 engine, whittling a V-8 engine out of wood. I didn't finish it, but I had a block of teakwood, and that's real hard wood. I think I used a mess kit knife

that I sharpened and was whittling with it. But I never did finish it.

Marcello: When you went on work details, did you have an opportunity to trade with the natives or to steal food and so on?

Stone: Oh, yes. In those old bombed-out warehouses, you might get a chance . . . you might see some canned milk or anything that you could steal and stick up under your hat or in your clothes some way and smuggle it back into camp. At that time the Japanese hadn't wakened up to the fact that we were stealing all that stuff, and they weren't searching us near as closely as they did later on down the line. Yes, we could smuggle a lot of stuff in the camp, and, as you say, we could trade with the natives.

Marcello: I guess there were Dutch women running around on the outside, too, were there not? I know they interned most of the men, didn't they?

Stone: Yes, yes. Yes, they did. There was a lot of women. I remember one detail I was on; I was in the back of one of those old Jap trucks. There was a Dutch woman riding a bicycle. Of course, in those days the victory sign was the thing, you know, the two fingers, and she gave us a victory sign, and the Japanese saw her. They stopped that truck, and this guard went over there and took his rifle butt and knocked her off of that bicycle and beat her with that rifle butt. Now that was awfully hard to stand up there in that

truck and watch that go on, but that's the way they would treat those civilians.

Marcello: It was also around this time that a controversy developed concerning the use of company money. Do you know anything about that controversy?

Stone: Not a whole lot, just what I've heard. Now, of course, I understand that we were supposed to have gotten paid somewhere along the line, and the officers decided not to give us the money, that they would control the money and they would spend it as they thought it should be spent. So consequently we didn't get our individual pay, and the officers controlled that money.

Marcello: Did you notice that the officers were eating better than the enlisted men? That was a charge that I've heard leveled frequently.

Stone: Well, no, I wouldn't say that. I couldn't say that because I don't know.

Marcello: I've also been told that when a person was going on a work detail, he could actually get some of this money from the officers and buy food on the outside and then bring it back for everybody. Are you familiar with that particular routine?

Stone: No, I'm not. I know I had some money, but I don't know where I got it, and I don't know how I got it. I know that I did have a chance to buy from the natives at different times. I know canned milk was the thing that I went for

when I could get it. I had the money. Whether it was my own personal money or whether the officers gave it to me, I don't know. I can't recall what went on at that time.

Marcello: What sort of sports activities took place here in this camp?

Stone: We did form a volleyball team, and we had a good one. In fact, David Hiner just said last year, when I was talking to him, that he would match that volleyball team against any college team in the United States (chuckle). Yes, we had a volleyball team, and they were good, and we played a lot of volleyball. We also had some boxing matches, but not too many, because that wasn't . . . I would never participate in the boxing matches because that was for the entertainment of the Japanese, and I couldn't see beating each other up for the entertainment of the Japanese. But we did have a few.

Marcello: Would the Japanese come around when you had these sports events and so on?

Stone: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! They liked to watch that. Yes, they watched our sports.

Marcello: How about stage shows?

Stone: (Chuckle) Yes, yes, they had stage shows there. Now the British are really into this stage show business, and they were pretty good. The Americans participated in it, too,

and they put on some good stage shows. If they needed women in these plays, why, some of the guys would dress up like women, and they looked pretty good after they got dressed up (chuckle).

Marcello: I've heard some of the prisoners say that they were amazed at how people were able to construct scenery and things of that nature for these stage shows.

Stone: Yes, yes, yes. And where they got the material, I don't know, but they were very, very good at scrounging this material up--whatever they needed to construct the background and the props for these stage shows.

Marcello: Were these activities well-attended?

Stone: Yes, yes, they were. Any kind of entertainment was well-attended.

Marcello: What did you talk about when you sat around in your bull sessions? I assume you had a lot of time here at Bicycle Camp; nobody was really overworked here.

Stone: No, no, we weren't overworked here.

Marcello: What did you talk about in your bull sessions?

Stone: Well, we talked about food a whole lot. I remember Glen Self, from Lubbock. I remember one time sitting and listening to him talk about how he used to go down to the Jack O'Lantern every morning, and he'd order two eggs and ham and toast. He'd sit there and talk like that and make me so hungry I could eat anything. Food was mostly what we talked about.

Marcello: Did you talk a lot about your families and things of that

nature?

Stone: Oh, yes, yes. Yes, we talked about our families, talked about our childhoods.

Marcello: Girls?

Stone: Yes, at that time we were still talking about girls, but later on down the line the girls didn't seem to enter into the subject too often. But at that time we talked about girls.

Marcello: How long are you going to be prisoners-of-war at this stage?

Stone: Oh, maybe sixty, ninety days. Then it'd all be over.

Marcello: Is the camp one big rumor mill?

Stone: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! You could hear any kind of rumor you wanted to hear (chuckle). The Americans had landed in Australia with all kinds of troops, and they was pushing up, and then they'd retaken the Philippines, and they'd done everything. All kinds of . . . any kind of rumor you wanted to hear, you could hear it.

Marcello: On July 4, 1942, the Japanese insisted that all the prisoners sign a non-escape pledge. Do you remember that incident?

Stone: I sure do.

Marcello: Describe it.

Stone: I had been out on a work party that day, and when we came in camp, they wouldn't dismiss us. They made us stand at attention, and I knew something was going on, but I didn't know what. There was none of our officers around, just the

enlisted guys in the compound, and finally our first sergeant explained to us what had happened.

The Japanese had taken all the officers away. They had come out with this document for us to sign, that we would not try to escape and that we would assist the Imperial Japanese Army in any way that we could for them to win the war. Our officers refused to sign it, and so they'd taken our officers away, and we didn't know what had happened to them. We thought maybe they'd already executed them. They said we had to sign it. Nobody wanted to sign it, but the Japanese told us that if we didn't sign that document that we were not guaranteed our lives.

So somebody said, "Well, in order to stay alive, go ahead and sign the document because anything that was signed under duress didn't mean anything, anyway." So everybody signed it. As far as I know, they did. That was on the Fourth of July, our Independence Day, and I think the Japanese picked that particular day to make us sign that document.

Marcello: Was there ever any talk about escape? Talk is cheap, I'm sure, under those circumstances in terms of escape. Was there much talk of escape?

Stone: You mean at that time? In that particular camp?

Marcello: Yes, in Bicycle Camp.

Stone: No, I didn't hear of it. I'm sure that there was a lot of

guys that thought about it, but we'd already had our chance to escape. There was no way to get off that island that anybody knew about.

Marcello: And I'm sure the natives would turn you in, anyway.

Stone: Oh, yes, they would . . . well, I understand that they were offered a reward for any escaped prisoner that they reported to the Japs. They'd get a reward. As far as I was concerned, or my buddies, as far as I know, we had no plans for escape. What was the point in trying to escape and maybe getting killed when the war wasn't going to last but about another ninety days, anyway?

Marcello: Did the Japanese tell you what would happen if you did escape and were caught?

Stone: Oh, yes. They said we'd be executed. We'd be executed.

Marcello: Did you doubt their word?

Stone: No, I didn't doubt it because I figured they were capable of doing it.

Marcello: What were some of the more unusual forms of punishment that you saw the Japanese use here in Bicycle Camp? Now awhile ago you mentioned the slapping and the gun butts and all that sort of thing. I would assume that was routine punishment.

Stone: Oh, yes! Oh, yes!

Marcello: What were some of the more unusual forms of punishment that you observed here?

- Stone: Well, I saw them make one guy kneel down on his knees; and they put his hands behind his back, and they . . . the Japanese's favorite weapon was a bamboo stick about an inch or an inch-and-a-half in diameter and about three feet long, and they'd beat you with that stick--on the head, on the body, anywhere. They'd hit you anywhere with that stick. That was their favorite position--to make you kneel down on your knees--and then they'd beat you with that bamboo stick.
- Marcello: Did you ever see them make the prisoner kneel down on his knees with the bamboo stick put behind the knees?
- Stone: Yes, I'd see that, too--put the bamboo stick behind your knees and kneel down on it. That cuts off the circulation and makes your legs numb.
- Marcello: Is it accurate to say, however, that in some cases the prisoners asked for it? In other words, they broke certain rules, and they'd get caught.
- Stone: Well, yes, that sure is true. In fact, in Bicycle Camp we was always trying to pick up something extra to eat and cook it up--anything we could get to cook it up. Well, that meant that you had to have wood to make a fire. Wood got scarce, so we just started tearing down those old barracks, pulling all the wood off of the barracks, and those things were a wreck before long, you know. Of course, the Japs didn't like that--that's destruction, you know--and they'd give a few guys a beating when they'd see them tearing

a board off of those barracks, you see. So we did do a lot of things wrong, and then they got a beating for it. That's where we learned that those Japanese was capable of dishing out a lot of punishment.

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

Stone: Well, if I remember right, there was a hydrant, one hydrant, out there. A pipe came up out of the ground, and you could turn it on, and, as well as I remember, that was the only bathing facility for the whole camp. You just had to get out there and turn that hydrant on and get under it and take a shower.

Marcello: I assume the Japanese didn't provide you with soap or anything like that,

Stone: I think we still had some of our own soap that we had at that time. Yes, we had some of our own soap that we were using, but it didn't last too long. No, the Japanese never did furnish any soap that I remember. I don't think they ever gave us any soap.

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

Stone: I can't tell you. I don't remember.

Marcello: Well, did you have the Dutch-type toilets with that flowing water?

Stone: Well, if that's not . . . yes, yes. Okay, now there you go. Yes, that's right. You got a little cubicle there. It

doesn't have a top on it, and it doesn't have any doors on it. You just go in there, and there's a concrete trough built in the floor, and you'd just straddle this trough and squat down over this trough. There's water running down here, and this water runs in and out, and it carries this sewage with it and runs on out in the rivers. That's what contaminates . . . all that water over there is contaminated with that sewer.

Marcello: Here in Bicycle Camp, then, all your water did have to be boiled.

Stone: Oh, yes, yes. I never drank . . . by the time I was taken prisoner, I never drank one drop of water that wasn't boiled. I got awfully thirsty a lot of times, but I never did drink any water that wasn't boiled.

Marcello: Is it not also true that when you went through the chow line that the first thing you did was to dip your mess gear in hot boiling water? Wasn't that the usual procedure?

Stone: Yes, yes, yes, that's right. They had a hot cauldron of water there, and you dipped your mess kit in there to sterilize that. Of course, our doctors and everybody told us that all those worms that we were eating in our rice . . . as long as it was cooked real good, they said that there wasn't any germs in it, so we didn't have to worry about that. Yes, we tried to be as sanitary as we could.

I'll say that this is the reason that so many Americans

came back alive, is because we were in the prime of life at that time, we had had all the shots that we needed to go over there, and we were taught hygiene in the service. We took much better care of ourselves than any other nationality that was over there. That's the reason that so many of the British died, is because they didn't know how to take care of themselves.

Marcello: Incidentally, did the Japanese ever process you in any way up until this time? In other words, were they keeping records about you? Had they taken names and serial numbers? Did they possibly give you some sort of identification or anything of that nature?

Stone: I don't remember where it was, but I know they eventually gave us a wooden tag that we wore around our neck with a number on this tag, and that was our number. I guess we carried this all through our prison camp life, was this number, so evidently they had us all numbered. I know I wore that tag all through Burma.

Marcello: Now here at the Bicycle Camp everybody was still in fairly good health yet. You were hungry but healthy.

Stone: Right. That's right. Yes, we were still in pretty good health.

Marcello: Is there anything else about Bicycle Camp that we need to mention at this stage? Is there anything that we haven't covered that you think we need to talk about?

Stone: No, I think we've just about covered it. There's a lot of incidents that happened there that . . . well, yes. We decided that, since we had all that extra time, we were going to see if we couldn't further our education a little bit. So we would get people that we knew that were knowledgeable on one subject, and he'd hold a class, and the guys could attend that class. We had a lot of lectures on different things, and it was very educational and interesting to go to these classes and listen to these lectures. I think it was worthwhile. I know there was one sailor . . . he was an electrician on the ship, and he held a class in electricity, which was very interesting.

Marcello: I recall a bunch of people talking about an old abandoned car in Bicycle Camp, and they also mentioned that before they left, that car had almost been completely stripped by prisoners who had taken this, that, and the other off of it. Do you remember that car?

Stone: No, I don't recall the car, but I do know that a lot of those sailors had hubcaps for a mess kit. I don't know where they got it, but evidently it was off of this car.

Marcello: Well, I know one of them mentioned, since you brought up the subject, that somebody one night evidently cut a piece out of this car, probably out of the door, and it was almost the perfect configuration of a frying pan. I don't know if you remember that or not.

Stone: Yes, right. Yes, I remember all the different things that those sailors had. A lot of ingenuity (chuckle) was displayed there because, as I say, they had the hubcaps for mess kits. There was all kinds of metal that was shaped into mess kits or knives or eating utensils--anything they could get.

Marcello: You might share things with the sailors, but you didn't share those mess kits.

Stone: That's right! That's right! We only had one mess kit each, one knife, one fork, one spoon, and a canteen and a canteen cup. I carried that with me all through this ordeal. I held on to that.

Marcello: Okay, in October of 1942, early October, groups were beginning to leave Bicycle Camp. The first group out was under the command of Captain Arch Fitzsimmons. Did you leave in the first group, or did you leave later on?

Stone: I was with Captain Fitzsimmons' group.

Marcello: Okay, describe the whole process of leaving. How did this come about? What took place?

Stone: My memory's very vague about leaving Bicycle Camp. The only thing that I remember about that is getting on that Japanese transport ship.

Marcello: Were you prepared for this move? In other words, were you told some days or weeks in advance that you would be leaving or anything of that nature?

- Stone: No, no, I don't recall any advance warning or anything. In fact, I don't even recall what was said to make us move. Maybe you could say that in those days I was just kind of a zombie, going along with the crowd, I suppose. Either that or I've lost my memory on that.
- Marcello: What was your reaction to moving? I mean, by this time you probably had gotten into some sort of a routine here at Bicycle Camp.
- Stone: Right. I had gotten into a routine. When they say fall in for a work party, you just fell in for a work party; and when they said get all your gear and fall in, why, that was just routine. As far as I was concerned, you just did what you was told to do. But I remember that trip on that ship.
- Marcello: Did the Japanese give you any sort of an examination or prepare you in any way for this trip?
- Stone: I don't recall any examination that I had.
- Marcello: Okay, so if you were in the Fitzsimmons bunch, you must have left on October 7, 1942. That's when this group, I think, boarded the Dai Nichi Maru.
- Stone: That's right. That's the name of that ship. I remember that ship.
- Marcello: Describe that ship,
- Stone: Oh, it was a typical, old Japanese transport ship. I remember that they started herding us down in the hold of that ship,

and it must have been forty feet deep, it seemed to me like. They started pushing us down in that hold, and it got full and they just kept crowding prisoners in there, kept crowding in there, and crowding them in there until about all we had room for was standing room. We didn't have any room to lay down hardly at all. I don't think that I've ever been any more miserable than I was in the hold of that old ship because there was no air in there-- it was dead space, dead air space--and all those prisoners and those bodies were jammed together. It was just about as hot as a human could stand,

Marcello: It must have been pretty rank in there, too, with all the sweating and so on and so forth.

Stone: Well, the worst part of it was that there was no toilet facilities down there. Now the Japanese did build an old rickety thing out on the edge of the ship, that hung out over the ship, but they'd only let two men at a time out of that hold to go to that toilet. That sure wasn't enough for those guys, and some of them had begun to develop diarrhea at that time and I think maybe a few dysentery cases, too. But almost everybody had diarrhea, and if you couldn't get out of that hold and you had to go, why, when you got to go, you got to go, you know--right down in that hold. It was miserable conditions.

Marcello: Is it not true that the Japanese actually built layers or

platforms in that hold, and they actually crammed additional prisoners in?

Stone: Yes, yes, they built tiers in there, and I remember there was . . .

Marcello: Yes, tiers is a good word to use.

Stone: There was a detachment of Japanese guards that was in that hold. They were up on a tier, too, but they had a lot more room than we had. We weren't allowed up there where they were.

Marcello: Could you not get up on topside at all?

Stone: No, not unless they let you up there. You had to climb that ladder,

Marcello: And did they let you up very often?

Stone: Well, if there were two men up there, that's all that could be up there at one time, and when they came down, they'd let two more guys up there. I don't remember ever getting on top that whole trip, myself. Maybe some of the other guys did, but I didn't. I was in that hold at all times except when I could get up that ladder to go to that toilet.

Marcello: How were you fed?

Stone: Well, we were fed about a cup of rice about twice a day, and the only thing we had to drink was about half a canteen cup of hot tea twice a day--no water, just half a cup of hot tea. That was lowered down in those five-gallon cans, and you were allowed half a cup out of those cans.

Marcello: It's amazing to me that discipline was maintained down in that hold when the food and tea was being distributed.

Stone: Well, from the beginning to the end it was understood that these guys got so much rations so there'd be enough to go around, and nobody very seldom ever tried to get more than their rations. Later on down the line, when they did try to get more than their rations, usually a fight ensued.

Marcello: Fortunately, you weren't on this ship too long, were you?

Stone: No, we weren't there too long. It didn't take too long to get to Singapore because that's where we got off the ship.

Marcello: I believe you may have been on there maybe three or four days at the very most,

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, you land in Singapore sometime around October 11, 1942. Describe what happens when you get off the ship there at Singapore.

Stone: Well, when we got off the ship at Singapore, of course, we saw a lot of destruction there, where the Japanese had bombed and shelled the island of Singapore. But most of the barracks were still standing, and we were shipped to a former English barracks. The water situation was terrible. We only had one hydrant, and you had to carry the water from this hydrant.

I recall there was an old car that had, I believe,

a water tank on it, but there wasn't any gasoline to run it. So the prisoners had to push this old car--gang around it, push it up the hill and load it with water. Then they'd ride it back down the hill. That was manpower, just strictly manpower, and that's the way we hauled that water down to one of those barracks.

It wasn't really too bad in Singapore, except, as I recall, the water condition was bad there.

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

Stone: Oh, yes, it was a very large camp with two-story barracks, and there was all nationalities, if I remember right, there-- Indians, Dutch, and British. I understand that the Japanese captured about 75,000 British troops on that island when they captured the island. Most of the Englishmen came from Singapore.

Marcello: And is it not true that the English actually ran the internal administration of that camp?

Stone: Oh, yes. I tell you, those English were very regimented, no matter what. It didn't make them any difference if they were prisoners. They still maintained their regimentation and their discipline among their men, their people, and it was very difficult for the Americans to accept that kind of discipline from the British when they were prisoners, too, the same as we were. But it was allowed by the Japanese. In fact, the Japanese insisted that the British

take care of their own people and disciplinary problems.

Marcello: Describe the relationship that developed between the Americans and the British here at Singapore.

Stone: A very poor relationship. I know that the Americans didn't like the English, and I don't think the English liked the Americans too much, either. There was a lot of thieving going on, and the Americans would steal everything they could from those English officers--every chance they got.

Marcello: Can you describe any of this in more detail?

Stone: No, I don't remember any particular incident, except I remember the guys telling about what they had stolen out of the British kitchen. I can't go into much more detail than that.

Marcello: There were also some rumors that the British were holding back on Red Cross supplies. Do you know anything about that?

Stone: I don't know a thing in the world about Red Cross supplies because I never saw any Red Cross supplies until after the war.

Marcello: Describe what your barracks were like in the inside here at Changi.

Stone: At Changi?

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that they were two-story barracks.

Stone: Yes, that's about all I recall, that they were two-story. I tell you what is vivid in my mind on Singapore is that great, big gray concrete prison.

Marcello: Changi Jail.

Stone: Changi Jail, which was a big prison. That's where the Japanese had interned all the civilian women and children. I did get a glimpse of some of them on the inside of that prison, and they were in pretty bad shape at that time.

Marcello: Evidently, Changi Jail made an impression on all the prisoners, and I don't think anybody wanted any part of Changi Jail.

Stone: Well, I sure didn't. That was a formidable-looking structure to me.

Marcello: Did you have bunks or anything like that in your barracks here at Changi?

Stone: I don't recall any bunks. As far as I remember, I just had one blanket . . . well, maybe I had two blankets at that time. I know I only wound up with only one, but, anyway, there wasn't very much padding between you and the concrete floor that you had to sleep on.

Marcello: I've heard that a lot of the prisoners had problems here with bedbugs. Do you remember that?

Stone: I don't recall too many bedbugs in Changi. It was later on down the line where I remember the bedbugs. I'm sure they were there, but I don't recall too much problem with them at that time.

Marcello: Describe the food that you were receiving here at Changi.

Stone: Well, it was the same old rice . . . same old rice.

Marcello: Did you perchance get any of that green mutton or whatever that the British had?

Stone: No, I didn't get hold of any meat there (chuckle).

Marcello: Evidently, they fed some of the groups of prisoners some mutton that evidently had been in storage for quite a long period of time here. Were you at Changi when Battery E passed through here?

Stone: I don't think so. I don't remember them passing through.

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

Stone: I didn't do any, except I helped push that old truck up and down that hill.

Marcello: How long were you at Changi altogether?

Stone: Not very long; a very short time; maybe not over two weeks.

Marcello: Changi evidently was just a transit station, so to speak, a temporary place, so far as the American prisoners were concerned because, like you mentioned, you left there pretty early. I know at least one group left Changi around January 6, 1943. That means you would have probably spent your first Christmas as a prisoner-of-war in Changi. Do you remember that?

Stone: No, I don't remember. I don't remember any Christmas there because in those days one day was just like another to me.

Marcello: Describe what happens when you leave Changi.

Stone: Well, we boarded another one of those old Japanese transport ships.

Marcello: Did you board that ship right there at Changi, or did you go up the coast to George Town or Penang? Do you recall offhand?

Stone: No, I don't. I don't remember any of the names of those places.

Marcello: Do you remember the name of the ship that you boarded?

Stone: Well, you said the other one was the Dai Nichi Maru, and this one was another maru. I guess they were all named maru. I don't know what it was.

Marcello: Was it the Dai Moji Maru? Does that ring a bell?

Stone: It could have been. Yes, it could have been that.

Marcello: Okay, describe this portion of your trip. First of all, I guess what we need to do is describe what the ship itself was like.

Stone: Well, as far as I can recall, it was just the same type of ship as the one we came to Singapore on, with the old rickety structure built out over the rail of that ship for a latrine. The conditions was the same. We were down in that hold, and it was just as crowded, and it was just as hot, only the trip was longer--it took longer. Then this is where I really began to see the guys start really going downhill,

Marcello: Describe what you saw.

Stone: Well, they were getting diarrhea and dysentery, and they began to lose weight, and they began to lose a lot of the

morale that they had had, It was just a miserable, hot condition. Now they did have an old wind scoop that they stuck down in that hold, and if you could be lucky enough to get under that scoop, you could get a little bit of fresh air; but if you wasn't directly under that, you couldn't even tell that there was any air at all coming in that hold. I didn't know if we was going to ever get out of that ship or not.

Of course, the Japanese was up on top in that hold, and they had machine guns set up up there. I don't know what they thought we were going to try to do, but, anyway, I guess if we tried to get out of that hold, we'd have never made it.

I remember that we was going up that coast, and one time I could look up through that hold, and I saw one of our B-24 planes pass over. Now it didn't bomb us, but I did get a glimpse of that plane. I guess it was just lucky that they didn't bomb us. I understand that they did bomb some of those ships that went up there, but the one that I was on wasn't bombed,

Marcello: Do you recall approximately how long you were on this ship?

Stone: Well, it seemed to me like about two weeks. It might not have been that long, but it seemed like two weeks.

Marcello: What do you do when you're on that ship? Here you have all this time, and you're down in the hold. What do you talk

about? What are you doing down there?

Stone: Nobody was doing much talking--nobody.

Marcello: What do you think about?

Stone: You just think about what's going to happen to you and when is this war going to be over. No, I don't recall people doing much talking at that time. As I say, the morale had begun to get pretty low at that time because, as far as I can recall, you just tried not to move around any and not try to exert yourself or not try to waste any of your energy, If you got a chance to lay down, which was very seldom, the only time you could lay down was when somebody else stood up. You just sat there in kind of a trance as far as I can . . . and you have your own thoughts to yourself.

Marcello: Okay, where did you finally land?

Stone: I think it was Moulmein, but I'm not sure. Some of the guys went to Rangoon, but I think our ship landed at Moulmein.

Marcello: Okay, so what happened when you get off the ship at Moulmein, Burma?

Stone: Okay, I remember . . . of course, in those plays that we had in Bicycle Camp, the singers would sing this song and then recite this poem that Kipling had, "On the Road to Mandalay," you know, and about the old Moulmein pagoda and all of that kind of stuff. When we got off of that ship, I saw this pagoda. That's the first pagoda that I recall seeing, and that's vivid in my mind.

Marcello: Did you spend some time there in Moulmein?

Stone: Yes, I believe we did. We went to a prison--an old, red brick prison. I remember that thing, and that was about the filthiest thing that I had been in. I think that the Japs had had a bunch of natives imprisoned in that thing, and that was filthy and dirty.

Marcello: Some of the people have remarked that the civilian prisoners in that jail actually had the ball and chain and that sort of thing. Do you recall that?

Stone: No, I don't recall any civilian prisoners.

Marcello: How long were you at this prison?

Stone: Not too long. I don't know how long, but it didn't seem like too long until they moved us out of there and moved us into the jungles. The only thing I remember is what that thing looked like and how dirty it was.

Marcello: Now did they put you in individual cells?

Stone: Yes, they had little individual blocks of cells, and I remember saying at that time that that was the first time that I had ever been locked up in a prison or a jail. But I was actually locked up behind bars in that thing.

Marcello: I assume that's not a very pleasant feeling.

Stone: No, it isn't. No, it isn't. But I was glad to get off that ship, I'll promise you that.

Marcello: So far as you, yourself, were concerned, were you still in pretty good shape physically?

Stone: Yes, I was. My health was fairly good. I'd lost some weight, but I hadn't developed any dysentery or any malaria at that time. My health was pretty good.

Marcello: Okay, now you mentioned that from Moulmein you go toward the jungle, and, of course, you're going to be working on this railroad. Up until this time, had you been told what you were going to be doing when you got to Burma?

Stone: No, I didn't know what we were going there for.

Marcello: Had you heard any rumors back in Singapore or anything of that nature?

Stone: I don't recall hearing anything of what our destination was.

Marcello: Okay, so did you go from Moulmein to Thanbyuzayat?

Stone: Thanbyuzayat?

Marcello: The base camp.

Stone: Yes, we went to the base camp, and that was a lot of prisoners in that camp. I recall that, yes.

Marcello: What happened when you got to Thanbyuzayat?

Stone: Well, I remember that speech that that Japanese officer made to us. He said that we were to work diligently and cheerfully and assist the Imperial Japanese Army in their endeavor to further the Asiatic Co-Prosperity Sphere. That's what we would do, and we were to work diligently and cheerfully.

Marcello: This was Colonel Nagatomo.

Stone: Yes. That was a great, long speech.

Marcello: I do know that some of the prisoners got copies of that

speech. Do you know how they did that?

Stone: I have no idea, I know we have a copy of that in our museum in Wichita Falls.

Marcello: Evidently, this speech was distributed up and down the line of that railroad or something.

Stone: It could have been, yes,

Marcello: Did you not remain at Thanbyuzayat very long?

Stone: No, I don't think we were there very long. They shipped us out into work camps because Thanbyuzayat was more or less a base camp, a dispersion camp.

Marcello: Do you recall which of the kilo camps you went to first?

Stone: I believe it was the 40 Kilo Camp where I went first.

Marcello: How did you get from Thanbyuzayat to the 40 Kilo Camp?

Stone: We walked, I think. Yes, we marched up there; I'm sure we did. At that time the railroad wasn't built, and there was no other way to get there but walk.

Marcello: Describe that walk because I think this was in the dry season, was it not?

Stone: Yes, yes, I don't know. I can't . . .

Marcello: I've heard it was very, very dusty.

Stone: Very dusty. And there's where the guys . . . I don't know . . . somewhere along the line we lost most of our gear. I remember all I had at that time . . . all I had to carry was my mess kit and canteen, and I think I had a ditty bag or a haversack, and I had one blanket, and I think I had a

pair of shoes. I was wearing a pair of shoes; that's the only shoes I had. And I think I had about two or three undershirts or one or two undershirts and a pair of khaki pants and a khaki shirt. I had picked up an old Dutch straw hat somewhere on Java, and I was wearing this straw hat, green straw hat. That's all the gear I had, and that's all I had to carry on that march.

Marcello: And that's what you had when you went into the 40 Kilo Camp.

Stone: Yes,

Marcello: Describe what the 40 Kilo Camp looked like from a physical standpoint. I assume that when we describe one of these jungle camps, we can talk about any one of them. They were all about the same.

Stone: Right. The only difference was that there was a difference in the terrain where they were built. The first ones were kind of on a level plain, and then farther on we got back up in the mountains,

Marcello: So I gather that the 40 Kilo Camp was at a relatively level location.

Stone: Yes. Of course, they were great, long huts, and everything was built out of bamboo. Over in that country, you utilize that bamboo for everything. You can even eat it; you can wear it. These huts were . . . I don't know how long they were, maybe a hundred yards long, and they were just bamboo huts with an aisle right down the middle. On each side of

the aisle was a platform made out of bamboo slats, oh, I'd say, about two feet off the ground or two-and-a-half feet. The roof was made of what you call atap, and that's just palm leaves. But those natives knew how to lace those things together where they were pretty well waterproof when they were new. But it didn't take them long to rot and deteriorate, and then there wasn't much shelter left. They were open on the sides; there weren't any walls on the sides, just open. Those bamboo slats . . . on the tier that was built is where we slept--on those slats.

Marcello: How much of a space did you have on that slat?

Stone: Well, in some camps we had just enough room to where a prisoner could lay . . . if each prisoner laid on their side, they'd have enough room; but if everyone laid on their back, they wouldn't have enough room because there wasn't enough room for their shoulders to lay flat. When we were packed in there at night, when we were sleeping, why, if one guy wanted to turn over, well, everybody had to turn over at one time. That was our quarters in the jungle, in those bamboo huts.

Marcello: Approximately how many prisoners would be in one of these camps? Again, you would have to estimate this.

Stone: Well, in some of the camps, there was as many as 3,000 prisoners in one camp.

Marcello: Would they be mixed nationalities again?

Stone: Yes, yes, mixed nationalities. Of course, there were only approximately five hundred Americans to begin with, and there were Dutch, and there were English, Australians.

Marcello: But I guess at your end you had mostly Australians and Dutch?

Stone: Yes. It depended on the camp. I remember one camp where I wound up that I was the only American in this camp, and the rest were English and Australians. I don't know what camp that was, but it was somewhere along that line.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that there would usually be a fire going at the end of each one of these huts. Was that usually the case?

Stone: Yes, sometimes there was.

Marcello: Was that for cooking or was that basically to keep the wild critters out or what?

Stone: Well, basically, before the ordeal was over, that was basically for the guys to . . . the fire was to boil the water where the guys could bathe the ulcers on their legs or wherever their ulcers were. But that was one thing--when a guy got a tropical ulcer, he tried to take care of that. He made every effort in the world to take care of that ulcer.

Marcello: That was the number one priority.

Stone: That was number one priority because that thing would spread just like wildfire and just eat you up.

Marcello: We'll talk about those a little later on, but let's talk a little bit more about the 40 Kilo Camp. What other buildings

might there be in one of these camps, other than the barracks?

Stone: Well, we had the cook shack, what they called the cook shack, That's where the rice is cooked, and, of course, there were cooks assigned to do the cooking, and there were wood carriers assigned to furnish the wood to do the cooking with, There were also Japanese quarters--the engineers on the railroad and the Korean guards, We picked up Korean guards at that time, But usually they were on the . . . if there was a road going by, the Japanese quarters would usually be on the opposite side of the road from the prisoners.

Marcello: I assume the Japanese didn't have to worry about building a fence around any of these camps,

Stone: Well, now that's the thing about it now, you see. Any prisoner at any time could escape anytime he wanted to, as far as that goes, but we knew that there was at least a thousand miles of jungle between us and any friendly troops, Also, as I said before, the natives . . . the Japanese put out a reward for any escaped prisoner--that they would pay the natives. Also, there was a guard assigned for each hut at night, and there might be as many as four guards on a hut during a period of, say, two-hour shifts, you see. When the Japanese guards came up there and wanted to know how many men was out of that hut, you had to know. If they had to go to the latrine, you'd have to know how many men were out of that hut and going to the latrine, and

if you didn't know and he found out that you didn't know how many men, then you was in for a little confrontation with that guard. But the thing is, they said that if any prisoner escaped from that hut during the night, every man that was on guard that night would be executed for it, so we knew that if we escaped that there would be at least four men executed because we escaped,

Marcello: Oh, I see. In other words, the prisoners had to furnish the guards for the huts.

Stone: Right, right. The prisoners had to furnish the guards. When I was on guard duty, I told those guys, "Now if you want to escape, you let me know because I'm going with you."
(chuckle)

Marcello: You mentioned that cook shack awhile ago, How was the rice distributed? In other words, would the kitchen detail have to go to a warehouse to get the rice from the Japanese? Is that the way it usually took place?

Stone: Yes, the Japanese had the warehouse, and they controlled the rice, and they would issue so much rice each day.

Marcello: That had to last for all three meals, I assume.

Stone: Yes, right. The cooks would cook it up, and, of course, as I say, bamboo was used for everything, so they'd dump this . . . they had these old iron cauldrons, and our cooks finally learned how to cook that rice. Then they'd get it cooked, and they'd just dump it out in these bamboo baskets, and they

were carried to our hut. Then we'd line up and get our rations.

Marcello: I'll bet everybody watched the distribution of that rice like a hawk, too, did they not?

Stone: Well, I was going to say that I guess the only fight I had in there was over rice. One of our guys came by . . . and they had a wooden paddle, and how much would stay on that wooden paddle is how much you got. Now you could go back for seconds. If there was any left, then you could get some if you was first in line, if you ate yours in a hurry. We had one guy that knew how to do it; he was always the first in line for seconds. But this guy told the cook, "Give me a little more rice." The cook said, "No, get in the seconds line. If there's any left, you can have some." He kept saying, "I want some more rice," I was standing there waiting to get mine, and I said something to him to get his rice and go on so the rest of us could get ours. So one word led to another, and so we tangled there. Stensland was there . . . and everytime the Japs saw two prisoners fighting, why, they'd stop it, and they'd take them up to the front of the guardhouse, and then they'd make them stand there and fight each other. Then when they got through, then the Japanese would jump into it and give them a good thrashing, too, so we tried not to let the guards see us fighting. So Lieutenant Stensland got us around between two huts and let

us finish our fight.' But mostly the fights that took place between the prisoners was usually over food.

Marcello: This is what Ben Dunn says in his book, too.

Stone: Yes, yes.

Marcello: I would assume, also, that working in the cook shack was probably a pretty good detail to be on, wasn't it?

Stone: It was, I suppose. Of course, now they had their problems, too, because they had to take a lot of guff from the Japanese guards. If they didn't do exactly like the Japs thought they should, then they'd get the bamboo pole, you see. But, yes, well, it's only natural that they would have access to the best food. Now I'm not saying that they took advantage of it, but it's just a normal thing that they might eat a little bit better than the average railroad worker.

Marcello: I've heard it said that the crust, the burnt rice off the bottom of the pots, was a sought-after piece of food.

Stone: That was a delicacy. It was real brown right around the edge of that pot. You'd take the white rice out, or supposedly white rice, and it would leave that crust right around the edge of that iron cauldron, and everybody was after that because that was the tasty part of the rice.

Marcello: Evidently, that proved to be rather helpful if you had dysentery, too, wasn't it?

Stone: Yes. You see, if you would let it burn real black, that served as an antacid for an acidic stomach, you see, and

was more or less a medication.

Marcello: Let's talk about some of the work details that took place here at the 40 Kilo Camp. Now you're going to be working on the railroad at this point.

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Work isn't too bad here because, like you mentioned awhile ago, you're still in fairly good physical condition, all things considered, and you were working on level ground.

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, describe one of these work details from the time you get up in the morning until you came in in the evening. Describe one of these work details.

Stone: Okay, when it first started out, of course, this was fairly low country, but we did have some small cuts to make through these hills for this railroad to go through. Everybody was assigned to work there; there was no loafing there. Everybody had to work.

Marcello: What time did work begin in the morning?

Stone: Oh, about daylight. We'd usually eat in the dark, and by the time we get through eating and got everything together, it was just about daylight when we'd start to work.

Marcello: Would there be a roll call every morning?

Stone: Oh, yes. There'd be what the Japanese called a tenko. Now they taught us . . . see, we had to count off in Japanese. If we counted off in English--that'd be the Americans and

the English and the Australians that would count off in English--and then if the Dutch would count off in their language, that was kind of confusing to the Japanese because the English accent was so much different from the American accent. To the Japanese it sounded like a different language altogether, so they taught everybody to count off in Japanese so the Japanese could understand it.

I remember one time I was talking to some of the boys . . . we were split up in what they called kumis, so many men in each kumi, see. Then they had a Japanese that was over this kumi and he was called a kumisho. Then several kumis assimilated together was . . . then the guy that was over that whole assimilation was called a hancho, you know; he was higher up than a kumisho, you see. Anyway, we were split up in kumis, and I was in this kumi. I said to some of the guys, "We're not Japanese." I said, "Let's just count off in English; let's don't count off in Japanese." They said, "Well, okay." So they came down in the . . . and there was about three guys in front of me, and they was counting off in Japanese, and when they came to me, I counted off in English. That guard didn't like that (chuckle); the kumisho didn't like that. Anyway, I finally did count off in Japanese because I didn't want to be the only one that didn't. I didn't want to suffer the consequences of that, so I finally conformed. So I counted off in Japanese. But

that was very confusing to those Japanese when everybody was counting off in a different language,

Marcello: So tenko was first, and then you had a breakfast which consisted of rice?

Stone: Right. Now sometimes we had what we call a stew that was mostly just water. They'd fill up one of these pots full of water, and they might have some ol'--what I call--pie melon, what we call pie melon in this country, ol' green melon, or maybe a little bit of pumpkin. But you would get about a cup of this stew, and if you was lucky you would get a slice of pumpkin or a slice of that pie melon in it. Of course, there was no seasoning in it, just old watery stuff.

Marcello: You're still looking for something to give that rice some flavor.

Stone: Right. It did change the taste of that rice, and anything--anything--that you could put in that rice to make it palatable, you'd do it.

Marcello: Okay, so you have breakfast, and then I guess you're ready for the work detail. You have to walk to the work detail.

Stone: Oh, yes, yes, we'd have to walk.

Marcello: Where did you get your tools--your picks and your shovels? Did you have to bring those back into camp with you?

Stone: Yes, they had what they called a tool house, and we had to carry them and put them in this tool house. It was still

another bamboo hut, but it had a wall around it, you see. We got them out of there, picked them up every morning. In most of the camps that I worked at, we transported that dirt in bamboo baskets, so we'd have to get our picks and our shovels and our bamboo baskets because at that time we were making cuts and fills for that railroad. It was all done with manpower, of course.

Marcello: Some of these cuts and fills, I guess, would be the size of a football field, wouldn't they?

Stone: Yes. After we got higher in the mountains, we had to make deeper cuts and larger fills up to those bridges that crossed those rivers.

Marcello: How much work were you expected to do each day?

Stone: Well, when we first started out, they'd count . . . they'd know how many men they had out there, and they'd measure off a cubic meter of dirt for each man. Well, now that was no sweat because a cubic meter of dirt is not too much dirt to have to move in a day's time. But as the work progressed . . . the main thing was that the Japanese had a deadline for that railroad. I don't want to get ahead of myself here, but as the work progressed, and as the guys began to get sick and die, then the work was doubled up on the men that were still able to work, and that's what made it tough. They just kept doubling up the amount of work that you had to do each day, and, of course, each day your

physical condition was such where you couldn't perform as much work as you could in the beginning.

Marcello: Is it not true, also, that in the beginning men were perhaps finishing up their quota by noon, and then they could come back to camp again?

Stone: Well, that's what bugged the Japs, you see. They'd set us this quota to do, a cubic meter per day, and you'd hurry up and get it done so you could go back to camp. That didn't set too well with the Japs, so they started increasing the quota to keep us out there working, you see. Yes, that's true.

Marcello: And how many men would be working in each one of these little groups? In other words, you would have somebody with a pick and somebody with a shovel and two men carrying the basket, so that was about four men,

Stone: Right, four-man groups. So these four-man groups would have four cubic meters of dirt to move, you see, and the Japanese would stake that off. They'd measure it and stake it off, but sometimes, when they weren't looking, we might just move those stakes in just a little bit (chuckle),

Marcello: Did they ever catch on?

Stone: Yes, once or twice they caught on. Of course, as time progressed, we learned different things to do, and the Japs got wiser, so it was a continual conflict between the prisoners and the Japs all the time to see who could out-smart who.

But that's what would happen a lot of times. But there was a lot of times when they gave you a real tough quota, more than you really should have had to have done, and it probably was hard digging and maybe a long way to carry the dirt. But it didn't matter to them; you had to finish that quota. If it took until midnight, you stayed there until you finished. I remember I was in one detail, and there was an Australian officer the Japs appointed over this group. We were working way late in the night, and we had all gave out, and so we all decided we'd just go on a strike--we wasn't going to do anymore, you see. So these Jap guards didn't like that very well.

Marcello: Now you say Jap guards, but you're really talking about Korean guards, are you not, at that stage?

Stone: No, no, the Korean guards were in camp. They were in the camp. I suppose some of them might have been on the railroad, but when we were taken out of camp, then we were turned over to the Japanese engineers, and they were in charge of us then. But the Koreans were in charge of us in the camps, you see.

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Stone: So this Japanese wanted to know why we wasn't working, and, of course, he put the responsibility on this Australian officer that was over us. He told us to go back to work, and he told that officer to tell us to go back to work. So the officer said to us, "Well, do you want to go back to work, or do you

want to quit?" We said, "Well, we want to quit; we're not going to work anymore." He said, "Okay, I'm with you." So that's what he told the guard, that we wasn't going to work anymore. When he did, he hit him in the back of the head with a bamboo club and knocked him off of that bank. Well, we decided we either had to follow up on the threat and take the consequences or go back to work. We decided we better go back to work, so we finished our job.

Marcello: Was this at the 40 Kilo Camp, or was this somewhere else down the line?

Stone: No, this was somewhere else down the line. I just happened to recall that incident when you was talking about the amount of work that we was having to do.

Marcello: Now what would you do about the noon meal when you were out on the work detail? Would it be brought out to you?

Stone: Yes, a lot of times it was brought from the kitchen out to us in those bamboo baskets by the kitchen detail, you see, and then we'd take a break and have our cup of rice.

Marcello: Usually, how much time would you have for lunch?

Stone: Oh, not over thirty minutes, if that long--not very much time. Of course, the holidays . . . of course, the Japanese don't know anything about Sunday. But we only got a holiday when the Japanese decided that maybe they wanted one, you see. Then they'd take a holiday, which wasn't too often. It was just everyday, everyday.

Marcello: I would assume that this assignment was not necessarily a pleasant task for the Japanese soldiers, either, was it?

Stone: Oh, no, they didn't like that jungle anymore than we did, but they had no choice, the same as we had no choice.

Marcello: What would you do when you came back into camp after getting off the work detail? Suppose you come back into camp in the early evening. Maybe it was one of those lucky days when you get back into camp in the early evening, and it was still light.

Stone: Well, everybody just kept . . . , their main effort was concentrated on how to eat a little better. That was the main thing. We were fortunate to have a Dutch doctor with us, Dr. Hekking, and he told us that there were certain plants in that jungle that were edible, and he showed us which ones were. That's the main thing we'd do if we had a chance and the opportunity and the time. We'd gather up some of these jungle greens, and we'd build a little fire and we'd cook them up--something, to mix with your rice, you know.

Marcello: I guess there were little fires going all over those camps, were there not?

Stone: Yes, just little small fires. I remember one night--it was after dark--and me and three other guys was around this little camp fire, and I had my mess kit and some jungle greens, trying to cook up some jungle greens. We was setting there talking, and, of course, now when a guard comes by,

you was supposed to stand up at attention and bow to him, you see. Well, this guard walked up behind me, and I didn't know he was there. Well, the other guys saw him, and they got up, but I just kept sitting there stirring my jungle greens, trying to get them cooked. I didn't know he was there, and he walked up and he kicked me in the back with his hobnailed boots, and my whole lower body just went numb. I didn't even know he was there. Finally, I got the feeling back in my legs, and I did manage to get back up. But you had to be on guard all the time and watch for those guys because they'd give you some problems if you didn't do what they told you you was supposed to do.

Marcello: Awhile ago I made the observation concerning all those fires that were going. Where did you get matches, or how did you make your fires?

Stone: Yes, that is a good question. It wasn't long until all the matches had been used up, you see, but the natives had a little thing that they used. You'd take a little joint of bamboo and hollow it out, and then they'd take the kapok off of those kapok trees and stuff it down in there. Then they'd manage to get hold of a piece of old steel and a flint rock, and you could use that steel and that flint rock and set that kapok on fire. Then you could start a fire with that. But mostly, there was always a fire going somewhere, either in the kitchen or somewhere, and you could borrow a coal of fire

from somebody to go start your fire with,

Marcello: Now when you're at the 40 Kilo Camp, you're also making these cuts and fills during the dry season, isn't that correct?

Stone: Yes, we started out in the dry season.

Marcello: At that stage I guess the ground was perhaps a little hard.

Stone: Yes, it was. It was hard and dry, and it was pretty tough digging. But we would make those cuts and then carry the dirt to make the fill to the approach to the bridges built across those draws in those streams.

Now the way they made those . . . now you've got to understand that there was no machinery at all; this was all manpower. The Japanese didn't ship anything in there, except they did have two big German-made diesel trucks. They could take the tires off of them, and then the wheels were railroad wheels--they would fit on a track. They used these diesel trucks to pull these little cars with up and down there after we got the track laid. There was one or two camps that they had two little Caterpillars that they'd gotten off of the British somewhere, and outside of that, that was all the machinery that I saw.

Marcello: How about elephants?

Stone: Yes, a lot of elephants. They had a lot of elephants, and they put them to work. I know that when they got ready to build those bridges across these big rivers, they would take these elephants and go out in there. Of course, all

the timber in that country was hardwood, teak and that, and they'd cut these big logs, and the elephants would drag them out of the jungle up there. These trees would be maybe two feet, two-and-a-half feet in diameter that they made these pilings out of for these bridges. They would sharpen the small end to be driven in the ground, and they would drill a hole in the top end where about a one-inch steel rod could be put in there. Then they had a bell-shaped weight, and it weighed something like, I would guess, 500 pounds. But first they'd build a scaffold across these bridges out of poles, and they'd tie them together with bark and stuff like that and make a scaffold across there first. Then they would drag these logs out of the jungle with the elephants.

There was one old bull elephant that had long tusks there, and the other elephants, the female elephants and the others, would drag the logs up there. They'd unhitch from the logs, and this old bull elephant was standing there, and he would stick his tusks under these logs and wrap his trunk around it, and he would stand back and he'd pick that log up and toss it up on the scaffold up on top of that bridge. That was his job. He'd stand there all day tossing those logs up on that bridge. There was no telling how much they weighed, but he could toss them up,

Marcello; Now I assume that the elephants were controlled by natives,

Stone: Yes, I understand that when a native kid is about six years old, he's assigned to an elephant, and that's all he does all of his life, is work that elephant. That's all he has to do, and that's the only master that that elephant has.

Marcello: Did you ever actually lay any of the tracks on the railroad, or drive spikes?

Stone: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! No, I'm sorry. I have loaded ties and cross-ties from one train to another. At one time I was in the camp that did that.

But these elephants that you were talking about, there was one native that was riding this old elephant, and he didn't have the hook like most of them do to guide the elephant. He had a great, big, long parang, a knife. When he wanted that elephant to turn, he'd just take that old knife and stick it in his ear and make him turn, you know. He was really rough on that elephant, and he beat him on top of the head with that old knife, and his head was just beat all to pieces. One day that old elephant reached around with his trunk and grabbed that guy and threw him to the ground, and that elephant took off out in the jungle. He just went berserk, I guess he'd taken all he could take.

I know the Japs got mad at one of the elephants--he wasn't doing what they wanted him to--and they shot him. They shot him in the guts with a rifle. Well, it didn't kill the old elephant. They just kept working him for about

a week or two, and he finally died. He was out there along the track rotting and decaying. One night one of the Japs came up there and got one of our guys and got an axe and took him down there, and he was going to make that prisoner chop those tusks out of that elephant because he wanted those tusks. Boy, that was a messy job!

Marcello: Awhile ago you were talking about supplementing your food. Did you ever resort to cats, dogs, snakes, and things of that nature?

Stone: No, I never had a chance. I would have if I'd had a chance, but I didn't get a chance to catch a dog or a rat or a cat. Talking about supplementing your food, now the Japanese allowed . . . those old oxen, when they got too old and wore out to pull those carts, then the Japs would let us have them to butcher, say, one ol' ox for 3,000 people, you see. Well, that wasn't too bad because it did give that stew a little bit of flavor, you know.

We didn't waste a thing--ate the ears, take the intestines, strip the offal out of it, and cut them up and boil them up. There wasn't anything wasted. When they cut their throat, they'd catch the blood, and you could boil the moisture out of that blood, and it looked like liver, and it tastes about like liver. But there wasn't anything wasted about any animal.

I remember during the rainy season at one of those

camps--I think it was the 114 Kilo--we had some old oxen out there in the pen, and one night about three of them died. When you cut into those things, there'd be big, ol', long, white worms between the stomach. You know, they were just full of ol', long, white worms. But three of them died, and the Japs said we could have all of them--every one of them. So the cook out there--Ray King was our cook--and he took some guys to help him skin those dead animals. But, of course, by the time they got them skinned, the old green blowflies had blown, and maggots were crawling all over them. But they went ahead and cut them up and put them in those pots and started boiling them. Those maggots came to the top, and he just took an ol' dipper and just dipped those maggots off and poured them out on the ground. We had a lot of meat. We had a lot of meat that time, and we ate pretty good that day.

Marcello: Talk a little bit about the Korean guards in these camps. Describe their conduct.

Stone: Well, (chuckle) they were pretty tough--some of them were. Some of them were pretty tough. I know that in one of those camps we had an ol' Korean they called "Liver Lips," and he was pretty big. He was pretty big, and he was tough; and he was always going around looking for some excuse to beat somebody up, and he usually found it. That just seemed to be the thing that was prevalent at all times, is that

somebody was always getting a beating. Now when the Japs started into one of those huts, into one end . . . of course, the Australians started this, and if somebody saw one of the Japs come in the hut, the Australians would say, "Red light!" Then they'd just pass it right on down to the next guy, all the way down to the end of the hut. The last guy down on the end knew that there was a guard coming through that hut, so he had to be on his toes and pay attention to what he was doing. He'd be ready to stand at attention and bow to him when he came by. Now, it wasn't the fact that we couldn't have taken any of those guards at any time, but it was the consequences that we knew that we would have to suffer if we did because there was no chance to escape from that place that we could figure out, any of us.

Now we reorganized later on. During the . . . when the British and the Americans began to make a push from India down into northern Burma, somebody had gotten rumor or word, maybe through the radios or something, that they were beginning this push. So we had organized with a certain amount of men assigned to the tool house to go grab the picks and the shovels and storm the Japanese guardhouse, and the others were assigned to carry the sick that couldn't walk. We were going to make a break for it when the time came, but the opportunity never did come. Finally, along toward the last, there wasn't enough well men to carry the sick, much

less storm the guardhouse,

Marcello: I guess you had names for all these Korean guards, didn't you?

Stone: Yes, yes, they had names for them. I know that one that kicked me in the back looked like he had an expression on his face like he was crying all the time, and we called him the "Crier." Of course, "Liver Lips" had great big, thick lips. Yes, we had nicknames for all of them.

Marcello: I gather that even the Japanese held these Koreans in contempt.

Stone: Oh, yes! Yes, they did. They thought they were a low class of people, and, of course, the Koreans held us in contempt. So there you are, just pass the buck right on down the line.

Marcello: Once more, I guess it's best just to stay as far away from those guards as you can.

Stone: That's right. You'd stay out of their way. Now I know that there was one guy who got pretty close to one of those Jap guards that could talk pretty good English. He got to be pretty good buddies with him until he was getting a little bit of extra food. This Jap was giving him a little bit of extra food. Well, for some reason or other, the Jap got transferred or the prisoner got transferred to another camp, and this prisoner wrote this Jap a note--tried to get it to him some way or another. But the other Jap got hold of this note, and in this note the prisoner said, "Well, when you get to be my prisoner, I'll treat you the same way you've been

treating me." Well, that was just too bad that he did that because those other Japs got hold of that note and found out about it, and they took that guy up on the hill, and they just about killed him. There was three of those guys with a bamboo pole, and they worked him over something terrible.

Marcello: It seems to me that for a long time this particular individual to whom you were referring was held in a great deal of contempt by the other prisoners.

Stone: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! Anybody that fraternized with the Japanese guards was . . . in the eyes of most of the prisoners, it was wrong. Yes, we held them in contempt. Now I remember one of the sailors, a machinist's mate off of the Houston, in one of the camps he got to working in the Jap garage where they worked on those old trucks. They had a few old trucks, and that's where the Caterpillars were that I mentioned before. But the Japanese didn't know anything about those Caterpillars. Those "Gats" had a little two-cylinder gasoline engine that you cranked up, and then you engaged it with a diesel engine to start the diesel engine. Well, they would crank this little gasoline engine up and engage it, but they didn't know how to start the diesel engine. But they'd get up in the driver's seat and put that thing in the lowest gear that it had because that was the only gear that that little engine could pull it in, and it would just barely creep. This Jap

says, "No good! No good! No speedo!" He didn't know that you was supposed to crank this big engine to drive the tractor with.

But anyway, this guy was working up there, and, of course, he knew I was a mechanic in the Army. He said, "Why don't you come up there. I can get you a job up there working on those 'Cats' and on those trucks." He said, "You get a little better food. They'll give you some better rice." The Japs always ate a better grade of rice than what we did. I said, "I wouldn't go up there and help those guys for anything." I said, "Now if you'll tell me how we can get some dynamite and go up there, I'll help you blow them up, but I sure won't work on them. I don't care if they ever get them running or not." That's the way I felt about it, and that's the way most of the guys felt about it.

There were a few individuals that, you know, would just do about anything to get better food and better treatment.

Marcello: The Japanese were paying you a wage somewhere along in here, too, weren't they?

Stone: Yes, they were. They was paying us ten cents a day. Of course, that was Japanese invasion money, and there wasn't anything in that country to buy with it. So the best use we found for that money was to split those little ol' ten-cent bills and make two out of them and use them for cigarette paper when we could trade for some of that ol' "boong" tobacco.

We called it "boong" tobacco. It looked like seaweed soaked in a little bit of nicotine.

Marcello: I've heard it referred to as "wog" tobacco, too,

Stone: Yes, yes, "wog" or "boong." It looked like seaweed, is what it looked like.

Marcello: Was there a payday when the Japanese would distribute this money?

Stone: Yes, When did they pay? Every ten days, I believe. I believe that's right. But this was money that they had printed in Japan. They knew they were going to invade that country, and they bailed it up just like bailing hay, and they distributed out ten-cent notes, ten-yen notes. As I say, that's all it was worth, is to make cigarette paper out of it because there was nothing to buy and nobody to buy it from.

Marcello: In other words, while you were building this railroad, you really weren't close to any native towns or villages or camps or anything like that.

Stone: No, the only natives we saw were . . . well, the Japanese made prisoners out of them, and there was a lot of natives that worked on that road, I know we occupied a hut that the natives were moving out when we were moving in. Of course, when we went to a place, we always went out there and dug a slit trench and put bamboo slats on it for a latrine, but those natives didn't do anything like that.

When they got ready to go, they just stepped outside the hut, and when we moved in there, the whole area around that hut, you couldn't step without stepping in human dung. Flies was just swarming like bees all around this place, and that's where a lot of your disease comes from,

But there were a few natives . . . now I remember one time that me and ol' Grover Reichle was on the wood detail, and we was furnishing wood for the kitchen. Well, the Japs gave us an axe and an old two-man crosscut saw, and we was sawing that old hard teakwood and splitting it. We had a rice sack with two bamboo poles ran through the corners like a stretcher, and that's what we carried the wood in.

Okay, when we went out of the camp . . . they had a guardhouse there, and we had our wooden tags with our numbers on them, and we had to stop and bow to the guards and report that we was going after wood. So we'd go out there, and if we had any kind of clothing--I don't care, a skivvy shirt or a pair of shorts or anything that we could scrounge that anybody had left--and if we could contact any native out in the jungle, we could trade with him. But that was strictly forbidden for us to have any contact at all with the natives by the Japanese. So we had to be real careful when we was trading with these natives. But maybe some of the guys in camp would have a skivvy shirt left, and he'd give it to us to go out there and trade, and whatever we traded for he'd

split with us, you see. It was kind of a risky job when you're trading with those natives. Anyway, that's what we'd do.

They had what they called . . . those natives made a kind of a brown sugar out of palms, some kind of palm juice or something, and we called it shintagar. It was real sweet, or it did taste sweet to us at that time, and that was a real delicacy if you could get a hold of it. The only way we could get it was to trade with the natives, you see.

So Reichle and I had made a trade or two, and we'd put it on the bottom of this old stretcher, and then we'd pile wood on top of it, and that's the way we would get it by the guardhouse. Well, sometimes those guards would make us stop and dump that wood to see if we had anything, and then we'd have to load it back up. We was taking a chance every time we tried to smuggle anything in the camp, or out, even.

But I remember one time we saw this ol' native out there in the jungle, and we was sawing away at that old crosscut saw. We had a skivvy shirt; somebody had given us a skivvy shirt. Reichle says, "You watch for the Japs, and I'll go trade him a skivvy shirt for that shintagar." They had it wrapped up in palm leaves; that's how they wrapped it up. So he slipped out there, and I was watching for the guards, and this old native had that package of shintagar out there.

Old Reichle gave him that skivvy shirt, and he grabbed that shintagar, and that native took off out through the jungle. So we hid that under a log, you know, and kept sawing the wood. When we got ready to go back in, why, we put it on the stretcher, put the wood on top of it, and hauled it in. They didn't make us dump it; we got inside with it.

Man, we run over there in that hut by our bunks and started unwrapping that stuff, and all it was was just a hunk of dirt (chuckle). So I kid ol' Reichle today about that real estate that he owns in Burma (chuckle). That native was smarter than we were--just a hunk of dirt.

Marcello: How long were you at the 40 Kilo Camp altogether? Were you there very long?

Stone: It didn't seem like we were there too long because we didn't have a whole lot of work to do. As I say, it was more or less level terrain, and the cuts weren't very deep.

Marcello: And from there did you go back into the jungle farther, or did you go back toward Thanbyuzayat to the 26 Kilo Camp? Do you recall?

Stone: As far as I recall, we kept going deeper into the jungle, I know I was in the 80 Kilo Camp, and I believe I was in the 105 Kilo Camp, 104 Kilo Camp, and I think the 114 Kilo Camp.

Marcello: Where were you when the "Speedo" campaign and the monsoons

had started? Do you recall which camp you were in?

Stone: I believe it was about the 80 Kilo Camp where I was when it started.

Marcello: Okay, I think it was in May of 1943 when the Japanese were behind schedule on the completing of this railroad, and so they initiated this so-called "Speedo" campaign, which, of course, meant more work for the prisoners.

Stone: More work, yes.

Marcello: Unfortunately, the "Speedo" campaign and the monsoons coincided, and at the same time you were getting farther and farther back into that jungle. Like you mentioned, you were at the 80 Kilo Camp. First of all, describe what it was like working in the monsoons.

Stone: Okay, that was . . .

Marcello: Are you still out on the road?

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: You're still on the road.

Stone: Yes, I'm still working on the railroad. Of course, all of that dust during the dry season turned to mud, and so you was slogging around in the mud. By that time my shoes had just deteriorated altogether, and I didn't have any shoes. That was the condition of most prisoners, so we was going barefooted at that time. I'd taken my khaki pants, and I'd cut the legs off and was wearing the shorts. They eventually wore out, and then all I had left was just the legs, and I

made what we call a G-string or a loincloth out of the legs. That's all I wore. I still had this old straw hat that I'd brought there with me, and that's all I had on, was this straw hat and a G-string. That's the way I worked, and that's the way everybody was at that time.

Marcello: And it's cold, too, was it not, in the monsoon season?

Stone: Oh, yes. Well, most guys only had one blanket apiece. That's all I had, was just one blanket. Especially higher in the mountains, it got cold, especially at night. You would just freeze to death at night. It would rain . . . it would just rain day and night, and the water would just start running through those old huts. Of course, you was up off of the ground, and you didn't have to sleep in the water. But when you got out of your hut, then you'd just step off into that water that was just running through the hut. It was cold, and sand gnats and mosquitoes would eat you up.

Now I remember that during the worst rainy season that we had, this particular group that I was with had built part of the railroad and were extending it farther on up in the mountains, and they would bring up the crossties and the rails on the steam train. Now we would have to unload the crossties and the rails, and then we'd back these little diesel trains up, and we'd have to load them on these diesel trains to go farther up the track. In one camp that was our job, is to load and unload crossties and rails.

Marcello: Now this is not at the 80 Kilo Camp where you were for your "Speedo" campaign.

Stone: No, this is farther up the jungle. I think it was the 104 Kilo. But at the 80 Kilo Camp, why, we were still making cuts and fills for the railroad.

Marcello: Well, what is it like to make cuts and fills in that monsoon season?

Stone: Well, it was just a matter of slogging in that mud and carrying that mud and crud and making those fills.

Marcello: It would seem to me that no sooner would you be making one of those fills than the monsoons would wash it back out again.

Stone: Well, that's what happened a lot of times. We'd build those bridges, and then those ol' rivers would get up and just wash them away, and we'd have to rebuild them.

I remember one time a bridge washed out, and the train couldn't cross. But they had to get supplies farther up the track, you see, so they brought one train up to the washed-out bridge, and they had another train on the other side. Now our job was to unload the supplies off of this train (gesture), carry it across that old make-shift foot-bridge that was made across there, and load it on the other train across the river. I remember that they had a big wash there that the water was coming down, and so they just threw a lot of poles in that wash so . . . and the Japs had some natives with some ox carts there trying to haul that rice,

and they would make these old oxens go across this ol' pole bridge. I can remember their hoofs would go down in the crack between those poles, and they'd just tear the dewclaws off of their hoofs, and they'd just bleed. The Japs would be just beating them and trying to make them pull that ox cart across there. They were just as cruel to animals as they were to human beings--they had no mercy for anything--but I suppose they had to do those things for the furtherance of the war effort. I suppose that's the way they looked at it. You know, in wartime you have to do a lot of things that would seem to be cruel in peacetime.

Marcello: How did the attitude of the Japanese and Korean guards change in this particular period, that is, during the "Speedo" period?

Stone: "Speedo" period, yes. Well, they just kept getting tougher; they just kept getting more and more hard to get along with. Well, they was trying to get more work out of us, and they just had to get tougher with us. Of course, I'm sure that their attitude wasn't too good because they had to live in that country, too, you know.

Marcello: Did the beatings become more frequent?

Stone: Yes. They would even go out on the job, and if you wasn't working fast enough, they'd have to start beating on you.

Marcello: How long were the work days during the "Speedo" campaign?

Stone: Well, a lot of them ran way into the night. As I say, when they gave you that quota and they kept increasing the quota

and the able-bodied men began to diminish, your work details would continue way on into the night until you got your quota filled.

Marcello: When this occurred, that is, when you worked way into the night, was your meal still waiting for you when you returned to camp?

Stone: Yes, the cooks had it for you; they had it waiting for you when you got there. You had your quota of rice.

Marcello: Was it here at 80 Kilo Camp that the health really started to deteriorate? Is this when it occurred?

Stone: Yes. Yes, that's where I noticed that it began to deteriorate, and guys began to get dysentery and began to get malaria. Then, of course, malnutrition was taking its toll, and the guys were getting skinny, and their faces were all drawn and gaunt, and their legs were just skinny.

Marcello: How was your condition holding out here at the 80 Kilo Camp?

Stone: I was in fairly good shape at that camp. The 104 Kilo Camp is where I began to lose my health.

Marcello: Did you take dysentery?

Stone: No, I had diarrhea and I had malaria.

Marcello: How do you distinguish between dysentery and diarrhea?

Stone: Well, diarrhea is just a running off of the bowels which everybody had from eating that old, dirty, filthy rice.

Marcello: But what was the dysentery like?

Stone: Dysentery is a germ. Now when you get dysentery, then your

bowels move about every thirty minutes, and all you can excrete is pus and blood. That's an infection that infects your bowels, and unless you get medication there's very few guys that lived when they got dysentery.

Marcello: What did you do for that dysentery? What kind of medicine could you get there in the jungle possibly?

Stone: Well, none that I know of. I had dysentery when I got back, and I know how I was treated after I got back, but there was none of that kind of medication in the jungle at all.

Marcello: How about the eating of charcoal?

Stone: Well, that was good for diarrhea, yes. That was good for diarrhea because it would slow down your gastric flow.

Marcello: In looking down that roster--the names of "Lost Battalion" people that Crayton Gordon has compiled--it seems to me as though most of the deaths were caused by dysentery,

Stone: Yes. Well, it was almost fatal if you contacted dysentery. That's why I said earlier that I would not drink any water that wasn't boiled. Now I did have about a quart tomato can with a bailing wire deal that I carried with me all the time. When I'd come in at night, I'd boil my water, and I'd fill my canteen; and then I'd boil another can of water, and then I'd drink it; then I'd boil another can of water and hang it up for in the morning. I never drank one drop of water that I didn't boil.

Most Americans were the same way, but I had seen the

English go out there and belly down to those ol' filthy, polluted streams and just drink right out of them, and they were just dying just like flies. But the reason that so many Americans came back is on account of their hygiene that they practiced while they were in there--the best that they could.

Marcello: Another one of the big killers, obviously, was the tropical ulcer.

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: Did you have any of those?

Stone: Yes, I had one when I was on the railroad and when we were moving rails and crossties.

Marcello: Describe what those tropical ulcers were like.

Stone: Okay, I walked around the end of the rails, and I just nicked my ankle on one of those railings and just broke the skin. That's all you had to do, is just break the skin, and those tropical ulcers would start. But I was very fortunate that this one healed before it spread too far. It did get pretty deep, but I kept doctoring it and doctoring it, and it eventually healed over. But there were a lot of the guys that couldn't get their ulcers to heal. Their ol' flesh would just rot away.

I know that Glen Self, one of the boys in our outfit, had one on his leg, and it ate all the way down to the bone, and it went almost from his ankle to his knee. Dr. Hekking,

that Dutch doctor that we had with us, there was three different times that he was prepared to cut Glen's leg off with a handsaw. He already detailed a number of guys to hold him down while he cut it off, but he just couldn't bring himself around to cutting his leg off. But Glen did everything in his power to take care of that ulcer. I remember Dr. Hekking told him to go out to the latrine--of course, the latrine was just working those ol' maggots all the time--and get the maggots and put them in that ulcer, but be sure and count them and know how many he put in there. Those maggots ate that ol' pus and that ol' rotten flesh out, and then he'd pick the maggots out. But Glen was continually, constantly taking care of that ulcer, and that's the only thing that saved his leg, was because he was so diligent about taking care of that ulcer,

Marcello: Earlier you mentioned that there was water constantly boiling for treating these ulcers, also. What would you do with that water? Would you soak rags in that water or what?

Stone: Yes, you would boil the rags in that water and then sterilize them, and then you would wash these ulcers out with those rags, you see, and try to clean them out the best you could and just keep putting hot water on them. You'd soak the rags in the hot water, and you'd put it on that ulcer just as hot as you could stand it, you see. That would help heal it, bring the blood to it to help heal the ulcer. Some of

the guys that . . . well, I know you had to scrape that pus out a lot, you see.

Marcello: Who was it that developed that scraping technique? Was it Hekking or Bloemsma? Or did both of them use it?

Stone: I don't know. I believe it was the other doctor. Dr. Hekking didn't . . . well, I think Dr. Hekking was one of the best doctors that ever lived as far as tropical diseases, and all of us owe a lot to Dr. Hekking. I don't know which one developed that technique.

Anyway, as clean as you could keep those ulcers, the better it was and the more chance they had of healing. But I know Glen suffered an awful lot with that ulcer of his, and he was just fortunate that he didn't lose his leg. There were a lot of prisoners that the doctors had to cut their leg off just to save their lives, and then a lot of times that didn't do the job.

Marcello: Yes, I was going to say that I don't believe that very many of the amputees made it through.

Stone: No, there wasn't a lot of them.

Marcello: How did you manage to heal your tropical ulcer?

Stone: Well, by the same technique--just kept hot water on it, kept it clean, and kept hot water on it. Evidently, my system or my condition was a little better than the average, but my . . . well, it just healed up before it ever got too big. It was on my ankle, right on my anklebone.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that when you saw one of these forming that it just struck your heart with terror?

Stone: Scared you to death, yes, because you knew what was coming. You saw it everyday, and you saw what they were. If you ever saw one of those ulcers developing, why, then you knew that you was in for a siege of it.

Marcello: How about malaria? I guess everybody had malaria.

Stone: Well, that's when I had my hardest time, and I owe my life to Ray King, our cook. Well, I developed malaria and I had chills and fever for fourteen months straight--all through that period. Well, when guys would get so sick and they couldn't leave the camp . . . well, the Japanese would tell the Korean guards that they had to have so many out on the working detail, and so it didn't make any difference to the Koreans, just as long as they got that many men out there, because they was obeying the Japanese orders. If there wasn't enough able-bodied men to work, well, then the sick had to go out, and a lot of times we had to carry them out. Now when the Koreans got the workers out on the job, then it was up to the Japanese to do what they wanted to do with them--get the work out of them if they could--because the Koreans had done their job, you see. When I had this malaria so bad, I remember laying . . . I don't know how I got there, but I remember laying out on a pile of crossties all night long and too sick to even stand up. It was raining on me

all night long, and how I got back in camp, I don't remember that, either. But I do remember laying up in that bunk, and I didn't care whether the sun came up or not.

Marcello: That was bad, too, wasn't it?

Stone: Yes. And I was delirious half the time, and in a coma, a semi-coma, for I don't know how many days that I never even got out of that bunk. But I can vaguely remember Ray King coming up there, and he had a little ol' cup of broth that he'd boiled some meat or something, and he wanted me to drink that broth, I felt like if I had to eat anything I'd just vomit, you see, but he forced me to drink that broth. He came up there and he forced me to eat until I finally regained consciousness and knew what was going on. Then I started forcing the food down and finally came out of it. But that was the worst period of my time as a prisoner-of-war.

Marcello: And you mentioned that you had malaria for how long? Did you say for fourteen months?

Stone: For fourteen months, fourteen months.

Marcello: And when you say you had malaria for fourteen months, that means you were alternating between chills and fever?

Stone: Right. You'd have chills and fever one day; the next day you'd be all right; and then the next day you'd revert back to chills and fever again. Now you had to work during all these periods, you see, when you had that.

Of course, I'm no doctor, and I don't know this, but . . .

I don't know if this is true, but if I recall, Dr. Hekking said if you could survive malaria without it killing you for a period of time, your spleen and your liver would . . . your system would finally become immune to malaria. He said it might leave your spleen or liver damaged. But you would not have chills and fever. Now I guess that's what happened to me. After a time I didn't have anymore chills or any more fever. So if you can survive it, then your body will become immune to chills and fever.

Marcello: In your past few comments, you mentioned several things I think we need to pursue a little bit farther. You mentioned awhile ago that the Japanese gave the Koreans a quota of manpower that had to be out on that railway. Now the doctor might initially determine that a particular group of prisoners were unfit for work, but it was the ignorant, peasant Korean guard who ultimately decided. It didn't make any difference what the doctor said.

Stone: Right! Oh, yes! No, it didn't make any difference what the doctor said, In fact, if a doctor made a decision . . . now the doctor was really . . . of course, he tried to keep the sickest guys off the railroad, but if that didn't meet the quota, then he was due for a beating himself. They punished those doctors because the doctors were trying to protect the sick people. The doctors caught a lot of punishment from them. No, it was the ultimate decision of the . . .

it might have been the lowest rank of the Koreans that would make that decision.

Marcello: When you were sick, that is, sick enough to have to go to the hospital hut or shack or whatever you wish to call it, what did that mean if a person had to go there?

Stone: Well, that meant that you was so physically disabled that there was no way in the world that you could do any manual labor. You could be of no use at all to the Japanese as far as building the railroad.

Marcello: Theoretically, the Japanese felt that those that were too sick to work shouldn't be getting full rations, either, is that true?

Stone: Oh, yes! "No workee, no eatee!" That was their philosophy. If you didn't work, you didn't get anything to eat. The sick guys wasn't supposed to get anything to eat. Of course, since our guys were in charge of the chow, the food, after it came into camp, why, of course, they tried to give the sick guys the best of the deal. If they had a little extra broth or something like that, the sick guys got it.

Marcello: I gather nobody wanted to go to a hospital hut.

Stone: No! I didn't want to go to any hospital hut. In fact, I don't think I did. I stayed right in the labor camps all the time. I wasn't put in a hospital hut, but I have seen those hospital huts, and I have seen guys in there. You could see a guy laying there, and he looked about like a skeleton--

just a skeleton with some skin stretched over him, you see. Of course, I couldn't see myself, but I can imagine how I looked at the time that I was delirious with this malaria because I had seen guys exactly like me right beside of me, and they would just look like a skeleton with the skin stretched over them.

Marcello: And I've heard that hospital huts just stunk to high heaven. Is that right?

Stone: Oh, yes! Well, to get ahead of myself a little, talking about the odor, I remember we were shipped on a train into Bangkok, Thailand, and all the Thais were lined up to see us. When we unloaded off of that train, they all held their noses and walked away. That's the first time that I realized just how we did smell. Yes, it was a terrible odor and a terrible sight to see.

I know there was an Englishman that had escaped the Japanese in Burma, and he'd been hiding out, but they discovered him. I guess maybe one of the natives turned him in and collected a reward or whatever. They brought that guy to our hut, and they'd make him eat raw rice. They tied a rope around him, and they'd throw him out in the river. When he was just about ready to drown, they'd pull him out; and then when he revived a little bit--he'd swallowed a bunch of that water--then they'd throw him out again. They didn't drown him, but they did bring him back in and put him

in the hospital hut. He died right there because his belly was all bloated up from all that raw rice he ate and that water he swallowed. It just swelled him up, and he died right there in that hospital hut.

Marcello: You actually saw that.

Stone: I saw that guy.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that you had malaria so bad that you didn't care whether you lived or died, and you may recall that I mentioned that that was a bad state to get into, also.

Stone: Yes, yes, that was a bad state.

Marcello: What happened when a prisoner gave up?

Stone: Well, he usually died. He usually died. But that was the only time that I can recall that I did give up. I had no energy. All I wanted to do was just lay in that sack, and I didn't care if the Jap guards come around and beat me, which they'd do a lot of times. If a guy was sick, and he couldn't get out to work, they'd just come through that hut with those bamboo poles and just start beating on those guys because they wasn't out working. And I didn't care. At that time I had reached a point that I didn't care what they did to me.

Marcello: How could you tell when a guy had given up?

Stone: Well, he usually just didn't care. He didn't eat. He didn't want to eat. When he lost his appetite and didn't want to eat, then you knew that he was pretty far gone.

Now I had a good buddy of mine, ol' "Swede" Ecklund, and he took dysentery. He was in a bunk by me, and he got so bad that he couldn't . . . about all the strength that he had was to get up out of the bunk and go to the latrine and then come back, and that had to be about every thirty minutes. That was day and night that he did that. But I'd go by every morning before I went to work and ask him how he was feeling, and he'd always say, "Oh, I'm feeling fine." You know, that was always his answer.

Well, I walked by one morning, and I said, "How are you doing, 'Swede?'" He said, "I fooled them last night." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I didn't have to go to the latrine last night." So in his own mind, he didn't have to have a bowel movement, and he laid right there in that bed, and he crapped in his bed all night because he didn't have enough strength or enough sense of mind to get up and go to the latrine. And the next day he was dead.

Marcello: By this time you've got to be living from day to day.

Stone: Right, right. You were just living from day to day. I know that you could work right beside a guy and go to bed with him that night and wake up the next morning and he'd be dead. You'd wonder, "Am I going to be the next?" I don't know how many guys that we buried at that 114 Kilo Camp because that was the roughest of the group that I was with.

Marcello: Describe what the burial details were like.

- Stone: Well, we'd just take a guy and wrap him up in his blanket. The Japs designated this burial ground right up on a rocky hill, and the prisoners had to dig the grave, and it was tough to dig a grave in that rock, so we wouldn't dig any deeper than we absolutely had to. And we just wrapped the guy in his blanket and put him in this little ol' shallow hole and covered him up. We had a guy that could play the bugle, and he had a bugle and he'd blow "Taps." All during the day, why, you could hear "Taps" blowing. Either the Australians or the English or the Americans were up on that hill burying somebody all the time.
- Marcello: How were the graves marked?
- Stone: Well, I don't know if they had any distinction. I didn't see any that were distinctly marked. Maybe an old wooden cross stuck in the ground is all I ever saw. Now I did hear that some of the guys did carve the guys' names on the cross.
- Marcello: Is it not true, however, that the locations of these burial grounds were plotted?
- Stone: You mean for future references?
- Marcello: Yes.
- Stone: Yes, I understood that they were plotted, so in case that they wanted to recover the remains, they'd know where they were. I didn't have anything to do with that. I was just on the working details.
- Marcello: How bad were vermin in these camps? I'm referring to lice,

bedbugs, rats.

Stone: Lice, bedbugs, and rats! Well, the rats weren't too bad where I was, but the lice and the bedbugs were bad. Now the bedbugs would get in those bamboo slats that we slept on--just by the millions! And the lice would get in your clothes, in your blankets. This old straw hat I wore all the time--I don't know how I managed to keep that thing all through that--the bedbugs would get in the sweatband around that thing, and they'd come out in the daytime and eat on your head..

Now in the dry season, when the sun was shining hot, we could take these bamboo slats off of these frames, but it had to be a cooperative thing or it wouldn't do any good. Everybody had to take their slats out and turn them upside down out in the hot sun, and then it would just bake those old bedbugs, you see. Now if everybody did that at one time, it would certainly send the bedbugs out for a little while, anyway. It wouldn't eliminate them; there was no way you could eliminate them. But it helped send them out for a while, and that's what we would do, the Americans especially. It would be a cooperative thing, and we'd take all of our slats out at one time and get the bedbugs out of them.

You could take your blanket out and lay it flat on the hot ground in the hot sun, and you could see those ol' white lice just start crawling out of that blanket. Then when

they got out in that sun, they'd just turn brown. That sun would just cook them. That's the way you'd delouse your clothes and your bedclothes.

Now you could do that in the dry season when the sun was shining, but in rainy season you couldn't do that. You just had to put up with them.

Marcello: How about rats? Were they much of a problem?

Stone: Not where I was. I didn't have a whole lot of problems with rats. Some of the other guys seemed to think they had some problems with rats, but I didn't.

Marcello: Under these circumstances, what part does religion play in your daily life? I'm referring to the circumstances that you were in here at the 114 Kilo Camp or the 80 Kilo or the 140 Kilo Camp.

Stone: Well, I'm sure that it affected different guys in different ways. Are you asking me specifically or the group?

Marcello: Well, let's start with you specifically. Do you become more religious under those circumstances?

Stone: Personally, I don't think . . . not for me. Now it might have other guys, but not me. No, I didn't become more religious. You would think that under those conditions a person would or should, but I didn't.

Marcello: Is the buddy system still at work here? Are cliques still in operation?

Stone: Yes. Oh, yes! Oh, yes! It sure is!

Marcello: Who were the people with whom you buddied at this point?
Again, I'm referring to this low point of your POW career,
if we can call it a career.

Stone: Well, it was most of the guys that I was close to all along.
In other words, it was the guys out of C Battery because
I was more closer to those guys than I was to the guys from
F Battery. It just seemed like the guys that transferred
from C Battery over to F Battery was a little bit closer than
they were to the guys that were originally in F Battery.
Those were the guys that I buddied with. If you're asking
for names, I can give you names.

Marcello: Yes..

Stone: Okay, James Morris, Glen Self, and Jay Hoover, and . . .
yes, well, now Claude Thomas and I . . . but Claude Thomas
and I were separated in Singapore; he went to Japan and I
went on up into Burma. But it was Glen Self and James Morris
and Jay Hoover. Those were the guys that I was closer to.

Marcello: And this was one of the essentials for survival, was it not?

Stone: Oh, yes, we had to take care of each other. I mean, if one
guy was so sick that he couldn't wait on his self, then his
buddy took care of him. The next time, well, his buddy might
be sick, and then he'd have to take care of his buddy. Yes,
it was a matter of survival that you had to have some help
from the other guys. But I got my help when I was the sickest
from Ray King, who was a cook, but he was also from Lubbock

and from the C Battery. But he did everybody that way because if he found a guy that had given up or couldn't get out of his bunk, he made a special effort to see that he got extra food to try to get him back on his feet.

Marcello: How hard was this period affecting the Japanese? In other words, they had to work during the monsoon season, also, and I would assume that their rations got a little shorter. Not nearly so short as yours, but I would assume they got shorter.

Stone: Sure, sure. You're right because that tropical jungle is hard on man or beast. Sure, yes, their tempers got short, and their problems increased just as much as ours. When you build that railroad and you go to all that effort and build those bridges, and then the water comes down and washes the bridges out, you know, then you got to do it all over again. That was their responsibility, you see. Sure, their tempers got short trying to get more work out of the prisoners.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were at the 104 Kilo Camp. I do know that at the 105 Kilo Camp there had been an outbreak of cholera. Do you remember that?

Stone: Yes, I remember that one night there was . . . yes, I remember that. One guy had cholera, and they put him down there in an isolation hut by his self, and they took all of his clothes and all of his bedding and piled it out on the ground and set it afire and burned it. Now, let's see, was that cholera

or smallpox? No, that was a smallpox case. No, I don't remember the cholera, no.

Marcello: At one point--I believe it was in September of 1943--they formed a "hospital camp" back down at the 80 Kilo Camp. Do you have any knowledge of that so-called hospital camp?

Stone: Yes, I knew about it. I wasn't in it, but I knew about it.

Marcello: Evidently, whenever anybody was sent down there, it was strictly to die.

Stone: Yes, that's right. That was a death camp, and that's why I did my best to stay out of it. I didn't want to be sent back down there. Yes, when you was sent back down there, why, then you was supposed to be so bad that you couldn't recover.

Marcello: During this period in the jungle, what did you do in terms of shaving, haircuts, and that sort of thing?

Stone: Well, we had what we called a barber--Maston Rea was his name--and he had a pair of scissors, and he did all of ours. But we paid him our Japanese yen that we collected, and we'd pay him. If there was ever anything to buy, why, you know, he ate pretty good--if he could buy anything, if there ever was anything to buy. For shaving, why, I didn't have anything to shave with. I grew a beard mostly. I had a beard most of the time that I was a POW.

Marcello: Would you want to have as little facial hair as possible because of the bedbugs and the lice and so on?

Stone: Oh, yes! With the bedbugs and the lice and all the other vermin that crawled in your beard, you didn't want to have any more hair than you needed. But I did have a beard a long time because I didn't have any way to shave. Rea did have a straight razor--the Japs allowed him to keep his straight razor for that purpose--and I would get a shave every once in awhile. He'd shave me every once in awhile.

Marcello: How did you care for your teeth?

Stone: I didn't have a toothbrush. I don't know what happened to it.

Marcello: Did you have any make-shift toothbrush?

Stone: I didn't. Now I know some of the guys hung onto their toothbrush, and they guarded it with their life. If you had a toothbrush and you wanted to sell it, there was always a sale for a toothbrush. It didn't make any difference how secondhand it was, you could sell a toothbrush. But I don't know what happened to mine, so I wound up without a toothbrush.

Marcello: I know a lot of guys would chew a twig and use the bristly end of the twig to brush their teeth.

Stone: Yes, yes, yes, that's true.

Marcello: I assume that if you felt you needed to take a bath, you went to the nearest stream if one was close by.

Stone: Well, during the rainy season, you didn't have to take a bath--that was a continuous thing. But in the dry season, there wasn't very many places that you could take a bath.

Now every once in awhile we'd get to a river, a big river, and sometimes the Japs would let us go down there and bathe in the river. But as a regular bathing routine, you didn't have one.

I remember that the Dutch used water to clean themselves, and the Americans didn't. So one old guy was out there at the latrine, and he had a little old stick about six inches long and smaller than a pencil, trying to clean himself. And this Dutchman said to me, "Now wouldn't it be a lot better if you just used some water to wash yourself?" He said, "How is he going to get himself clean with that little old stick?" I said, "Well, he's really not trying to clean himself; he's just smearing it so it'll dry quicker." (chuckle)

Marcello: Between October of 1943 and January of 1944, they started moving prisoners out of the jungle because the railroad was in the final stages, and ultimately it was also completed during that period. Do you have any idea as to when you actually get out of the jungle?

Stone: I don't know what time it was. I remember that they shipped us down into Thailand after the railroad was completed.

Marcello: Did you go by train?

Stone: Yes, we went by train--by slow train.

Marcello: What did you think about riding on this railroad that you'd just completed, knowing how it was constructed?

Stone: When we'd start to cross those great, big, high bridges over

those big rivers, it was a little scary because I didn't know if they was going to hold up or not.

Marcello: Now most of those big bridges had been built by the British, hadn't they?

Stone: Well, down on that end, yes. But, you see, like I was saying awhile ago, the way we built those bridges . . . I remember very distinctly, and I was on this crew that did it. The elephants would pull those logs out of the jungle, and we'd sharpen them on one end. They'd drill a hole in the top and put this steel bar in this hole, and this just bell-shaped weight that we had had a hole in the middle that would slide over that steel bar. Of course, they had this pole scaffolding up there. Now they would hang two pulleys, one on each side of the heavy weight. They'd tied up to the scaffolding and run a rope through each pulley and tied it to this big iron weight. The rope came through the pulley, and down at the other end of this rope there would be smaller ropes coming out--spider-leg-type thing--and I don't know how many ropes but maybe there were eight or ten on each side. Then the prisoners would get hold of these small ropes, and in a cadence count they would all pull and raise this big weight up and then drop it. That's the way they drove the pilings for those big bridges. That's how they built those bridges, which, I guess, was effective. I'll have to give the Japanese credit for building a railroad

that the British wouldn't even tackle, wouldn't even survey. But the Japanese went in there and built that railroad through that jungle with nothing but just plain manpower and ingenuity.

Marcello: Okay, when you got out of the jungle, you mentioned you were going down into Thailand. I assume you're still down with malaria.

Stone: Yes, yes. Yes, I was still having malaria. I was feeling a lot better than I was at one time. I'd began to feel a little better, and I could get around pretty good.

Marcello: Where did they send you? Where specifically? Was it Kanchanaburi or Tamarkan?

Stone: Kanchanaburi, Kanchanaburi was where the bridge was across the river, and the anti-aircraft guns were right next to camp.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about Kanchanaburi because, compared to what you had had up in the jungle, it was a pretty nice camp, wasn't it?

Stone: Yes, we got down into Thailand where the food was a little better, and it was a little more civilized. Naturally, our food became just a little bit better. We got a little more pumpkin and melon in our stew, but our rice was the same.

Marcello: And there was even a canteen here, though, wasn't there?

Stone: Now I don't remember that. Now are you talking about this canteen where we could go and spend our Japanese money?

Marcello: I guess that's what it was.

Stone: Yes, that's what it was. Well, that's what it was. Now you could buy maybe a duck egg. You could buy a duck egg for maybe a week's wages.

Marcello: Eggs were precious commodities, weren't they?

Stone: Oh, yes. Well, I remember back in one of those camps back on the railroad where I was the only American in that camp. How I wound up that way, I don't know. But the Australians took me, and they more or less adopted me, you see. That's where I learned to play chess. One Aussie had whittled out a chess set and they taught me how to play chess. I had some good friends among those Australians.

Marcello: How long had you been back at that camp in the jungle with the Australians?

Stone: Oh, I was there several months, and I remember they had a clean-up detail in that camp one time, and I was on the detail to clean up the camp. There was a lot of old rotten bamboo baskets, and so I just started picking these baskets up and throwing them over the back and into the river.

Well, they had a British sergeant major there, and he was in charge of the detail. He yelled at me and said something about throwing those baskets over there, and I told him that he could shove it where he wanted to. You know, the British are very regimental, and he didn't like me talking to him like that, so he put me on report to the British

officer in charge of that camp. He put me on report, so they was going to have me court-martialled. And I told those Aussies, "I'm not going to have anything to do with it. I'm not even going up there." They said, "Well, you better or you're going to get in trouble." I said, "I don't know what much more trouble I can get in."

But they talked me into going up there in front of the British officers. I went in and I told him, "In 1776 we already settled this issue, and I have nothing to do with you. If you want to punish me, just turn me over to the Japs because I'm having nothing to do with you!" So I turned around and went back to my hut, so they fined me. They put a fine on me. We was getting about two eggs a week, and they fined me one of my eggs. Well, the Australians divided their eggs with me, so I didn't have to go without eggs.

Marcello: I've heard a lot of guys say that there was nothing tastier than to take an egg and break it over that rice and mix it together.

Stone: Right. Oh, eggs or bananas. You haven't eaten a banana until you've eaten a tree-ripened banana. Eggs and bananas, they were really good.

Marcello: Well, tell me a little bit more about this camp that you were in with the Australians. It sounds kind of interesting since I've never run across anybody else that was in that situation?

Stone: (Chuckle) Really? Really?

- Marcello: Well, like you say, you were the only one in that camp.
- Stone: Yes, I was the only American in that camp, and those Australians just adopted me, you know. They was always gathering around me. They knew I was from Texas, and they called me "Tex." They was always wanting me to tell them my experiences down through the years when I was growing up in Texas. I guess I furnished a lot of entertainment for them.
- Marcello: What sort of work were you doing in that camp?
- Stone: Well, we were making an approach to the bridge and making cuts through the mountain. Moving dirt, that's what we were doing at that time.
- Marcello: It's interesting how you got assigned to this camp as the only American. It's rather strange, I would say.
- Stone: I don't know . . . I don't recall how I got in it, whether I was transferred there or whether I was left there when the other Americans were moved out. Now there's a possibility that I was left there in this camp when the other Americans were moved to another camp, but why or for what reason, I can't recall.
- Marcello: What sort of physical condition were you in while you were here?
- Stone: At that time? That was along toward the earlier part, so physically I was able to go out on work detail everyday. My physical condition was pretty good.
- Marcello: Let's start talking about Kanchanaburi once again, since this

is where you went after you left the jungle. I gather that they also eased off in terms of work details and so on here.

Stone: Yes, there wasn't as much to do. There wasn't as much work to do after we got back down into Thailand, but at this Kanchanaburi, if I'm right on the name of this camp, there was a big steel bridge across the river.

Marcello: Concrete and steel bridge, yes.

Stone: Yes. That's where we camped--right beside of it. The Japanese had an observation post on a big, high hill over there, and there was a detail of prisoners that went out of camp each day to carry water and food up on this hill to these Japanese,

There were three antiaircraft guns in revetments right beside of that camp. So our officers complained about those antiaircraft guns being so close to that camp, and the Japanese said we should be grateful that the Japanese furnished those antiaircraft guns there to protect us from those planes. But they weren't much protection.

Now I remember we had a pretty strict discipline in that camp because we'd have to go out on the parade ground--what they called the parade ground, which is the British word for assembly ground--and we'd stand there for hours at a time at attention. I don't know how many searches we had of our huts at that time. I don't know what the Japanese thought we had in there because we'd just come out of that jungle

with nothing. I don't know what they was going to find, but they searched it, it seemed like, everyday while we was standing out there.

Marcello: Were there any air raids occurring while you were here at Kanchanaburi?

Stone: Oh, yes, but not in that particular camp while I was there. But there were air raids all over that part of the country. They were coming in there, and I know they was using those old Liberator planes at that time, and you could hear those things way in the distance at night. You could hear them way in the distance, and then they'd be getting louder and louder. It seemed like at about five-minute intervals they were bombing targets in that area--bridges mostly.

Marcello: But they never actually did bomb Kanchanaburi while you were there?

Stone: Not while I was there. But I was sent . . . I think I went back up in the jungle to rebuild some bridges or something, and while I was in that jungle, then they did have an air raid on that camp, and I think there was one American that got killed in that camp. I'm not real sure.

Marcello: That's back at Kanchanaburi?

Stone: Yes. I know the guys that were there, and we all heard the story, of course. But while I was there, I know that the planes . . . one evening we was out on the parade ground. It was just almost sundown, and the first thing we knew there

was a flight of those planes that came right out of that sun, real low on the ground, and they flew right over that camp. Of course, everybody was scared. They thought that this camp was going to be bombed, but they didn't drop any bombs at that time. They just flew right over it real low, and when it was all over, there was an empty Juicy Fruit chewing gum package laying out there on the ground. It had fallen out of one of those planes. Now that was something to see--an empty Juicy Fruit gum package laying out there on the ground (chuckle).

Marcello: What was your reaction when you found it?

Stone: Well, that was quite a thrill to see that.

Marcello: Did these air raids help your morale?

Stone: In a way they did. We knew that those raids had to come if we was going to win this war, that those planes had to be active, but it was frightening because we knew that it was a possibility that we could be bombed by our own planes.

Marcello: How did the attitude of the Japanese change, if it did change, as a result of these air raids? Could you detect any change in the attitudes of the Japanese?

Stone: Well, yes, there was a change. I can't say exactly how it was, but I know when we were in the jungle and the Japanese was winning the war, why, they were all hopped-up. At different times we got to talking to the guards, the ones that could understand a little English. In other words,

we got to where we could communicate with the Japanese in a little bit of English, and we picked up a few words there, and we could communicate. We were talking to one Jap one time about . . . he had been in China. He was a seasoned soldier, and he'd fought in China. We were asking him about the different nationalities, about how good fighters they were and everything. We asked him if the Chinese were good fighters, and he said the Chinese were good fighters--that they were assigned three men to a rifle, and if the rifleman got killed, another one was there ready to pick it up and start fighting with this rifle. We asked about the British, and he said they were no good because they ran--they wouldn't fight. I think that proved to be true in Malaya when they ran out of Malaya and ran down on the island of Singapore, and all got captured. We asked him about the Americans, and he said he didn't know about the Americans because he'd never fought the Americans. Of course, I know we're getting off the subject, but I happened to think about this incident where we was talking to this Jap guard.

In the earlier part of our internment, they knew they was winning the war. They knew that they were going to win the war because they were number one. Of course, every Jap knew the word New York and knew the word San Francisco, so they just delighted in getting around and telling us that the Japanese had bombed New York or San Francisco. The way

this one in particular would explain, that is, that he'd say, "New York, ka?" That was a question for us. This word ka was a question to them. In other words, he was wanting to know if we understood what he meant by "New York." We'd say, "Yeah." He's say, "Nippon ko-ki." That's what they call their airplanes. He'd make this motion with his hands (gesture) that the Japanese planes flew over New York and bombed New York. Then he'd say, "San Francisco, ka?" We'd all acknowledge that we understood, and he'd say the planes flew over San Francisco and bombed San Francisco. One of the old boys from Jacksboro, he said, "How about Jacksboro?" He said, "Jacksboro, yeah! Ko-ki! Boom! Boom! Boom!" And one of the other ones said, "How about Shithouse?" "Shithouse? Yeah! Nippon, boom! Boom! Boom!" (chuckle) We would have a lot of fun out of that.

Anyway, along about that time, when those planes was coming over when we were in Kanchanaburi there, they began to realize that things weren't going their way so good, and so their attitude did change. But I couldn't tell if it changed for the better. If anything, it changed for the worse. Of course, these were all American planes, and they had American markings on them, and so they began to get a little bit tougher on the Americans at that time. We were their targets when they came in with a blitz.

Marcello: I gather that here at Kanchanaburi there were some rather

flourishing black market activities going on. Do you recall or know anything about any of those?

Stone: No, I don't know but just what I heard. I know some of the guys were slipping out of camp at night and contacting the natives of that country and doing a little black market trading. Now where in the world all of this clothing and stuff came from, I have no idea because I know I had gotten rid of everything I had except my straw hat and my G-string. I don't know where all of this stuff came from, but there was a certain amount of black market activity going on.

Marcello: At this point, they were moving some of the prisoners back to Japan. What did you think about the idea of going to Japan?

Stone: Well, I didn't think very much of it.

But back to this work detail in that camp, while I was in the jungle, they had bombed that camp, and they knocked out one of those antiaircraft guns and killed a lot of Japs. But I think there was only one American that got killed. Now I don't know if he was an American, but, anyway, he was a prisoner. But they killed a bunch of Japs.

Okay, what they did, they moved those remaining guns away from camp and back up to this observation post that I mentioned before. I was moved back down to that camp later on, after it had been bombed. So they moved those guns away from camp, and it was our detail--and I was on this detail

for several days--that had to carry the food and water to these Japs up on this hill. That was a real steep climb, and I remember that was a tough detail because in our condition it was hard to climb that hill with that food and that water. Also, we had to go down to those antiaircraft guns and take all the old camouflage off, pile it up in a pile, and cut new brush, and re-camouflage those antiaircraft guns.

Well, everyday there was a reconnaissance plane that came over just about at noon, and I believe old Ben Dunn mentioned it in his book, and the Japs called it a "go-look-see-come-back-seekie plane." That's what they called it. Anyway, it was a reconnaissance plane, and we knew and had enough sense to know that they were taking pictures, and there was no way in the world they could keep from seeing this pile of old dead brush growing everyday. But evidently the Japs didn't understand those things. They didn't have any concept of what aerial photography was, and they didn't seem to pay any attention to that. Everybody dreaded that detail because they knew that that position was going to get it one of these days, and whoever was out there on that detail was also going to get it. That was a dreaded detail each day.

But in the meantime, those planes was coming over at night, and you could hear them coming. You got to where you could hear those things when they weren't even audible, you

know; your senses got that sharp. We didn't know if our camp was the target or not.

Marcello: In the meantime, had you built slit trenches or anything like that for this contingency?

Stone: Yes, the Japs allowed us to dig slit trenches alongside the huts, and we could get in those slit trenches. But we could see some of the targets. The first plane would come, and he'd drop a string of bombs, It might be a bridge, one of those bridges. Then he would drop his flares for the next plane, and the next plane would come, and he could see from the flares. When he dropped his bombs, then he'd drop a flare for the next plane. Sometimes you could hear them coming and bombing on their mission, and then they'd come back over. That would last for sometimes two hours, it seemed like, at a time. As long as the first plane went over the camp, then we realized that our camp wasn't the target, but we never did know when it was going to be our target,

But I remember one day there was an ol' lone Liberator came through there, and I guess he just had one bomb left. He came by that bridge, and he come in real low, and he dropped that bomb, and it slid right under that bridge. That plane was so low that the bomb didn't have time to nose down, and so it didn't explode. It just hit flat under that bridge and didn't explode. That was quite a commotion

around there. They had to call in the Japanese bomb squad and defuse the thing.

But after they bombed some of those bridges, then they took all this party from this camp to go over there and build a footbridge across that thing. We couldn't build the old steel structure back, but we had to build a footbridge across that thing so they could cross on foot. While we were all over there on that detail, then those planes came in that evening and hit those antiaircraft positions again and dropped incendiary bombs, and it wiped them out. There wasn't a prisoner in there when that happened, so I had to lay that on to some good spy work on our part because the Thais were really on our side. Although the Japanese had the country occupied, we had a lot of friends on our side in that country.

Marcello: Awhile ago we were talking about that fear of going back to Japan. Did you and your buddies ever talk about that?

Stone: No, I didn't have any idea at any time that I would go to Japan. Now I do know that they shipped some of the guys out, but that must have been while I was back in the jungle that they shipped these guys out. I don't remember them being shipped out, but I know that after I got back, why, some of them had headed toward Japan. But they only got as far as Saigon in, at that time, French Indochina.

Marcello: Evidently, they had a lot of entertainment here in this camp at Kanchanaburi, too, didn't they? Do you recall any

entertainment there?

Stone: No, I don't recall any of that entertainment there.

Marcello: How long were you at Kanchanaburi altogether?

Stone: Well, I think I was there two different times. We were there quite awhile, but I don't know the exact time. I'd say it was maybe a month or two, maybe longer.

Marcello: And where did you go from Kanchanaburi then?

Stone: Well, they moved us back in the hills somewhere, and I don't know the name of the camp. The Japanese were digging caves back in the mountains, and that's what we were doing--digging those caves and reinforcing them with logs. They was prepared to make a stand in that country; they was expecting an invasion of that country.

Marcello: Let me throw out some names to you and maybe you can tell me where you were located at this time. Does Nakhon Pathom mean anything to you?

Stone: That sounds familiar, yes.

Marcello: Or another one is Nan Pladuk.

Stone: Nan Pladuk.

Marcello: Rat Buri? Phet Buri?

Stone: Rat Buri, Phet Buri, yes, those names are familiar, but I can't place where they were. Yes, I know I've heard those names before, but I can't distinguish which one of those camps that I was in. We built an airport back there somewhere, and I don't know the name of that camp.

Marcello: Well, I know there was an airport built at Nakhon Pathom, and there was also another one that was built at Phet Buri.

Stone: Well, maybe it was Phet Buri where I was. I know how we built that airport, which I guess it was a pretty good airport when we had it done, but it took a lot of work. I know it was a rock quarry there, and we had to go up there and quarry the rock out and break them up in pretty good-sized boulders to begin with. We laid the base by hand. We placed those rocks in there by hand, and then when we got the big rocks in, then we had to break them up to real small rocks, say, about a three-quarter to one-inch aggregate and fill in on the cracks in that. When we got that done, then we had to go out and dig up sod to put on top of that. It was a grass runway with a rock base. There's where a lot of guys got ulcers, too, breaking those rocks and those rock chips going into their legs, breaking the skin. They started getting ulcers there.

Marcello: Now all through this period, had you ever received or had you sent any mail?

Stone: Yes, I think three different times in the jungle . . . I believe it's . . . yes, I'm sure. Three times when I was in the jungle, the Japs gave us a little printed card, a form-type card, that we could send home. We could put our name down, and it said, "I am working," and you could check that, or "I'm not working," and you could check it; or "I

am working for pay," or "I am not working for pay," and you could check that. It was just a form thing. I think I sent three of those different cards all the time that I was incarcerated.

Marcello: How long were you working on this airfield at this particular camp?

Stone: Oh, it seemed like it took three or four months to get that thing finished.

Marcello: Were there very many people working on this airfield?

Stone: Yes, a lot of prisoners--a lot of English, a lot of Australians, Americans. I don't know the exact number, but it took a lot of people to get that job done.

Marcello: Had you recovered some of your health by this time?

Stone: Yes, I had because, as I say, we were back down in civilization, and the food was a little more plentiful because the Thais were pretty prosperous people to be an Asiatic people. They were good farmers, and they raised a lot of vegetables. We were getting a little more food, and our health began to improve quite a bit. I have always said that I could have taken anything that the Japs dished out to me in the way of punishment or work if they'd just fed me. That was the thing that hurt us most, that we were just starved.

Marcello: Are your Korean guards still accompanying you to these other camps?

Stone: Yes, they were still with us.

Marcello: Many of the same ones?

Stone: Many of the same ones that were in Burma. They accompanied us down there to those other camps.

Marcello: Are you harboring any grudges against these Koreans, that is, if and when you get out of this thing, are you hoping to take out some sort of revenge on any of these guys?

Stone: Well, I did at that time. Of course, I've lost a lot of that now, you know. But at that time I figured if I ever met one of those guys we'd have it out right there. Yes, I'm very resentful even today. I'm resentful.

Marcello: When you were working on this airfield or airstrip, did you ever run into OSS activity, Office of Strategic Services?

Stone: Yes, yes. Yes, I remember one time--I remember this very well--we were all sleeping in these huts in one of those camps down in Thailand. It was the eclipse of the moon, and I remember that very distinctly. We heard a plane, and when we heard that plane, somebody woke up and raised up. When you rattle those bamboo slats, it makes a noise when you move them. Some guy sat up and woke the guy next to him up, and he sat up and it was just like a row of dominoes all down that hut--just a noise where the guys was getting up off of those slats. It woke the next hut up, and they started all getting up. It was just a din of noise all through that camp. The Japanese started yelling and screaming and hollering, and they was running out there, and they

grabbed their machine guns, and they set those machine guns up around that camp and instead of pointing out, they were all pointing in toward the camp.

But this plane circled for, it seemed to me, like about thirty minutes during that eclipse of that moon--real dark. I knew something was going on, but I didn't know what. But I found out later that that's what they were doing, is dropping those OSS troops in there by parachute. I know one of the guys a little later on was on a cow-herding detail, taking the cows outside of camp to graze, and he didn't come home that night. I found out later that he had been contacted by these SS troops, and he went with them.

But it was in one of those camps that I saw one of those Thais tortured to death by the Japanese. I was in this hut, and I don't know whether I was on a sick detail or what, but I heard a noise out in the back of the hut, and I looked through the crack of that atap, and there was about three Japs out there that had this native on his back on a bench, a bamboo bench. They had a cloth over his mouth and his nose, and they were pouring water on him. They had his hands tied together under that bench. They'd pour water there for a while, and then they'd take the cloth off, and the guy'd cough and spit and get his breath, and then they'd jabber. I'm sure they were interrogating him. Either the guy didn't know the information that they wanted or wouldn't tell, but

they drowned that guy right there on that bamboo bench. That was right after this was happening, the eclipse of the moon and that airplane flying over, and evidently they had caught one of those guys and were trying to get some information from him about what was going on.

Marcello: Were there other Americans in this camp with you, that is, where you were building the airfield?

Stone: Oh, yes, yes.

Marcello: Was Ben Dunn or any of those people with you here? Do you recall?

Stone: Now I don't remember him specifically, but I just know that there was Americans. I can't recall any particular man that was there with me, but I know that there were Americans in that camp.

Marcello: In any of your travels, did you ever go to Saigon?

Stone: No, I didn't get to Saigon at all.

Marcello: Where were you when the war ended?

Stone: Well, I was in this camp where we were digging those caves back in those mountains and lining them with logs. I don't know the name of it.

Marcello: Was this still in Thailand?

Stone: Yes. I remember that's where we were when we were liberated. That was the place where they had that old horse cavalry. The Japs had some old horse calvary in there, and they'd been feeding those old horses corn. They'd go down this

road that we walked down to go to work, and these old horses would eat that corn, and a lot of the grain wouldn't digest, and it'd pass through them whole, and guys would go along picking this corn up and take it into camp and boil it up and eat it. I remember that. But that's where I was when we were liberated.

Marcello: Okay, let's describe the end of the war and your ultimate liberation. Again, you're not sure exactly which camp you were in when this took place.

Stone: No, I don't know the name of it. It was in Thailand somewhere.

Marcello: Describe the events leading up to your liberation. Go into as much detail with this account as you can.

Stone: Each day we were lined up and counted and marched out on this working party back in the hills. We had to march down this road, this dirt road. That morning we lined up, marched out of camp, and we got about halfway to the working site, and here comes a Jap on a bicycle, coming up from the rear. He passed the column, and he went up to that Jap guard that was leading the column, and he started jabbering and jabbering. We couldn't understand what he was saying, but we could tell he was really excited. He got all the other Jap guards excited, and eventually they turned us around and marched us back in camp and dismissed us. We knew that something was going on, but we didn't know what. So we stayed around there all day, all the rest of that day, not

doing anything, which was a treat because we didn't have to work, you know. We knew something was going on, and all kinds of rumors were flying around, but we got to where we didn't believe any of those rumors, anyway.

Anyway, the night passed and the next morning they called us out, lined us up for tenko, counted us, and we got ready for work. Of course, our hopes fell then because we figured we was going to have to go back to work. Then the Japanese officer in charge of that camp got up on a platform they had built there, and he spoke pretty fair English, and he told us that the war was over. He said the war was over, that there wasn't going to be any more war, that they were still responsible for our welfare, and that we still had to be guarded in that camp. They had orders to . . . that they was going to be held accountable for all the prisoners and that nobody would escape that camp.

Boy, everybody went wild! Everybody threw their old hats in the air and yelled and screamed, and the English started singing their national anthem. Well, when they got through, none of us could sing our national anthem, so we sang "God Bless America" (chuckle).

Marcello: Evidently, the English also rolled out an English flag, did they not? Somewhere along the line, didn't they have a flag?

Stone: Yes, and we had a flag somewhere. I don't know where it came from, but somebody'd made a flag. Yes, they unfurled their flags, and I don't know where they came from. I have no idea. Of course, I found out later that some of our guys had sewn one together. I believe it was that night that they scrounged up enough material, different colors, and made a U.S. flag. I don't know who did it, but it came from somewhere.

Marcello: What kind of celebrating could you possibly do other than whooping and singing and that sort of thing?

Stone: Well, I'll tell you, there was no more inside roving guards after that. The guards were all on the outside of the camp, and they weren't anymore on the inside. The guys went crazy, I don't think anybody slept that night. Boy, we built fires, and we just celebrated--just sat around and talked and tried to figure out what was going on and everything like that.

Marcello: At this stage are you beginning to become a little impatient as to when you're finally going to get out of here for good?

Stone: Yes. We began to get a little bit impatient, and some of the guys thought about breaking out of camp and taking off, but they didn't know where to go or where to contact anybody. As far as I know, nobody left that camp.

But I remember the day they marched us out on that road.

Our walking days were over, and so they marched us out on that road, and we waited for those old Japanese trucks to come and haul us into Bangkok. While we were lined up on the side of that road waiting for those trucks, those Japs was coming down out of those hills, and you never saw a more dejected bunch of soldiers in your life. They were trudging, and their heads were hanging down. They still had all their arms, but I understand they had orders to take all their arms into Bangkok and pile them in a big park there.

Marcello: Nobody was teasing or taunting these soldiers, I guess.

Stone: Yes, they were.

Marcello: Oh, they were?

Stone: That's where I got apprehensive about the whole thing. One guy by the side of me said, "Oh, yeah, you yellow-bellied sons-of-bitches, what do you think about it now?" I said, "Man, you shut up!" I said, "One of them guys might understand English, and he might turn the machine gun loose on us." I said, "Well, it's too close now! Don't say anymore!" I was a little apprehensive about that because I didn't know what they'd do. They still had their arms, you see.

Marcello: So when do you finally meet the Americans?

Stone: Okay, they came and loaded us in those trucks, and we was going down this old dirt road, and the column stopped and there was the OSS officer who came out of the brush and

was talking to us. That's the first American that I had seen, and he was a sight for sore eyes, I'll tell you. He was sure good to look at. He was the one that was giving the orders to the Japanese and what to do to us.

Marcello: And what happened at that point?

Stone: Well, what happened at that point? Well, all I know is that we continued on into Bangkok, and I guess the OSS troops had been in there for quite awhile. As I say, I think that the Thai government was on our side, and they were doing a lot of spy work for us in that area. So they took us to Bangkok, and they put us in some barracks there, and that's the first Red Cross supplies that I had seen. They had them stacked in those warehouses just by the boxes and the boxes, and I understand the Japanese had been using a lot of them themselves. They gave us new khaki clothes, and they started giving us those Red Cross rations, and we really began to eat.

Marcello: It doesn't take too long to put on weight, does it?

Stone: No, it doesn't. Now you take guys at our age, you know, we could assimilate that food and utilize it, and you began to fill out and you feel a whole lot better, you know. The ones that weren't so . . . well, the ones that were severely sick had already died, anyway. No, it doesn't take too long to put that weight back on if you get the proper food.

I remember that twin-engine plane coming down--I think

it was a B-25--and I believe this guy was a major who was flying that plane . . . well, we could see those planes flying up in the air circling around, and this plane came in, and he landed on that airfield. He had .50-caliber machine guns bristling out all over that thing, and he came in and turned around and was ready to take off because evidently they didn't know if the Japs had really surrendered there or not. But these C-47's were still circling around overhead, and evidently this major saw that everything was all right, so he radioed for those other planes to land.

Of course, the British officers were all lined up there ready to go, and they asked this major, "Did you blokes come after us?" He said, "Hell, no, we came after the Americans!" So when those C-47's landed, why, then us Americans started piling on, and we took off. That was my first plane ride ever in my life, and I was glad to get on that plane.

Marcello: So where did you go from Bangkok?

Stone: Well, we went to Calcutta, India.

Marcello: To the 142nd General Hospital?

Stone: Yes.

Marcello: What kind of care did you get when you went there?

Stone: Oh, that was just like paradise! Boy, we had those bunks to sleep in and clean, white sheets and a shower . . . we could go take a shower. They took all of our clothes, what

clothes we had on, and destroyed them and gave us some new ones.

I'll never forget my first meal at that place. I lined up in the chow line, and they had those ol' red beans and roast beef, and I just filled my mess kit full. I went down there and went to eat it, and I took about four or five bites, and I couldn't eat anymore. I had to go dump that in the garbage can, and that was the hardest thing that I ever did in my life, was dump that food out in that garbage can. But I just couldn't eat it--too rich.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get back a full appetite again?

Stone: Well, I really didn't get a full appetite until I got back to the States, really.

Marcello: What food did you crave more than any other while you were a prisoner?

Stone: Sweets, sweets. I craved sweets all the time.

Marcello: Did you get very many of them here at the 142nd General Hospital?

Stone: Oh, yes. We had anything we wanted. We could have anything that we wanted there.

Marcello: Also, I gather some of the prisoners were surprised when they saw their first WAC.

Stone: We sure did. I don't know who set this up, but they had a dance for us one night, and they had all these WACs there. Boy, now that was something for sure. That was a sight for sore eyes, to see all those pretty girls. That was really

something.

Marcello: I understand there were constant parties going on all the time here at the 142nd General Hospital, Is that correct?

Stone: Yes, yes. That's true. As I remember, I was back in the kitchen, and I don't know what I was doing. But I had cigarettes; they'd issued us cigarettes and everything. I walked back there, and I was just looking around. I was looking at everything I could see, and they had a lot of those Indians working in the kitchen. I pulled out a cigarette, and one of those Indians asked me for one, and I gave it to him, and when I did, boy, all the rest of them just swarmed me, and so I just gave them the whole package and let them divide it.

No, I wasn't in on any of those parties. I did go downtown once or twice to look around and see what those people were like.

Marcello: I gather at this stage of your Army career, most of you weren't ready to take orders from anybody. Is that correct?

Stone: Well, that came later on. For me, it was after I got in the States. I finally woke up to the fact that I wasn't ready to take orders from anybody, and I got in a little trouble on account of it after I got back in the States. No, the guys were pretty wild; they got pretty wild.

Marcello: So you ultimately get back to the States. Do you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life once you finally get out?

When did you officially get out of the Army?

Stone: Well, okay, when we flew out of Calcutta, we went to Casablanca, and there they put us in this airport. They put us in this little room, and they had this . . . I guess you'd call it closed-circuit TV--the first one of those things I'd ever seen. But we sat down there, and they gave us a lecture on how to put our "Mae West" on, what they called a "Mae West." It was a life jacket, a life preserver. We was fixing to fly over the water. They gave us that instruction, and we boarded those . . . I forget the name of that plane. Anyway, it was a four-engine transport plane, and we left there and we stopped in the Azore Islands and refueled. Then our next stop was Newfoundland, and then we came from there to New York. My plane, the old plane that I was on, came to New York.

When we landed there, why, then they took us out on Ellis Island in New York to a hospital. They had a hospital there, and there's where they discovered that I had dysentery. The way they check for that, you pull your pants down and bend over, and they run this glass tube up, you see. Somebody accused those sailors of going back for seconds, but I don't know if that's true or not (chuckle). That's where they discovered that I had dysentery, and I stayed in that hospital for, oh, I guess, two or three weeks.

I did get one pass and a partial pay, and me and one

of my buddies conned a couple of those little Red Cross worker girls to take us over to Manhattan and show us the town. I drew \$75 back pay, and I was really going to have a time, but the night was half over, and then all that money was gone. What a surprise that was to me. It took so much money to do anything.

But they shipped me . . . they put me on a train . . . when I left there, they put me on a train, and it took about a week for that train to get to Temple, Texas, and I went into a hospital there, and they started treating me for dysentery and my other ailments. It was mainly dysentery, but I remember I was pretty sick for a long time in that hospital.

This is what I say, if we had not dropped those two bombs and that war had lasted another thirty days, I don't know if I'd have gotten back or not because, as I say, I was real sick for a long time. But they had some good doctors down there. I was in that hospital for a year after I got back.

Marcello: Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life once you got out of the service?

Stone: Oh, I don't think I had any special problem adjusting to it. I do know one thing: if there was anything I wanted, I got it because, as I mentioned to you before, I don't remember ever depriving myself of anything as long as I

could afford it. And I really don't ever intend to.

Marcello: As you look back upon your experience as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as being the key to your survival? Why is it that you came back and other guys are still over there, so to speak?

Stone: Well, number one, as I said before, we were all in the prime of life, and during that one year's training in Camp Bowie and those Louisiana maneuvers, we were all at peak physical condition. Well, it was my will to live, I suppose.

Marcello: Other people would have been in peak physical condition, too, but they died.

Stone: Well, that's true, that's true.

Marcello: But I think the will to live is something that probably was a greater factor.

Stone: I tried to keep out of all the conflicts that I could with the Japanese. I avoided them as much as possible. As I said before, I know I didn't get as many beatings as some of the other guys did because I avoided it as much as I could, and I had just as little to do with them as I could. I know some of the other guys that tried to make friends with them and everything like that, but I didn't want to be friends with them. I avoided them as much as I could.

I just never had any idea at all that I would never get back. Just that one time that I had malaria so bad was the only time . . . that was closest I ever came. But

other than that, why, I just always knew I was going to get back some way or other. I just had that will to live, that's all I can lay that to.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Stone, that exhausts my list of questions. I want to thank you very much for having participated. You've said a lot of very interesting and important things, and I'm sure that scholars will find your material quite valuable when they use it to study this topic.

Stone: Well, it's been a pleasure to do this interview.