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Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Eldridge L. Rayburn
(Signature)

Date: 1-16-80

Oral History Collection

Eldridge Rayburn

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello Date: January 16, 1980

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Eldridge Rayburn for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on January 16, 1980, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Rayburn in order to get his reminiscenses and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. More specifically, Mr. Rayburn was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 131st Regiment or Field Artillery, of the 36th Division of the Texas National Guard. 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. This unit is more popularly known as the "Lost Battalion."

Mr. Rayburn, to begin this interview, would you 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. Rayburn: I was born in Garvin County, Oklahoma--that's near Pauls

Valley--on February 2, 1919. I moved to West Texas at the age of about four--three-and-a-half or four years of age. I attended public schools in Lubbock, Texas. I did not graduate from high school. I dropped out just before graduation and went into the oil fields in South Texas to work. At all times I had my eye on Rice University. Working for this company . . . we only worked six hours a day. That was The Texas Company. An older brother had wanted me to attend Rice if at all possible, but it never was possible for me. I went into the service in 1941 and didn't get out for some time.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you went into the service in 1941. Did you go into the Texas National Guard in 1941?

Rayburn: Yes. I joined the Texas National Guard unit there in Lubbock, which was Battery C, 131st Field Artillery of the 36th Division. A friend of mine came by shortly before the National Guard was to mobilize, which was on November 25, 1941.

Marcello: November 25, 1940, wasn't it?

Rayburn: I beg your pardon. It was 1940. I decided it was best that I go on in and enlist. At age twenty-one I had just registered for the draft the past September. The best thing I could do was to get on in and get it over with--get my one year over with like everyone else was talking about. But this wasn't the way it happened (chuckle).

Marcello: So when exactly did you get into the National Guard?

Rayburn: In October, 1940. I believe I mentioned that it was in 1941 that we were federalized. It was on November 25, 1940. Then, of course, we moved to Brownwood, Texas--a brand-new camp.

Marcello: Let's back up just a minute. Now you mentioned that the Texas National Guard mobilized on November 25, 1940. What did mobilization mean at that time? In other words, what did the men in the unit do immediately upon mobilization in November, 1940, and before it moved on to Brownwood?

Rayburn: Well, the men that were in the National Guard, many of them were students at Texas Tech University, and a lot of them were farmers--all walks of life. Then we had a drill one time each week, and then we had our summer camps each summer for two weeks, which we held in either Louisiana or down in Palacios, Texas. We had a big camp there. And these people . . . quite a lot of the football players from Texas Tech were in the National Guard. So they were doing the same thing then as our Texas National Guard are doing today. But this crisis came on in 1939, and by 1940 they had evidently made up their mind that the guards were going to be federalized pretty soon. So this happened on November 25, 1940.

Marcello: But I guess what I'm saying is, after mobilization took place, did you all go to a central location like, perhaps, the armory there in Lubbock? And what training and so on did you undergo at that point, then, when mobilization took place?

Rayburn: We immediately had to take up residence in the armory. We did that even before November. And we had got underway at that time in training, such as different schools that you could go to and start studying for in order to better your grade in rank. And we in Lubbock . . . I don't know about the rest of the National Guard units, but we in Lubbock began schools right then and there. And the officers, which were civilians, of course, were teaching these schools, and so were various non-coms that had been in the guard for many years. They immediately started us learning small arms, how to maintain a fieldpiece, which at that time we were using the old 1917, 1918, or 1919 French 75. We used that fieldpiece until we went overseas.

Marcello: So Battery C was a firing battery, was it not?

Rayburn: Yes. And, also, we had part of, or we had, another battery there which was the maintenance or supply unit. It also was stationed there in Lubbock.

Marcello: What was your particular function in the unit at that time?

Rayburn: At that time I was really nothing. I was a private, and I was naturally looking like everyone else. Well, I'm looking around for something that I can do and maybe do as well as, or a little better than, some of the other men. With my previous experience in the oil fields, why, I managed to get hold of one of the two better trucks that our unit had, which was a GMC. The rest of them were old-model Dodges.

I proved to them that I could drive well enough to get one of the better trucks to drive.

Marcello: Now after you mobilized and you underwent training there at the armory in Lubbock, were some of the people who lived close by allowed to go home in the evenings or weekends and so on, or did everybody sleep and stay there at the armory all the time?

Rayburn: Most of us who lived in Lubbock got to go home, and we could sleep at home if we chose to, but you better be there to answer reveille at 5:30 or six o'clock the next morning. So that made it pretty difficult. Quite a few fellows that had been going to Texas Tech--the university--were staying at the armory. And quite a lot of fellows were from out of town and came in there to join because maybe he had an uncle that was a major, or he had a friend that he had known for many years; and he might have come from Quanah or as far away as Marlin, Texas, to join this particular unit because they knew someone in it.

I felt the same way because, heck, if we're going to have to go overseas, I want to go with some buddies of mine that I know. I don't want to be all alone over there. So that was my way of thinking.

Now we spent most of our time . . . we spent a good eight or ten hours everyday at that armory. We absolutely did not goof off. They immediately put us into training.

This was even before the 25th of November because shortly after that we moved on down to Camp Bowie at Brownwood, Texas.

Marcello: You mention that while you were here in Lubbock that you weren't "goofing off," to use your words, and that you actually were undergoing serious training. What did mobilization mean to you and your buddies at the time, though? How seriously were you actually taking it? That is, were you cognizant of the world situation? Did you realize how serious the situation was abroad?

Rayburn: I don't really think I did. I'll retract that statement for a minute. I knew things weren't too well--that things weren't going very good. I took the training, you might say, with a dose of salt. I did get into it, and I worked at it pretty hard, but it was fun for me because I had just turned twenty-one years of age, and I considered that to be pretty young, although we had a lot of men that were only seventeen. I was going to have some fun out of it, as well as do as good as I could possibly do, which wasn't much.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that when you thought of the country going into war, however, that your eyes were turned more toward Europe than toward the Far East at that time?

Rayburn: At that time, yes. That's true. We knew what Hitler was doing in Europe, and we knew how tough England . . . you only had to read the papers to find out how tough England was having

it. As far as me, personally, I was leaning toward Europe all the way. It never entered my mind of going to the Far East or Japan or that direction. It was Europe. That's all I could think of.

Marcello: You mentioned that at the time of mobilization, you were twenty-one years of age. Now the next question I'm going to ask you is perhaps unfair, but I'll ask it, anyway. What would you estimate was the average age of the enlisted man in your unit, that is, in Battery C?

Rayburn: In Battery C, I'd think that the average age..... you know, we only had four officers, and they were from five to fifteen years older than we were. But I'd say that the average age would probably be about twenty-one or twenty-two years of age.

Marcello: Who was the commanding officer of the battery?

Rayburn: The commanding officer of the battery was Huddleston Wright, Captain, and a long, long-time friend of mine, and, in fact, I went to school with a younger brother of his and knew where he worked and where he had been working for many, many years. Perhaps he's the one in the battery that I knew the best as far as the officers. We had some other officers--lieutenants--that I knew of, especially Jimmy Lattimore, and I got acquainted with them real well afterwards. But Captain Wright was the battery commander, and then we had some regimental officers there in Lubbock, also, that ended up in Headquarters

Battery of the 1st Battalion.

Marcello: Now between December of 1940 and January of 1941, the Texas National Guard moved to Camp Bowie, Texas, near Brownwood.

Rayburn: That's correct.

Marcello: Do you recall when Battery C moved to Camp Bowie?

Rayburn: Yes.

Marcello: Again, I'm not asking you for a specific date, but do you know approximately when it was?

Rayburn: Being a truck driver, our first duty was to haul the "paddle-feet" into Brownwood, and we started this quite early.

Marcello: To haul in the "paddle-feet?"

Rayburn: Yes.

Marcello: That must be the infantry.

Rayburn: Infantry is correct. We started quite early on that. I'll say early . . . it was in November. Evidently, this would have to be after November 25th, I believe. I could be wrong on that, but it took a few days. The infantry battalions were scattered throughout West Texas and around Sweetwater and so forth and so on, and we hauled them down first, and then we moved our battery, Battery C, and the Supply Battery went along with us. Of course, we were all in the same armory there in Lubbock.

Marcello: Now while you were mobilized there in Lubbock, did you already have the French 75's there at the armory?

Rayburn: Oh, yes, yes. We had four guns, or four fieldpieces, and,

of course, it consisted of a sergeant, corporal, and about six or seven men for the gun crew. And we worked on those everyday--cleaning, repairing, oiling.

Marcello: And going through the motions of firing, I guess.

Rayburn: Going through the motions of firing them; learning how to be a cannoneer. Also, we got just some marching. They wanted everybody to be a pretty good soldier by the time we got to Brownwood--this big, new camp that they were just opening up. So you can bet your life that we spent many an hour out at the old armory out at the fairgrounds there in Lubbock, Texas, marching up and down to cadence.

Marcello: You mentioned the fairgrounds there in Lubbock. Fairgrounds and racetracks are going to play an important part in this story, are they not?

Rayburn: Yes, they're going to play (chuckle) a very important part of it.

Marcello: So you move on to Camp Bowie. Describe the physical condition of Camp Bowie when you arrived there in 1940.

Rayburn: One big mud hole (laughter). We moved in there, and, of course, they had nowhere near completed the streets or the parade grounds. They were working as hard as they could work, and we moved in on top of them and gave them a hand in completing Camp Bowie. We had to haul our own caliche and small rock for our walkways between our tents to the mess hall, to the commanding officer's quarters, and to the

first sergeant's and the battery clerk's headquarters. We hauled caliche there for days and days, and when I'd come in with a truckload of it and unload it, why, the other fellows were out there spreading it out. We done not only our unit, but all of them. We done quite a lot to actually complete Brownwood. It was a place just a short distance south of Brownwood--Brownwood's a small town--and it was sitting there on kind of a side of a hill. But when we moved down there . . . we actually got down there, I guess, the first part of December, and it was just one big mud hole. You could not get out of your tent. You could not go anywhere without your big, old galoshes on. It was only a matter of two or three months that that place was really, really nice. They just kept working at it and kept working at it, and that was everybody. Everybody worked. The sergeants, the corporals, the privates--they all worked to get this place in good shape. And it was, when we left there, a very, very nice camp.

They were all tents. Our mess halls were wooden, but we all lived in tents with about five, six men, or possibly seven or eight men, to a tent. We had a stove in the center of it, and our bunks was all around it.

Marcello: These were the pyramidal tents. I believe that's what they were called, were they not?

Rayburn: I believe that's correct. They had wooden wainscoting about

waist-high and then the canvas over that, and, of course, we let the canvas down in the wintertime and raised it up in the summertime. And that was our heat and air-conditioning other than the little stove that we had in the center of the tent.

Marcello: What sort of training did the unit undergo when it arrived in Camp Bowie?

Rayburn: When we arrived in Camp Bowie, we went right into training. For the first few months, after we got a little bit of the mud covered up with caliche and rock, small crushed rock . . . we done quite a lot of foot training such as learning to march and calisthenics. And just soon as the weather permitted, we hit the field, and we'd have a bivouac for two or three days. We'd have plenty of ground to maneuver on, and they'd get us out in the field and keep us out there, and we went through this training on the fieldpieces time and time again. They had small arms school; they had instrument schools; they had mechanical schools. They had any kind of training that you wanted to get; you could get it there.

Marcello: Now were you actually firing the fieldpieces here at Camp Bowie?

Rayburn: We'd go through the motion of firing, and then probably after one exercise or two exercises in the field . . . then we didn't use the French 75; we had a smaller fieldpiece

that fit on the barrel of the French 75, and I can't tell you what caliber they were because I actually wasn't connected to any of the firing batteries, other than the fact that I was driving a truck and hauling supplies.

But I will mention here that I walked by one day when they were laying out on a piece of ducking there, and we were just getting ready to do some firing across the range. I made a crack about them being sure pretty Easter eggs, and I know the lieutenant sitting there doggone sure didn't like it. He let me know right quick that I had to respect (chuckle) those cases and the ammo that we was fixing to shoot. He straightened me out right quick, and I never referred to them as Easter eggs anymore. They were small caliber.

Marcello: Mobilization was still only going to take a year at this point.

Rayburn: Oh, yes. We were all in for one year. We wanted to get it over with. Man, I had big plans. I had been working for a major oil company, and I felt like there's a future there for me. I just wanted to get my year over with--get back down there with The Texas Company in South Texas, where I liked very much, and get into growing up.

Marcello: Now in the summer of 1941, the unit participated in the 3rd Army maneuvers in Louisiana. What do you recall from those 3rd Army maneuvers?

Rayburn: Well, I'm one of the lucky ones on our 3rd Army maneuvers. Just before it was time to leave on the Louisiana maneuvers, we had a field problem, and we went out on this field problem and . . . I hate to say this, but I was the battery bootlegger. And that was permissible. Now we were a long way from Fort Worth, Dallas. No one actually cared too much about going into Brownwood, and our commanding officer, Huddleston Wright, would sanction, on our time off, a little drinking. The only thing that I ever heard him complain about was when he said, "If I catch you drinking rot gut whiskey, it's going to be too damn bad!" He sure didn't believe in just drinking the run-of-the-mill booze. If you're going to drink, drink good stuff. And he permitted me to keep half-pints and pints there in my footlocker, and the guys could purchase this from me at a nominal fee. I didn't rob them on it. I made enough money to buy my cigarettes probably.

But they went on this field unit, and one of our instrument sergeants and his crew got to nipping a little bit, and before the field unit could get set up and go through their problems that they had planned to work on when they got out there, they could see right quick that they had a disorderly bunch of soldiers. So they brought them back into camp. Now I might just tell you this. I was scared and I was not on the field problem.

I was on KP in the camp, and I had a hernia that had

been bothering me, and I immediately went on sick call and was sent to the hospital and operated on. I was in the hospital, or on sick leave, at the time that they made the Louisiana maneuvers. So that's one good maneuver that I missed, other than the fact that I was driving trucks back into Louisiana, picking up the infantry and bringing them back into Camp Bowie after the maneuvers were already over with.

Marcello: Now concerning those Louisiana maneuvers, there are all sorts of stories that come forward as a result. Some people like to say that it was because the unit had performed so well in Louisiana that it was chosen to go overseas. Again, this is talk at this point. I'm not exactly sure why the unit was selected to go overseas. Can you throw any light on that?

Rayburn: Well, I really don't know about that, but I do know that we got some very good grades, or our unit got some very good grades, in Louisiana. They might have been the most troublesome unit there from the stories that I heard . . . since I didn't go on the maneuvers, only to help bring back the infantry after they were over, but I know that it was just a short time after that that they had picked the unit to go overseas. I feel like they felt that we were ready for action--that our training had been good enough that we could go right into action. And, of course, as you probably

know, they picked the 2nd Battalion.

I was in the 1st Battalion, and then they started asking for volunteers. Now our officers, I suppose, were picked. That would be Captain Wright, Lieutenant Hard, and Lieutenant James Lattimore. And I talked to them a little bit. I was torn there between trying to go to the Air Force or go on with a bunch of my friends that had volunteered for the 2nd Battalion. I felt like that . . . we could get a three-day pass to go to Goodfellow Field and try out for the Air Force, but I felt like that my education would be very much against me. I wasn't afraid of the physical examination, but I was afraid of passing the Air Force tests. So I talked to a couple of my officers and decided that the best thing I could do . . . I really believe they were a picked outfit, so I'd just go with them.

Of course, we knew approximately where we were going. We knew we was going out from San Francisco, and so it was just more or less understood that we were headed for the Philippines.

Marcello: Let's back up here a minute. Now sometime after you returned from those Louisiana maneuvers, the Army underwent an organizational change. I believe it was during this time they changed from the so-called square divisions to the triangular divisions. And it was during this reorganization that the 2nd Battalion was separated from the division.

I gather the Army was rather impressed with the speed and mobility of the German divisions in Europe, and I think that's one of the reasons why they decided to tighten up and reduce the size of the American divisions.

Rayburn: I've heard, you know, some discusson on that. I actually, myself, didn't quite understand it. All I knew, you know, was that General Burkhead had the 36th Division, and I knew that we were referred to as a square division, but that's actually what happened after war was declared. They called it a triangle division. Of course, we went on overseas in November of 1941.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that at that particular time, that is, when you were there in Camp Bowie and before you actually left, you had been a part of the 1st Battalion? Battery C was a part of the 1st Battalion?

Rayburn: Yes. The 1st Battalion was made up of Battery A, B, and C, with a Supply Battery adjoining it. And then the 2nd Battalion would be D, E, and F. And I ended up in Battery F of the 2nd Battalion.

Marcello: In other words, then, only Batteries D, E, and F departed as a part of Operation PLUM.

Rayburn: That's correct. The 2nd Battalion was picked to go at that particular time. Of course, they had people in it that . . . it was strictly after it was picked, and then the rest of it was volunteers.

Marcello: Is it not true, also, that married men were given the option of getting out of the unit at that time, since it was going overseas?

Rayburn: That's correct. That's the best of my knowledge. The older men that were in the National Guard units and those who were married were given options at that time to get out, and so actually those people that came out of the 2nd Battalion, we're taking their place from the 1st Battalion. There was no problem for them to get the volunteers. Everybody was looking for adventure or something different, you know. We had a year in Brownwood, and we was ready to go somewhere and do something.

Marcello: I would assume that there were not very many married men among the enlisted personnel at that time, were there?

Rayburn: Well, there were quite a few because, being a National Guard unit, those men that were in there, you know, for years, and there were quite a few of them that were married and had children. And as little as it might seem, this little National Guard check that was coming in every month . . . if you'll just recall back a few years before that, we were in a very, very bad depression, and every little bit of money that you could pick up extra like that . . . for two weeks of maneuvers each year, you see, why, you'd get a pretty nice little check. It depended on your rank. There were quite a few married people in the 1st and 2nd Battalions.

Marcello: So you're a part of Operation PLUM. I'm sure that encouraged all sorts of rumors as to what PLUM meant or as to what the destination was.

Rayburn: There were lots of rumors. Oh, man, you'd pass by three or four gathered here and three or four gathered there, you know, and talking and talking, and we're going to do this, we're going to do that. I've always tried to be a good listener.

But I'll never forget Major Rockett, our chaplain. I walked into him face-to-face one day--just about when all this was going on--and he said, "Son, I don't believe I've met you. I'm Major Rockett." And I said, "Well, Major, I'm from the 1st Battalion." He said, "Well, these are all my boys down here." He said, "I've been with them for years." He said, "You know, you boys are going overseas just any day," and he said, "I want to give you this little Testament." And he said, "Keep it and when you get time, read a little bit." I told him I certainly would, and he said, "There's one other thing, soldier, that I want to tell you before you leave." He said, "I want you to know that you're going into a problem." And he said, "I'd like for all these boys to understand that." And I said, "Well, thank you, Major." I said, "I probably haven't taken it that seriously." Well, he said, "Son, I just want you to know that it's not going to be any bed of roses where you're

going." And that was my first time to really think about this thing--when the chaplain had that little conversation with me.

Marcello: Well, I guess, when you boarded that train on November 11, 1941, and were heading toward San Francisco, you at least knew that you were going somewhere into the Pacific.

Rayburn: That's true. We got a three-day pass before we boarded that train, and, of course, everybody took off from Brownwood, you know, in every direction. It doesn't hardly seem like enough time to drive from Brownwood, Texas, to Lubbock, Texas, but the highway patrolmen will tell you that we didn't waste very much time getting there and back (chuckle).

But the morning that we crawled on that train and headed west . . . of course, we went right back through Lubbock, Texas, and there's a lot of people there that came down to the railroad depot to say goodbye again. Then we were pretty well . . . oh, I'd say we were more than sure that we were headed for the Philippines. Of course, we was hoping it was Hawaii, and we was hoping it was maybe the Samoan Islands or someplace like that, you know. Well, really, no one had any idea, but they were all hoping different places. But then I think everyone was more or less reconciled to the fact that the Philippines might not be a bad place to go.

Marcello: I guess San Francisco was as far away from home as most

people had been at that particular time, wasn't it?

Rayburn: Why, I'm sure that there was quite a lot of people there that hadn't been near that far away from home. I know it was my first time to visit San Francisco--quite a town. We got some leave while we were there. Of course, we landed at San Francisco and were put on a barge and taken to Angel Island. I'm sure that everyone who wanted it got about an eight-hour leave in San Francisco, and we kind of let our hair down a little bit and done some things in San Francisco that we shouldn't have done. But I don't look back on it and think that we were too far out of line. We was just kind of letting off a little steam.

I'm sorry to say this, but I encountered some people in California that were very much opposed to soldiers. They didn't particularly like us a little bit. We were going around the small neighborhood bars and having a few beers and playing the pinball machines and what-have-you. In fact, I got into a little conversation with a party in a small bar. We just happened to walk in, and I was just trying to buy a package of cigarettes, and this lady wouldn't even give me time to buy my cigarettes. She told me in so many words to back up from that seat because it belonged to her husband. Of course, I backed up, but then I had a few more words about the time he walked up and shouldn't have said it. But, anyway, we didn't have a fight in this

bar. It just so happened that Glen Jones, our topkick, happened to be with us. In fact, my group ran around with our top sergeant quite a lot, and we just got on out and went to Chinatown, where we did have a brawl or two down in Chinatown.

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

Rayburn: The history on Eddie Fung is that he was working on a ranch near Midland, Texas. In fact, I was doing some gas and oil lease work on this ranch after the war was over. Eddie had been working on this ranch--not as a cook but as a cowboy. Eddie came into Lubbock before I did and joined the National Guard, and that was quite something, you know, to have this little Chinaman in our organization. He evidently turned out to be one of the best persons that I've ever known, and he is to be commended.

Marcello: Okay, as you mentioned, you stayed in San Francisco for about ten days there at Angel Island, and then on November 21, 1941, you boarded the USS Republic.

Rayburn: Yes, the good, old USS Republic, a World War I ship that, I guess, we confiscated from the Germans--so I was told. It was a very old ship and almost rusted out. We boarded this ship and took off, and, believe me, what a mess it was the next day! We hit huge swells just a short distance out from San Francisco, and of all the things that the Navy would cook this particular day with all those poor guys seasick

was sauerkraut and wieners. And what a mess it was (laughter)!

Marcello: How did you make out?

Rayburn: I made out real fine. I never was sick on the ship. I immediately started looking around to see what was going on. I was broke when I got on this ship. I'd spent all my money in San Francisco--what little I had.

Marcello: I think most of the other people had, too.

Rayburn: Yes, everybody was out of money. But I found out that the ship's stores opened at a certain time of day, and cigarettes were only six cents a package. You could buy a whole box of candy for about thirty cents. And due to the long lines, and the short time that the ship's stores were open, well, I found out there was a little bit of money to be made just by going up there and buying two or three boxes of candy and walking around the ship selling it to the people who had money for five cents a bar. When you'd sold your twenty-four bars of candy, why, you had made a few nickels to buy cigarettes with.

Marcello: Now the 131st Field Artillery, that is, the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, was not the only unit aboard the Republic. For example, I do know that the 26th Brigade was aboard and, also, the 22nd Bombardment Group. Now 26th Brigade would go with you to Java and would actually be integrated into the unit.

Rayburn: That's correct. Not all of them, but twenty-six, I believe,

was the number of that 26th Brigade that ended up with us. On the USS Republic we had this bomb group, most of them being officers. They were more or less separated from the enlisted men. But we had all these airplane parts, .50-caliber air-cooled machine guns, and quite a lot of ammunition on this ship.

Marcello: Was the ship pretty crowded with personnel?

Rayburn: The ship was very crowded. My quarters . . . I can't really recall exactly where they were, but they were near the galley enough that when they'd start cooking in there, you know, sometimes it was . . . it really wasn't bad on myself, but it was on a lot of the fellows because they were sick for days. They just didn't get over it in twenty-four hours. They were sick for days. And I found out later on, you know, that nobody seemed to bother you if you got topside. You got back out of their way, got you a lifejacket for a pillow, and took a blanket up there topside. It was pretty nice. I spent most of my time topside. I spent very little time in the compartment.

Marcello: On November 28, 1941, the Republic docked at Honolulu. Did you get any shore leave there?

Rayburn: I got six hours shore leave in Honolulu. I didn't have any money . . . oh, a few nickels and dimes, maybe. And that's something that I don't really understand. Now I went ashore . . . I especially picked an ex-Marine, a fellow by the name

of "Brodie" Miller, Sergeant Miller. Incidentally, he was sunk by an American sub on a Japanese ship just before we were liberated. I personally picked him to go ashore with because, not having any money hardly . . . and I knew he'd been stationed there before and kind of knew his way around. I felt like I could see more things and do more things in that short period of time with someone that had been there before. I was in a group of soldiers with Sergeant Miller, and we were all probably about in the same shape as far as money was concerned.

We went ashore. We had to be back, I believe, that night at maybe eleven o'clock. We walked around. Anything that was in walking distance that he could show us and tell us about, why, we'd go there. The first thing that he wanted to buy was one of those native drinks. The best I can remember, evidently, it's made from . . . might have been made from pineapple, but it was some native plant over there. It was very reasonable, kind of like tequila in Mexico, and we bought a little of that. There wasn't enough of it to get any of us feeling too high, but it was potent enough.

But the thing that I don't understand about Honolulu . . . when we walked off of that ship, we hadn't got three or four blocks from the docks, and there is barricades and machine guns set up, tripod machine guns, .30-caliber and .50-caliber machine guns. And armed soldiers, Marines, and

sailors were walking the streets everywhere. If you walked up to a corner in a group of five or six and were looking around--"Well, which way shall we go?"--they didn't hesitate a minute to walk up and say, "Move on, soldier. You can't stop here." That's something that I'll never, never be able to understand. It looked like to me, if there is any such thing as martial law with all these soldiers, sailors, and Marines on duty and parading up and down the streets, all armed, carrying rifles and sidepieces, I just can't understand, if they had an alert on like that, how this other thing happened the 7th of December,

Marcello: Did it have a whole lot of significance at the time, however? In other words, did you think about it at the time in terms of the seriousness of the situation?

Rayburn: Well, as I explained before, I had some doubts, actually, when we left Brownwood. But when we got to the Hawaiian Islands, and we could see what was going on there, then there was no doubt anymore. I knew that something was fixing to happen. And the doubt had been satisfied by then because I knew that there was no other reason to have those people patrolling the streets like that, with these barricades set up and machine guns all around, unless something big was fixing to happen.

Marcello: I guess you were only in Honolulu that one day because the next day you took off again as part of a convoy, and you were

on your way toward the Philippines.

Rayburn: We pulled anchor early that next morning and joined some other ships. I can't recall the name of the other transport, but we were told that it had quite a few soldiers on it.

Marcello: I think the Chaumont was part of this convoy.

Rayburn: Yes, that's it. That was it. Also, we had the USS Pensacola as an escort vessel, and, by golly, she was a slick-looking, little, black ship with a wave painted on the side of her. We found out after a few days that she was a mighty fine little cruiser. Of course, it was only a matter of seven days until we heard what had happened to Hawaii--Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Describe what you were doing and how you received the news and what your reaction was when you and your buddies found out about the Japaense attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. You're somewhere near the Gilbert Islands, as I recall, when you get the word. Describe that day.

Rayburn: I believe . . . the Gilbert Islands . . . I think possibly that's about where we were seven days out. Well, my description of that . . . I wouldn't hardly know how to explain it. Just all at once, bang! You hear the President of the United States come on the intercom and make this speech, in which I think I can remember part of it. But the best part of it that I remember is, "Japan, your rising sun shall rise no more." And I can't swim. Oh, barely. And you're floating around out there in the wide Pacific, and you look

around you. Here's two or three old freighters with you and the Chaumont. It's loaded down with gear. You could see some planes on it. And on our ship, the USS Republic, we felt like that it shouldn't be even on the high seas, as old and rusty as it was. It was one hell of a feeling. I didn't know just how to take it. Naturally, I began thinking, "Well, I don't see how in the devil we can get out of this without going into battle, and what am I going to go?" And I got hold of a lifejacket, which we had been instructed to do. And I'll just tell you the doggone truth. I kept that life-jacket with me all the time.

Marcello: How did you receive the initial word of the attack? Did it come across the public address system?

Rayburn: The captain of the ship informed us that there had been an attack on Pearl Harbor. And, I believe, at eleven o'clock the President of the United States would talk to the nation, and we would pick it up, and it would be on the intercom, which it was, all over the ship.

Everything was awful quiet there for several hours until the President made his speech, and then it seemed like that ship just went into action. It's just unbelievable. It's just hard to see so many people that know what they was supposed to do and just start doing it. Evidently, we started along about that time our zigzag course that we took. It was rumored that we were going into Samoa . . . Samoan Islands.

On this zigzag course, we didn't have any idea where we were going. But then we didn't just sit around and feel sorry for ourself. The sailors on that ship and our men began setting up guns, forward and aft.

Marcello: Were these your fieldpieces?

Rayburn: Now there were fieldpieces, and they weren't the old French 75, 1917-model. We had the newer American-type 75, split trail. And when you spread that . . . those two trails out and set that gun at an angle and use a short fuse HE (high explosive), it makes a very, very good antiaircraft fieldpiece. At least we had them. We brought them out there. We tied them down and to where we could keep control of it, and we stacked our ammo out there. I suppose it was HE with a short fuse. Well, of course, we set the fuse when we'd get ready to shoot. Also, all around this old ship, we . . . as I said before we had all these supplies for the Air Force in the Philippines, and we had those air-cooled .50-caliber machine guns that they used in the B-24's and B-17's. Well, all the aircraft that we had flying at that time. They made tripods and set those up all around the ship. And personnel were appointed to each gun position, and we even had some practice on the machine guns to make sure that everyone that was going to be assigned to this gun knew how to operate it. We had a little practice with live ammo, and, of course, the tracer bullets would give you an idea of how accurate you were

when firing them out to sea.

Marcello: At least you were doing something, and that was important.

Rayburn: That's correct. We were doing something. And it didn't seem like to me that anyone had to be told. It was just automatic. It's unbelievable.. The sailors on that ship could just make anything nearly. I'll tell you, it's unbelievable. But they got in that welding shop, and before you know it, they had made these tripods, and we had these machine guns forward and aft and all up on the side of the old USS Republic. And they had anchored those fieldpieces down to where they weren't going to get loose on that deck. We were ready for a little battle shortly after the President made his speech.

Marcello: What was some of the scuttlebutt that was going around among you and your buddies? First of all, when you thought of a typical Japanese at that particular time, what sort of a person did you conjure up in your mind? Did you have a stereotype?

Rayburn: Why, certainly! Little, dumb, cross-eyed or slant-eyed idiots, so to speak. Didn't know how to get in out of the rain. And any twenty-one or twenty-two-year-old farm boy that became a soldier was worth fifteen or twenty Japanese.

Marcello: How long was this war going to last?

Rayburn: Why, just a matter of days. This war is not going . . . can't possibly last very long. There is no way that the Japanese can come close to whipping a nation like the United States, and it's just a matter of time. Just get us there and let us

get it over with--that seemed to be the attitude of everyone that I was around on the ship.

Marcello: Did you know Frank Fujita at this time?

Rayburn: I knew Frank but not very well because Frank, being in the 2nd Battalion, and me being in the 1st Battalion at Brownwood, our paths didn't cross much. There was a battery street between the 1st and 2nd Battalion, and probably, like all units, they were foreigners to us. There was the 1st Battalion, and there was the 2nd Battalion.

But it didn't take too long, after I transferred into 2nd Battalion,to get acquainted with him. It was a matter of curiosity, you know. It was just floating around all over the ship: "Well, we got a Jap with us." So as a matter of curiosity, I wanted to get a little closer to Frank and get acquainted with him the best I could, you know, because he might come in handy. He could speak Japanese, and I might need him sometime (chuckle). But it was some time after we were in Java before I really got to know Frank Fujita.

Marcello: Your course was diverted, since you obviously weren't going to be going to the Philippines now. The Japanese, as we know, also hit the Philippines very shortly after they staged the Pearl Harbor attack. You dock at Suva in the Fiji Islands for a very, very short time. I think you were only here to take on some fresh supplies and so on.

Rayburn: We ended up at Suva, Fiji Islands. And, oh, an old country

boy like myself, you know, looking at those people!

Marcello: You're referring to the so-called "fuzzy-wuzzy's?"

Rayburn: Yes, the "fuzzy-wuzzy's." And it was quite a sight to see. I'd just never been out of the continental limits of the United States before, and here I was in the Fiji Islands. I just barely can remember studying a little bit about it in history.

We weren't there long. We took on fresh supplies, and they didn't . . . I'll say one thing about those "fuzzy-wuzzy's." It didn't take them long to load those supplies on board, and it was a welcome sight, because there was a lot of fruit and a lot of fresh vegetables to be loaded. Our food became better after that.

Marcello: I guess you actually didn't get off the ship there, did you?

Rayburn: No, no one got off the ship. I don't believe we was there over four hours. It might have been five or six hours, but it was a very, very short time. We pulled anchor and headed out, and, of course, the rumors were then, after we'd got to Suva, that we were definitely going to Australia.

Marcello: Incidentally, what was the conduct of your officers at this time, that is, from December 7, 1941, up until this particular time? How were they performing? What is their conduct like?

Rayburn: Well, I don't mind telling you just how I think it was. Our officers . . . of course, I naturally would notice them more than I would the other firing batteries or headquarters

or anyone else. I felt like that some of them were prepared for it, and some of them weren't prepared for it. I know that "Hud" was pretty jumpy.

Probably one of the best officers we had was Ilo Hard, Lieutenant Hard. He was 100 percent military, and everything he done had to be precise. He wouldn't take any excuses. He got a little bit hard. Of course, he and I were considered friends, as far as an enlisted man and an officer goes, before then because he was my officer in the motor pool of the firing battery. He put out orders, and he put them out fast, and he put them out strong. And you carried them out. You certainly didn't argue with him, or you didn't fool around about it. He'd let you know right quick.

Now "Hud" Wright, a man that I've known all my life . . . I couldn't have the confidence in Captain Wright that I'd had before because I'm sure that he had a lot of things to worry about. He had a couple of daughters and a wife back home, and I'm sure that that played a big part of his action, or him acting the way he did. Nevertheless, he tried not to show it too much, but he couldn't keep from showing it a little bit.

Marcello: In what way?

Rayburn: Being a little bit on the nervous side and maybe in his tone of voice. He'd talk to you sharp and quick. He just made a little change there that was very noticeable after all

this happened.

Marcello: Did he have words of discouragement and things like that concerning the situation?

Rayburn: I can't recall anything such as that. I know he didn't like the situation. Possibly he did have some words of discouragement, but I didn't take it that way myself. I really wasn't around him that much, and I felt like the best thing to do was to stay as far away from him as I possibly can on the ship.

Now Lieutenant Lattimore, real good friend, he and I and a good friend of mine, Jack Cellum, who was a corporal at that time, and maybe two or three more, would get Jimmy off to himself, and we'd discuss the situation as much as we could--things that we could think about to discuss. And he was a 2nd lieutenant and had been in the guards for many years and was pretty well-educated, and was a very sensible person. Probably I got more from that one man than I did from any of the other officers that we had.

Marcello: You get into Brisbane, Australia, on December 21, 1941. What do you do when you land at Brisbane?

Rayburn: We landed at Brisbane, and we began unloading that ship, hauling our fieldpieces into Ascott Racetrack. That's where the Australians had set up camp for us--beautiful place.

And, doggone the Australians, you can't say enough for

them. They're fine people. You would kindly judge them as to maybe the United States years ago, colonial people, you know, the pioneers, so to speak. They were awful glad to see us and just couldn't be nicer, but I was real busy.

I'm wheeling a truck and hauling in supplies and hauling in the fieldpieces. Of course, we unloaded that ship--all those Air Force machine guns, ammunition. Everything that we felt like we could use, why, we started taking it off of there.

And the Australians were busy preparing us food for that night, and it was kind of embarrassing. I look back on this, you know, and they was such a nice bunch of guys. They had beautiful, beautiful, big old chops on those long grills, cooking them off, you know, and it was mutton. These Texas boys were used to beef all their life. They didn't pull any punches letting the Australians know right quick that they didn't give a damn about that mutton. (laughter). It was really embarrassing because the people were trying to be so nice and so helpful. Believe me, it wasn't bad. It was the first mutton I'd ever eaten. I've very often since then ordered lamb chops and mint jelly. It's very delicious, I think.

Marcello: A lot of the boys mentioned that they were struck by the fact that they didn't see any young men while they were there. All they saw were old men, women, and young boys.

Rayburn: That's true. It was just overrun with women. That's very true. The Australians had been in action in the Middle East long before this. "Jolly Old England" had taken every man that was available to fight in the desert, and that left people quite elderly and, of course, real young ones. But Brisbane was a good town.

Marcello: I understand you didn't have to buy anything whenever you went into bars and so on and so forth.

Rayburn: We didn't have any money again (chuckle). And, you know, we all thought we'd get a partial payment there, being Christmas and in Australia and everything. I can recall Jack Cellum, Corporal Cellum, and myself going into town one day, the two of us, and he said, "You have any money?" I said, "Hell, no, I don't have any money. Where am I going to get any money?" So we just laughed about it. It was just a big joke. And we did have a few pennies. Now, I'm telling you, that's all we had. And the young Australian kids, you know, would come up to you and say, "Hey, 'Yank,' have you got a souvenir?" And we gave our pennies away to these Australian children that wanted souvenirs.

But we hadn't been downtown very long, and we was standing on a corner by a tram stop. They had a bank there, and we was standing there in a little park, small park, and an Australian man walked up to us and wanted to know what we were doing, and we told him, "Nothing." And he

said, "Well, come and go home with me." Well, we didn't know whether to accept the invitation or not, but we didn't have anything else to do, and no money. He said, "If you'll hold these packages while I go back across to the pub, I'll pick up some more. We'll catch this tram and go to my house."

So we held them, and it was a sack of small shrimp. So I just started peeling shrimp and eating it, you know, and Jack checked the other bag out, and it was small bottles of dark beer in it. He came back . . . incidentally, this fellow was a dentist. And if there's anyplace in the world that needs dentists, and lots of them, it's Australia. It's very often that you'd see twenty-year-olds with false teeth. There's something in the water, minerals, I guess, in Australia that their teeth just won't last very long.

And we went home with him. He had a lovely family of four daughters and his wife, and we just had a ball. We drank and sang and ate shrimp and visited. When it was time to go back to camp, he hired a taxi and took us back to where we could catch a tram that run right into Ascott Racetrack, and he would not take "no" for an answer, that we had to come back the next night and bring as many of our friends that wanted to come. And we did. And we had a ball.

I spent about two days, I guess, with this family, more or less, and then I think some of the fellows even went back

there again. But I wanted to see some more of Brisbane, and knowing that we weren't going to be there very long, I was only there the two times, the two evenings. They were very, very nice people. They just loved company, and I'm sure that they weren't well-to-do people, but they spent, probably, money that they shouldn't have spent in entertaining us. You just can't say enough for people like that.

Marcello: You really didn't undergo any training or anything of a military nature here in Brisbane, did you?

Rayburn: No. We had . . . I think everyone felt like that--other than maybe a few pep talks--we had been trained pretty well. We really didn't have time for anything like that. The only military action that we took in Australia, you might say, is the Military Police that they would take out of each firing battery. They'd send them to town to kind of keep the Americans straight--kind of oversee and make sure that the Americans behaved, which I know they did.

I don't recall hearing of anything bad about the Americans there in Australia. I'm sure there was some, but I can't recall anything that happened there that was really bad. They conducted theirself real well, I think.

As I told you, I did not want to go back out to the doctor's house anymore. I kind of wanted to see some more of Australia. Evidently, we got some kind of a little partial

payment there in Brisbane that didn't amount to very much. Then I went out on the town and went to some of the pubs and hotels and met a lot of people. Anytime you walked into a bar, well, you might just as well keep your money in your pocket because if there's a Australian sitting there, and if maybe he was a longshoreman, and he had all the money that his family had in his pocket, he was going to spend every bit of it before you could get out of that bar. They just would not let you pay for anything.

Marcello: On December 28, 1941, you leave Brisbane. This time you're on a Dutch motor vessel, the Bloemfontein. It was quite a bit different, was it not?

Rayburn: It was quite a ship. We left there.

Marcello: Did you know where you were going?

Rayburn: No.

Marcello: Did anybody ever tell you?

Rayburn: No. And that's another mystery that I haven't really got straight in my mind. We boarded this ship, hauled all of our gear on this ship, and we set right there in the harbor, I believe, about forty-eight hours. I don't know what's going on or what the devil we're doing: "Why couldn't they leave us out at Ascott? That was a nice place out there." But we boarded this ship and were just setting there and setting there, and it was quite confusing to me. But you have to make the best of everything.

The Australians, the longshoremen, were working up and down the docks there . . . and we had been told we could not leave the ship. Even though we were pulled right up to the dock, we could not get off the ship. We could not fraternize with the workers on the docks. In other words, we wasn't supposed to do anything. But I got close enough to one of those Australians and asked if he could bring us some beer back to the ship. "Certainly! You bet, 'Yank!'" And we gave him some money, and he came back with two gunny-sacks full of beer. They drink that beer down there at room temperature. We got it on board, and, of course, everybody was griping, you know. We did get to drink that beer, but we didn't get anymore. We got orders right quick from higher command that there would be no more beverages brought on board that ship.

But we stayed on the Bloemfontein, and we left out of there within, I'm going to say, about three days after we was on board. I can't remember, but there was something mysterious about the way that that ship pulled anchor and took off. We had no idea where we were going, and I have been told in the past that they never really got orders from the Allied Command to take us to Java.

But once they set anchor . . . it was a beautiful ship--motorized and fast--and it didn't need an escort as fast as it traveled. It was supposed to be able to outmaneuver subs

pretty well. And we took off, and the first thing we know is that we're in Darwin, Australia.

Marcello: By this time, you have lost the 22nd Bombardment Group. I think they stayed back in Australia, and, like you mentioned, most of the 26th Brigade actually stayed in Australia, too, but you did pick up some of those people into the 2nd Battalion.

Rayburn: We had, I believe, the whole Headquarters Battery of the 26th Brigade when we hit Java. But part of that Headquarters Battery got out of Java after we had been there perhaps a week or two.

Marcello: So we have you up at Port Darwin. What happens at that point?

Rayburn: Well, we anchored at Port Darwin. And there was a lot of scuttlebutt going on, and actually that's when the Bloemfontein mysteriously, to me, hauled anchor at . . . I believe that it happened in the nighttime, and at daylight the next morning, why, we were on the high seas. And it's always been my opinion--and I would like some way or another to prove this--that we were actually shanghaied by the Dutch and taken to Java without the permission of our government or the Allied Command.

Marcello: Do you recall a submarine scare on this trip from Australia to Java?

Rayburn: I believe so. I had got acquainted at that time with a

ship's baker. We did have a sub scare. Along about this time is when I was about halfway convinced that there was nothing to submarines for this ship because it was so fast and so maneuverable that it would just be nearly impossible to sink it. If that can be true, I don't know. But at least the Dutchmen on this Bloemfontein thought that to be true.

Marcello: So you land at Surabaja, Java, around January 11, 1942. Describe what happened at that point.

Rayburn: Well, it was on January 11, 1942. That's one date I remember well. We landed there and began moving our supplies off the ship, and we went by trucks to a place called Malang.

Marcello: Actually, you went to the air base at Singosari, did you not, which is right next door to Malang?

Rayburn: Yes. I suppose, and I've driven it many times from Surabaja to Batavia . . . excuse me, I'm getting a little bit confused.

Marcello: From Surabaja to Malang.

Rayburn: Yes, from Malang to Surabaja. And I always thought it was about thirty-five or forty miles . . . approximately thirty, thirty-five miles.

But this Singosari Airport had barracks on one side of it and the hangars and airfield on the other side--real nice place. They were brick and stone, tile floor barracks and were very well-constructed.

And we'd moved in there with our supplies, and the Air

Force was getting a few planes out of the Philippines, mostly the B-24's. It seemed like they had a longer range than their B-17's. But they had brought in three or four B-24's, and, I think, about three B-17's. Then, of course, they started ferrying them in from the States. That's where we became part of the Air Force--at Malang.

Marcello: It was at Singosari that you ran into remnants of the 6th, 7th, and, especially, the 19th Bomb Groups from the Philippines?

Rayburn: Yes, that's where we run into them. And we began, at that time, actually working for the Air Force. I was assigned as a driver over there, and the other boys--quite a few of them--were gunners, and quite a few of them mechanics, hauling supplies, and what-have-you. In other words, they had such a skeleton crew--the 19th and 22nd Bomb Group. Now I never was up in the mountains where the 22nd Group of P-40's was located. I was never up there. But they had this P-40 squadron of, oh, I don't know, maybe ten or twelve planes, very few; and then the bombers were down on this airport where we actually lived. Of course, that's when we found out, a short time after arriving there at Surabaja, that the war was really on.

Marcello: How did the unit get from Surabaja up to Singosari? Did it go by truck or by train?

Rayburn: We went by truck, the best that I can recall. Of course, I know these things had to be unloaded. But since you

brought this subject up, I just can't recall. It was a short distance from Surabaja. Maybe the Dutch furnished us transportation. In fact, that's what happened. The Dutch did furnish us transportation, and it didn't take us just a few days to get all of our equipment moved into the airfield out there at Singosari.

Marcello: Go into a little bit more detail as to what your barracks and living quarters were like there at Singosari.

Rayburn: They were masonry--permanent barracks. Like most of the buildings I saw in Java, they were of brick, stone structure. All have tile floors, and they're all built to be hosed down. The Dutch pride themselves on being very clean people. In fact, they even use water for toilet paper. And all these barracks are built to where they would rain and so forth and so on to where that they could be hosed down and kept very clean. They seemed to be fairly new barracks.

All the battery streets and everything were paved. Being in a country where there was probably a hundred inches or so of rain a year, naturally they would have to be some type of hard surface in order to get around either by foot or by trucks or ox carts or what-have-you.

They were very good living quarters. We enjoyed our stay there.

Marcello: I gather that Singosari was under the command of the Dutch.

Rayburn: Yes. In fact, the Dutch Navy was in command.

Marcello: A member of the Dutch Navy was in command or did you say a "Dutch native?"

Rayburn: Dutch Navy furnished the Supreme Allied Commander.

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Rayburn: A short time after we arrived in Singosari, the British moved in, and we had a British ack-ack battery stationed right there with us in this camp. Of course, the Asiatic commander of all the Allies was . . .

Marcello: Wavell?

Rayburn: Wavell. He addressed us there at Surabaja one day in his full-dress uniform and what-have-you, and he was a very impressive man.

Marcello: He addressed you at Surabaja or at Singosari?

Rayburn: At Singosari.

Marcello: What did you do in your spare time here at Singosari? Was there much of a social life for all you young bucks in Malang?

Rayburn: Well, the social life there was . . . outside of the "Monkey Village," where you could buy beer there at Malang, there was one restaurant that I recall in Malang, and that was more or less a headquarters for everyone. You could go in there and drink a few beers. The people you'd notice, naturally, would be the Dutch in their green uniforms and carrying their sabers. Then you'd see a few soldiers over in one corner, and then you'd see a few of the Air Force over in

another corner.

Now there was no way that you could distinguish the Air Force because they were dressed in everything. Most of them, or quite a few of them, came out of the Philippines . . . quite a number of them came out with nothing on but their shorts. They'd run and jumped in a plane, got it airborne, and got to Java. And they had no dress code, no uniforms. It was just a mixture of maybe an Australian hat, a pair of khakis that they got from our organization, and a shirt they might have bought downtown at some clothing store.

They were a well-seasoned bunch of individuals. They'd been overseas quite some time before that, and they'd already gone through the battle there in the Philippines. They were looked up to because they had seen the first action. We were all keenly interested in what was going on, and anytime we could sit down at a table and listen to their conversation, why, we were very eager to do that.

Like any red-blooded Americans, there were things that you could find to do. The natives and the native women and so forth and so on . . . you'd run across a lot of Dutch women that were very nice, very cordial. And there were Eurasians and the like. You'd even run into a few Americans over there who had husbands working in the oil fields in Sumatra and Borneo and different places around. The oil industry over

there is . . . well, it's a pretty big industry. And there was a few Americans around.

A lot of amusement that we had there wasn't too good. I won't elaborate too much on it (chuckle). But still there was a lot of things that happened that you recall that, at the time, were probably pretty bad, and still pretty funny.

There's one particular incident that I recall in Malang. About five or six Dutch warrant officers and noncom's were sitting at a table over there in the corner, and it was glass all around. We was sitting back over against the wall on the other side. I remember this Dutchman having just a little too much beer. Of course, they like to be called Hollanders, but, anyway,they was Dutchmen to me. And he got to waving his saber around a little bit and wanting everyone in there to recognize the fact that he was an expert with that saber. He could do many things with it and was letting most of the people in there know this. He danced around there a little bit and made a swing or two at the air and what-have-you and got a little bit closer to this table where the Air Force was sitting. No one was really paying much attention to him because that's what he wanted, was attention.

But I recall that this sergeant had on an Australian hat, beaded, with chin strap and some kind of a shirt and pair

of khakis. In other words, he didn't look anything at all military, other than the .45 that he had on. This Dutchman swung in closer and closer to their table, and he just pulled that .45 out and shoots out the chandelier. That was the end of that little demonstration of the saber. The Dutchman went over and holstered his saber and sat down. There wasn't (chuckle) any more demonstrations that night in this particular place.

Marcello: What did you do with your fieldpieces there at Singosari?

Rayburn: After arriving out at the airstrip at Singosari, we immediately set up our fieldpieces in a position to use them for ack-ack. We also twinned those machine guns that we had on the ship with us and dug emplacements all around our barracks and made two or three emplacements just off the runway on the airstrip. One of these was manned by the little Chinaman, Eddie Fung, and Sergeant "Brodie" Miller. I recall another emplacement out there that was manned by "Humpy" Campbell and two or three more. I don't remember just who all those people were. I was still driving a truck, and I'd rather drive that truck than be in one of those emplacements out there, and so I really didn't pay too much attention other than the fact that"Brodie" and Eddie Fung were from our battery. I remember that very well. They were two very qualified persons to have in an emplacement like that because they put out some fire. They wasn't afraid of

nothing, either one of them. And the BAR men--Browning Automatics--was "Humpy," I think. "Humpy" Campbell was, at that time, staff sergeant, and he was a BAR man. He burnt the barrels off of several of them during the air raids.

I'd like to go into the first air raid we had--my opinion of it, my views of it.

Marcello: Let me just make this particular statement, then, because I think we are at the point where we can talk about those air raids. The first one occurred on either February 3 or February 5, 1942, I think. I've seen various dates written down for it. Do you recall the date?

Rayburn: I think it was the day after my birthday, which is on the 2nd day of February.

Marcello: So you think it was on February 3rd then?

Rayburn: I believe it was February 3rd.

Marcello: Well, you probably have a good barometer by which to gauge when that attack did take place, don't you?

Rayburn: Well, from the 3rd to the 5th, you know, that's a very short time. But I very well recall that I had just passed my twenty-second birthday. That was my birthday present; I always considered it to be my birthday present.

Marcello: Describe that first air raid.

Rayburn: Of course, we really hadn't had too much instructions on air raids. Hell, nobody had been in them except the guys

that came out of the Philippines, the Air Force.

Marcello: I assume you had no slit trenches or shelters or anything dug at this time?

Rayburn: No, we didn't. Now there were drainage ditches around the camp and lots of bamboo, so forth and so on. But we had not prepared for an air raid, so to speak.

The best I recall, the drum started sounding, and we weren't familiar with the drums. We didn't know what they meant. But those natives, from one end of that island to the other, they started beating those drums. They were sending messages. And the Dutch were familiar with it, but there weren't any Dutch people around us at that time. And the best I recall, those planes were there before we even knew what was going on.

They came in bombing and strafing, and (chuckle) everybody started running for the bush, naturally. This first time the sirens sounded, and there was a little moving around. Some of the guys grabbed their guns and their canteens and were walking off out of the camp. Those guys that had their machine guns set up in their emplacements that they'd dug in the ground and filled sacks of sand and piled around them for a little protection was easing over toward those places. At that time the British had the . . . no, they weren't there for the first raid. They came in afterwards.

I didn't know exactly what to do, but I'm looking to

someone that's been in the service a little longer than I have. In other words, I'm looking for someone to give me an idea of what's the best thing to do. I walked across the street there to a hut to where "Brodie" Miller, Jack Cellum, and a fellow by the name of James Conley, and maybe Sergeant Lee and two or three other noncom's lived. "Brodie" and James Conley--James was a private like myself--were playing checkers. I said, "Well, hey, you guys gonna get out of this hut?" I said, "We're fixing to have a air raid." "Brodie" said, "Oh, you're just as safe here as you would be out in the bush." He said, "You got more protection here than you would out there." He said, "There's no point in running." I couldn't buy that. I had itchy feet.

I sat around for a little while, but I took off out back. I knew where this big drainage ditch was, and I was going to go out to where it was. It wasn't, oh, possibly two or three hundred yards outside of the barracks area. Just about the time I got within fifty or sixty feet, why, the first Zero peeled off and came right across that camp.

Marcello: Did the strafers come in first?

Rayburn: Yes.

Marcello: And then they were followed by the bombers?

Rayburn: Well, we could hear the bombers in the background, and that scared the devil out of me. Incidentally, these guys that were playing checkers there . . . they knocked off about

half of their roof the first time over, and you didn't have to tell them to get out then because they got out. Well, it was kind of funny. You could look back up there, and they're peeking around the building at them, you know. A lot of those people wasn't as afraid as I was. I guarantee you, I was scared.

But they made a pretty successful bombing run that first time over the field. I can't recall just how much damage they done, but I believe they got two or three of those old Martins that the Dutch had and possibly one or two of the B-17's that we had there on the airstrip. I don't remember that much about it, but I know we had some damage. And, of course, we were very short of planes, too.

Marcello: Did your fieldpieces get into action during this first raid?

Rayburn: Yes, I know some of them did. If all the places were manned at that time, I don't recall, but I do know that some of them got into action. This I remember very well: "Humpy" Campbell just literally burnt the barrel off of a BAR. "Brodie" and Eddie, they had the BAR and their machine guns, and "Brodie" probably didn't waste ammunition. He was a well-seasoned soldier, being an ex-Marine. But he got into action with his BAR, and Eddie certainly did with his machine gun. I don't think that we got any hits on any of the planes. They weren't there long enough, really. It was a very short time, but it seemed like a long time.

Marcello: How long would you estimate the entire action lasted?

Rayburn: Why, I would say, twenty minutes . . . fifteen to twenty minutes.

Marcello: Were you actually watching it, or were you keeping your head down the whole time?

Rayburn: The first time over I wasn't watching very much. I had to see a little bit of what was going on, but I kept my head down pretty well.

I know that this time I ran across two brothers. I'm looking up out of this drainage ditch, and I am giving them Japs one, one, one good cussing. And these two brothers . . . one of them walked up and kind of caught me by the shoulder and shook me a little bit. He said, "Rayburn, do you realize what you're doing?" I said, "Well, I don't know . . . what's the problem?" He said, "Don't you realize that you could be killed this instant, and you're using profanity like that?" I said, "Well, I'd never thought of it that way, but that sure could happen. But I tell you what, fellows, I believe I'll take a walk on farther down the ditch." I walked off with that little talking to that this young man had given me about using this terrible profanity. But the way I could see it, those people were trying to do something to me, and I didn't like it, and my only way of getting back at them was giving them a doggone good cussing, and which I did.

Marcello: So what do you learn from this attack and from the next series of air attacks that you have?

Rayburn: Well, that first one kind of, so to speak, oriented us. I guess that's the word for it. We found out that they meant business, and they were going to harass us as much as they possibly could, and so we might just well to be prepared for it. I think it took that first air raid to kind of get us, so to speak, in shape for other things to come. At least it was over with, and there was not just a great deal of danger, and no one was hurt. As far as I remember, no one ever got a scratch out of it.

Of course, there were several more to come. I figured that there was going to be more of it, and there was nothing you could run from. Just do the best you could, and God be with you, you know. I think I took that attitude. I hope I did. I wanted to do something if I possibly could, but there seemed to be so little that I could do. But I think I was ready for the next time.

Marcello: Did you begin digging slit trenches and air raid shelters after that initial attack?

Rayburn: We did. We got into the bamboo coverage, where there's some coverage, and, in fact, you didn't have to tell a whole bunch of those boys to get them a hole to get in (chuckle). They started digging holes theirself, and they dug some there between the barracks. I didn't think that was wise,

unless they came in on you so fast that you didn't have time to take cover. Then those that were right close to the barracks were fine. But I preferred the bamboo, myself, because you had coverage. We dug a lot of slit trenches in the bamboo out there on the edge of the field.

In fact, I ended up one day out there with two or three more fellows and the battery commander, Captain Wright. Spending that one air raid with Captain Wright out there in that slit trench made me think more and more of him. I didn't think so much of him for what he had done. He grabbed my rifle and dirtied it up to where I'd have to clean it, you know, shooting at them. I didn't feel like that they were close enough that you could knock them down with a 1918-model rifle. That's the kind of equipment that we took overseas with us. We just didn't have any. But, nevertheless, Captain Wright unloaded a clip on one of the planes that came over fairly close, and if he ever got a hit, we'd never know. But I had to clean up my rifle after that, and I made it a point afterwards to steer clear of him because he was going to grab the first rifle that he saw and start shooting. I'd have shot at them, but I didn't feel like that they was close enough that I could hit one with a darned ol' 1918-model rifle.

Marcello: Approximately how many of these air raids did you experience there altogether?

Rayburn: I believe that we had abour four, maybe five, there. Now I was in Surabaja for a while down there on ammo detail, and we had some raids there that they didn't have out at Singosari. So I believe that that was about all we had--maybe four or five.

Marcello: How much damage was done at the base?

Rayburn: Well, the runways had to be repaired. They knocked some pretty good holes in the runway, and they strafed a lot of those old Martins that the Dutch Air Force had bought from the United States years before, and they burnt. I believe that they got two B-17's.

Of course, we had one B-17 shot out of the air, and a good, little, friend of mine by the name of Barnes happened to be in that plane that day. They lost the crew and our soldiers that were with them. It was a maintenance flight. They had been working on this plane, and they were just taking it up for a checkout. Those boys just happened to be in the air when possibly the second air raid occurred that we had there at Singosari. That plane was shot down, and we lost one of the twins. There was twin brothers, Dan and Don Barnes. Don was the one that was on the plane. That was our first casualty in F Battery.

Marcello: Nevertheless, as a result of these air raids, you actually didn't lose many personnel, if any at all.

Rayburn: No, we didn't lose any, other than Don Barnes, and he happened

to be in F Battery. No, we had very, very little injuries up until that point, other than that one plane being shot down.

Marcello: How about the barracks and things like that? Did they suffer very much as a result of these air raids?

Rayburn: Not a whole lot.

Marcello: The Japanese knew what they were after, in other words?

Rayburn: Yes. I think they could care less about the personnel, which were very few. They just wanted to let us know that they were there, and they did strafe the barracks. One bomb that I recall hit in the area and destroyed part of this barracks where my friend "Brodie" Miller and John Lee and Jack Cellum and that bunch were. It got quite a bit of damage, about a third of the roof knocked off of it. We had some other damage on the barracks, but not a great amount. There wasn't enough . . . they were after the aircraft.

When they made this run on the airfield, these Martins were sitting just across the fence and a short distance from the barracks. It's quite possible that this first run, or first two runs, that they made were on the field proper, and then maybe just coming back across strafing the barracks a little just to let us know that they were there.

Marcello: What protection were you receiving from those P-40's that you said were based nearby?

Rayburn: Those P-40's, they hit the air, and we saw two or three real good dogfights from the ground. The P-40's were no match for the Zeros. It was bloodcurdling to hear one of those P-40's go into a dive, and that's the only way he could get away or get the Zero off of his tail because they were just too . . . the P-40's were too heavy, and they just weren't maneuverable enough to get away from that Zero. When one of them would get one of them on his tail, well, he would go into a dive, and those things make the dadgummedest noise that you'll ever hear in your life. But we knew what was going on. He'd come out of it, and he'd go right back into the clouds. Those pilots over there were a good bunch of guys.

One day right in the middle of an air raid this captain . . . I can't recall his name, but he had lots of friends in our outfit. I just don't recall where he come from but somewhere in our part of the country, somewhere in the state of Texas here. He just landed right there on the grass in that P-40 and jumped out of his plane. The air raid wasn't officially over, and he jumped out of that plane, and he didn't have a thing on but skivvy shorts. He came over to our barracks there, and somebody handed him a bottle. He stood around for a little while and got back in his plane and took off.

They didn't seem to be afraid of anything, and they were

doing all they could do with those P-40's. They had the firepower, but they didn't have the maneuverability to cope with the Zero.

Marcello: Could you expect the air raids at the same time whenever they occurred, or did this vary?

Rayburn: Well, it got into a pattern. It got into a pattern, probably for the reason of where the Japanese planes were coming from. I suppose that they were coming from Indochina. Maybe that was too far for the fighter planes. They might have been coming from closer than that, but it'd just nearly have to be Indochina because that field there, which will come into my life later on, is the field that they worked from when they sank the British Navy's Repulse and the Prince of Wales, which was practically the whole British Navy. So with the distance they had to come, I'm sure that just before they got there they'd kick off--well, we saw them kick them off--the extra tanks. So it was more or less a pattern.

Marcello: Did you always have sufficient warning?

Rayburn: Yes. After that first raid, we wised up that the natives knew more about it than the Dutch, and they would give us the warning before the Dutch would ever sound the sirens.

Marcello: Now it's quite clear by this time that the Japanese more or less control the air and that things are going pretty much in their favor. Do you detect any changes in the attitudes of the natives?

Rayburn: Not really. Not at that time. They seemed to be quite confused and didn't just really know what was going on. But right along those days, well, they were still very much for the Yank and always trying to sell you something. They wanted the dollar that we had, pretty much. If their attitude changed any at that time, I don't remember it. I couldn't see it. Maybe it was something that I just overlooked.

But I know I was on a special detail--ammo detail--in Surabaja, and I stayed down there about ten days, just two of us, Sergeant Lee and myself. We had a truck and were moving ammo out to the ammunition dumps. It was being unloaded off the ship, and the natives were all doing that work. Now when they'd sound the air raid alarm, the natives would take off. We did, too. It wasn't no point in us sitting there on the docks. We'd get in the truck and wheel off down the road a ways.

I was around some of those ammo dumps with the Dutch officers and some British officers, as well as Americans, and possibly I seen a little bit of concern with the Dutch people toward the natives. But, actually, to my way of thinking, the natives didn't really show me anything other than the fact that they didn't like those air raids. They would really"hook 'em up" when they'd sound that siren. Of course, down there on the docks those planes would come in

low, and they'd be there before you could get away--a lot of times, especially the strafers.

Marcello: In late February the Japanese land on the island of Java, and on February 27, 1942, the 19th Bomb Group leaves the island. What effect upon your morale did this even have?

Rayburn: Well, it had quite a lot. Hey, that was sad, man, because we had felt like all this time that just any day there was a half-dozen ships doing to anchor in there with all the supplies and men that we could ever want. But then you could see that it wasn't going to be that way because here would come a plane in. It came all the way from, the way I understand it, through Africa and into Java--a B-17. He'd make pass after pass at the field out there, a small grass field with a few barricades set up on it, and he'd actually wreck that plane before he could get the doggone thing on the ground.

Those old B-17's that we'd been working with had a lot of .30-caliber machine guns on them but no tail guns. We only saw two B-17's that had tail guns on them--they were B-17F's--only <u>two</u> of them. They'd get it airborne; the Japs come in from the blind side; that plane's shot down before the poor people knew what the devil's going on. When they took off and they started asking for volunteers, you know, to go with the 19th Bomb Group, that was a sad, sad day for me because I could see the writing on the wall. There

just was no place to run; there was no place to go.

Marcello: Was there very much resentment over the fact that the Air Corps was getting out and you guys had to stay?

Rayburn: Well, we knew that they couldn't take all of us, and you couldn't by no means take off with them without permission.

Marcello: My records indicate that there were only about four B-17's left by this time?

Rayburn: That's probably right.

Marcello: Obviously, they couldn't fly out 500 men or however many were in the 131st Field Artillery.

Rayburn: I believe there were still two B-24's--but maybe one of them was wrecked--around. We felt like they had enough planes to fly us out, but then they've got the 22nd Group, you know, to get out, also. At that time I don't suppose those fighter planes could make any Allied command post anywhere. They didn't have the range, is my way of thinking. Evidently, those crew and pilots went out with the B-24's and B-17's.

Now I'm pretty sure that we still had two B-24's because one of those B-24's that came in . . . a friend of mine that I went to school with and sold newspapers with . . . I'm walking down the battery street there in Singosari, and he hollered at me. His name was Lloyd McNeil. He said, "Have you got any extra clothes? I just came in on that B-24, and I don't have any clothes, no shoes, or nothing." I got him fixed up with a uniform and shoes and what-have-you.

But that's the way that they flew in. I personally felt like that somehow or another they should have mustered up enough planes to get us out of there.

Marcello: Up until this time you have no idea why you are in Java. You've never been told.

Rayburn: We have never been told. There was quite a lot of rumors floating around about this. We began to think, along about that time, that the Dutch shanghaied us, carried us, to Java because they had to have some kind of defense. Evidently, the Allied Forces were going to bypass Java, and the Dutch had us loaded on this Bloemfontein, and they pulled anchor, my friend, and hid them there.

There were some Allied ships . . . some shipping came into Surabaja. In fact, we picked up one or two stragglers off of those ships. One had left a sailor there for an appendix operation.

Marcello: Now almost immediately after the 19th Bomb Group leaves, your unit pulls out of Singosari, also, isn't that correct?

Rayburn: It was just a matter of a few days that we started loading gear and was told that E Battery would stay behind as a rear echelon. But there were some things that happened just before that.

As I mentioned before, being on this ammunition detail down in Surabaja, I ran across a sub crew and visited with them there in port, and they told me some . . . they really

brought me up-to-date, more or less. They didn't want to do much talking, either, because at that time there was all kinds of ships coming in from Singapore and the Celebes and other places that were bringing in Americans, British, and all nationalities. They were all on the run. They were trying to get as far as they could toward Australia. This sub crew that I got to having a few drinks with one night in Surabaja got to telling me a few things--and really didn't want to tell me anything, either--that really got me wondering: "What in the devil's going to happen?"

I ran across this one American, and he was really loaded. I tried to make conversation with him . . . I don't know what the man was doing there or anything else, but, anyway, all he'd ever say was to put his finger over his mouth and tell me he was a spy. I think probably he was a correspondent. That was my thinking about him later on in years.

But this sub crew off the Swordfish gave me a lot of information that was bad--very, very bad. They had just slipped in there for fuel and were going right back out. In fact, they just had a few hours, just long enough for them to take on supplies, and they were going to go right back.

On this ammunition detail there, there was a great, big hunk of a man, and he happened to be Filipino. He hollered at me and said, "Hey, 'Joe,' what're you doing?" And I got to visiting with him a little bit. His ship had

been shot out from under him, and they had picked him up and brought him into port there in Surabaja.

Things weren't going too well about that time, although this was very good duty for me and Sergeant Lee down in Surabaja.

There's something that we learned from the British soldiers that came through that I'd like to elaborate a little bit on. It had something to do with what the Americans could do. All the "brass" was staying at this huge, ultra, ultramodern, nice hotel. I can't tell you the name of it, but probably you have it somewhere in your history there. But the British resented it very much. We'd come in for lunch with our fatigues on and sit down with them and eat. They didn't think that that should be the way it was, but nobody told us that we couldn't stay in the best hotel down there. Although they had moved us in a smaller one, I took command over the sergeant (chuckle), more or less, and moved us to this big hotel. There are only two on the island of Java, and they are very well-known hotels there--very, very, very, very nice. You have natives--eight, ten, twelve, or fifteen of them--waiting on you, bringing these dishes around to each table. It's quite a sight to see. The British were quite upset about that. That just wasn't in their manual at all, but, nevertheless, the Americans done it, and the British couldn't do anything about it. There

was a complaint turned in about it, but none of our officers did anything about it. They weren't interested.

Very shortly after the 19th Bomb Group moved out, we started loading our gear in trucks. We had instructions to leave our footlockers, that they would be brought to us later on, and just take the things that you could get by with, such as your clothing, raincoat, galoshes, the barracks bag with blankets, and then our footlockers would be brought to us later. E Battery was assigned as rear echelon, and they stayed behind. Our unit pulled out, crossing the island of Java. The places that we went are just a foggy memory.

Marcello: You didn't stay anyplace very long.

Rayburn: No. We were on the go. We'd pull in after dark and pull out the next day. Really, I think, possibly about the only thing that we were doing is just crossing and re-crossing the island, and, of course, moving--actually I wouldn't call it west--north, but it was actually west. I think we were doing that, more or less, just to maybe confuse someone, make them think that there was more Army personnel than there really was.

Marcello: According to my records, the Japanese, of course, landed on the island in overwhelming force, and they evidently were continually outflaking your people, and so you were constantly having to pull back or move out and so on.

Rayburn: The best I remember that's the way it happened. Now this

force that landed there in Java, I've heard figures from 40,000 to 80,000 troops, and all the fighting personnel, including the Americans, the Australians, the British, and the Dutch, wouldn't number 16,000 or 17,000. You might just as well forget the Dutch--they didn't do a damn thing.

So I believe that all we were doing was . . . I'm sure that they were getting good information out of Java. The Japanese were getting this information, and I think all we were doing, more or less, is confusing the information that they were getting.

Now we did go into gun positions. We took up two field-pieces, I believe, two or three. I didn't go up to the front; I was hauling ammo in my truck. We engaged them in battle. The Australians were our infantry and a fighting bunch of son-of-a-guns, you know. All they wanted was a bottle and what they called . . . it's kind of a cape-like raincoat to sit down on, and they was ready to go. Quite a few of them got shot up pretty bad. I can recall several jeeps that they'd made litters on them bringing those Australians back out of there, and they were in the best of spirits, you know. All of them were always asking you, you know, "'Yank,' you got a drink?"

We had our trucks parked in a huge rubber plantation. Ilo Hard was up front with two firing batteries, and I was supposed to go on up there with some ammo, but they sent

another truck. That's the reason I never got up there. But they opened up there on them until they got to outflanking us, and then we had to get out and get out in a hurry.

But now, during this time that we were sitting in the rubber plantation, I had quite a lot of time on my hands, and I was back to the jeep where "Brodie" Miller and Eddie Fung had their twin machine guns set up on it. Jimmy Lattimore was their officer. We ran into the 5th MT (Motor Transport), Australians, Colonel Black's forces there, and their trucks was parked a hundred yards across from us. One of the Australians walked over and asked us if we had any .45 ammunition. "Brodie" said, "How much .45 ammunition do you have?" I said, "I think I've got twenty-two cases, the best I remember . . . somewhere around twenty, twenty-five cases." He said, "Well, we've got some Thompson submachine guns, but we don't have any ammo." "Brodie" and that little Chinaman . . . boy, that little Chinaman's eyes lit up like a Christmas tree; you know, he really wanted one of those Thompson submachine guns. I said, "What should I do, sergeant?" He said, "Go up and talk to the captain and tell him that we can trade some ammo for some submachine guns."

So I took off up the hill up there where Captain Wright was, and I got up there, and Captain Wright said, "What are you doing up here? I thought you took some ammo up." I said, "No, sir, somebody out of Service Battery took it up

there. I don't have but just a few cases of HE, and that .45 ammunition is all I've got in my truck. Captain, we've got a chance to trade a little ammunition for some Thompson submachine guns." I said, "We've got a lot of .45 ammunition." And the only thing we used it for was just sidepieces. He said, "Raymond, if you let one bit of that ammunition go, I'll court-martial you!" I said, "Well, captain, I didn't know." He said, "Well, don't you let any of that ammunition get away! You keep every bit of it!"

So I go back and tell Sergeant Miller what the captain said, and he said, "Well, I'll fix it then." Of course, unbeknown to Captain Wright, to this day probably, "Brodie" Miller and Eddie Fung got their machine guns, and the Australians got a little ammunition. Just how much I didn't want to know because I'm more or less responsible for it.

Marcello: Now during all this moving and maneuvering, I gather that you really haven't seen any Japanese soldiers.

Rayburn: No, sir, I never saw one Japanese soldier. Quite a few of the boys did, but I wasn't close enough to see them and did not see a Japanese soldier for several days after that.

Marcello: Let's talk about the capitulation of the island. When did it occur? Do you recall the date? Here again, I've seen March 8th, and I've seen March 11th mentioned.

Rayburn: It was on March 8th.

Marcello: Describe the events surrounding the surrender.

Rayburn: Well, when we left this rubber plantation, we have to maneuver into this surrender. We left this rubber plantation. We traveled a few miles--not too many miles--and pulled into another rubber plantation. In other words, we're retreating. We pulled into this place to where it's pretty well camouflaged, and we're waiting around there until night, and then we'll move on.

After we got, oh, down the road several miles, they'd already . . . well, Captain Wright pointed out to me, he said, "I don't know why we're sitting here! Why don't we get the hell out of here?" He said, "You can see movement right there, can't you?" And I said, "Well, captain, I don't see anything." He said, "Well, what the hell's wrong with you?" He said, "Can't you see that vehicle?" It was some kind of a armored truck, you know. I finally did get a glance at it, and, of course, I'm ready to go then. Well, we moved out shortly after that.

But we got on down the road a ways, and we stopped at this rubber plantation, and there was a village up the road. Well, we've got to stay there all day. I'm thinking that this day is probably a Saturday or a Sunday . . . I believe it was a Sunday. I went to Lieutenant Lattimore and asked him if he would go with me and someone else back up that village and see if we could buy anything. And he said, "All right." We went back up to this village in Eddie Fung's jeep,

and I was driving, and Lieutenant Lattimore was with us.

We go back up to this village, and there's a pretty good-sized grocery store there. We go in and we're picking up bottles of red label John Walker, not Johnny Walker, but John Walker--Australian whiskey. This groceryman didn't like it, and he started mouthing about us buying so much. And there was a lady walked up that spoke fluent English, and she said, "You let those soldiers have all they want!" She said, "The Japs are going to be here in a few hours, and they're going to take it, anyway!" Of course, he didn't say any more, and we bought it and went back and proceeded to drink it.

I know that I had a little more than I should have had, and I woke up sometime during the night in the back of a truck. I'd heard this night bombing. We go across this low water crossing there, and there's two English trucks sitting there on fire. I'm in the back of this truck all by myself, don't know where in the devil we're going or what we're doing, and I'm scared. That's quite a feeling, you know, to wake up from a little too much to drink and be in a situation like that.

But it was only a short distance, and we pulled into another big rubber plantation. This is on the outskirts of Bandung. And this day there in this rubber plantation in Bandung--as I said, it was just on the outskirts of it--they

had bombing raids all day long on Bandung, and the Dutch don't want their beautiful city tore up, and so they're "bacha-baching" all day long about just what they're going to do.

In the meantime, there's two big warehouses over there, I guess, about a quarter-of-a-mile. We could see them from this rubber plantation. We were told that they were full of supplies, that they were British warehouses, and they were full of supplies. The Australians, they seem to get around better than a lot of people on things like that, and they were putting out the word: "Go over there and take what you want because they're going to destroy the dump." Of course, everybody's interested in that when they found out there was huge cans of Cadbury chocolate in it and lots of cigarettes. Everybody's interested in it.

But another thing that happened along about that time was when Corporal Cellum and I were going over there to see what we could loot. This car drove up with Colonel Searle and his driver. Jack had got over close enough to the car to see that the back seat of that dadgummed car was full of money. What had happened, the Dutch had had him come into Bandung and take our money out of there.

Now we had got hold of some more money through a Lieutenant Stensland. He had came into Surabaja just about possibly two weeks before we left Singosari--very mysterious man. No

one knew why he was there and what he was doing with that $200,000. He certainly didn't tell anyone, and that didn't please the officers a bit because they felt like they should know. But when he left the United States with these orders, they were secret orders, and he didn't tell anyone ever. There was that money, and then there was our payroll that finally arrived, and evidently Colonel Searle had all of this money that belonged to the United States in the back of his car.

Well, Jack was torn between trying to get to that warehouse or trying to get in the back of that car for some of that money. It was getting to the point where it was dog-eat-dog; you had to hustle for yourself. There wasn't no way that we could get close to that car unless we had an air raid. Jack kept telling me, "Oh, just be patient! Just be patient! That damn driver won't stay there when those planes start coming over." Of course, they didn't. There were air raids, and they were still bombing Bandung.

But we did get to the warehouse and got some cans of chocolate out of it and a lot of cigarettes. I remember one name of those cigarettes called "Players." It was English tobacco and terrible, terrible, terrible cigarettes, but they were better than none at all. Of course, we lost everything that we got over there later on down the road. We didn't get too much benefit from it because it was taken away

from us.

We pulled out of there that night. Now it was a pretty well-known fact then and there, that day, that the Dutch wanted to stop this nonsense: "They're tearing up our beautiful Java!" Of course, they were in command. It was pretty well-known that they wanted to quit. They wanted to throw in the towel. But we took off from there, and we were driving blackout that night.

I had a Corporal Bankhead riding with me. Incidentally, there's a man I haven't seen since the war until 1978 in Dallas, and he finally showed up at a "Lost Battalion" reunion. We hadn't heard from him, didn't know what happened to him, and found out he was a stockbroker and living in New Jersey. He was riding with me, and "Brodie" Miller was in the back of the truck asleep. There was just the three of us. We were traveling pretty fast. I'd had a little bit to drink, and probably my mind wasn't working as clear as it should have been working. I made a sharp left turn--those drainage ditches over on the island of Java have culverts, and lots of drainage ditches--and I caught that culvert with the left front tire of my truck and knocked the front of it out. So we just jumped out of the truck and started getting our barracks bags out to catch another truck.

Sergeant Miller was fixing to set the truck on fire,

and one of our officers drove up about that time and stopped him. He didn't believe in leaving it there, even though it was wrecked, for the Japanese. He wanted to burn it. But the lieutenant wouldn't let him burn it. He said, "You'll only give away our position and accomplish nothing." And so we just grabbed a truck and rode the rest of the night. We had received word in the meantime to proceed to this race-track, another racetrack.

Marcello: We're going to Garoet Racetrack now.

Rayburn: Garoet. That's correct.

Marcello: So you do have the word of the surrender by this time?

Rayburn: Yes.

Marcello: What reaction did you have when you found out that the island was capitulating and that you were about to become a prisoner-of-war?

Rayburn: Awful. Man, you didn't know what to do, what to think, and you certainly didn't get any information from our officers because they were just as scared as we were. What the devil! I'd never been around any Japanese people; I didn't know how they think. I always thought they were very, very peculiar. And what the devil? What will they do with us? Are they going to shoot us or what?

Marcello: What were the rumors going around so far as to the Japanese's treatment of prisoners?

Rayburn: Well, very, very bad, the best that I can remember. They

didn't believe in taking prisoners. They taught their soldiers never to be taken prisoners, and they didn't believe in it, and so, therefore, what could come of this for us that could be worth a darn? If they didn't believe in it, how would they treat us? So it was bad. That was a sad, sad day walking around that racetrack out there. And then we got orders.

Marcello: Did you proceed to the racetrack as part of a convoy?

Rayburn: Yes.

Marcello: So that's, in effect, how you found the racetrack?

Rayburn: That was our instructions--to go to Garoet, to this racetrack, park our vehicles in a circle, and wait for further instructions.

Marcello: Was Garoet like a suburb of Batavia?

Rayburn: I think it was probably closer to Bandung that it was to Batavia because it was just a short distance from there.

And they called this next place we go to the "tea plantation." That means high ground, and Bandung definitely is in the hills or mountains--some high elevation there.

Marcello: I've heard some of the people say that they kind of felt ashamed that they had to surrender, especially since they hadn't really done very much fighting.

Rayburn: Well, truthfully, I hadn't done any at all. And, by golly, well, that's just no way you can describe it. It's all been over with. That's not the kind of wars that I've read about and seen in the movies. It didn't seem like we'd done

anything. We weren't all pleased with it. The only thing that we could see--we could see very well--was that when we're going to the front, the damn Dutch is going the other way. Now we saw a lot of that, man. And here's a country that's got an island to defend, and they're running from it, and we're trying to get into action. I'll never be able to justify that. If I live another hundred years, that's something that I could never understand. As far as I know, maybe on the other end of the island, maybe the Dutch got into action. From what I've heard from E Battery, they didn't. But they didn't get in any action that we know of where the Japs were landing. The Americans, and the British, and Australians, and mainly our 560 or 570 people with the Australian MT, Motor Transport, outfit were the only ones that I know of that got into action. The British were supposed to be on our flank, and--I don't know--the Dutch were supposed to be on the other. As far as I'm concerned, it was just a confused, messed up . . . I don't think the Dutch had any idea of doing any fighting to begin with. Just as soon as they could get the island surrendered--unconditional surrender--that was all they were interested in, and that's what happened to it.

Marcello: Some speculation has been that the Dutch figured that if they didn't put up very much resistance, things might revert almost to normal after the surrender.

Rayburn: Why, I'm sure that that's what they had in mind. You know, this little island was setting out there quite a ways from Australia, and they had taken French Indochina and Malaya. They was setting there, just a harmless, more or less, bunch of people, and, of course, the Dutch had families there. Some of them had lived there all their life, had been born there. They wanted to make it easier on theirself as they possibly could, which didn't work out that way.

Marcello: Now after you receive word of the surrender, and you were on your way to Garoet, what did you do with your weapons?

Rayburn: Well, we didn't do anything with our weapons until we got to Garoet, at this racetrack. Then our instructions there was to pile all of our small arms in a huge pile--destroy nothing--and line up our fieldpieces, machine guns, and so forth and so on. And, I guarantee you, if you take your rifle and pull the firing pin out of it or do something to try and make it not usable, you're subject to get court-martialed by one of those officers if they saw you. Now I saw this, and I'm going to put it down. There was quite a bit of that going on--just do anything to that doggone rifle to where it couldn't be used again, and you'd be court-martialed. There was some hard, hard words about that, and it came from our officers because they knew that they were going to be responsible. Maybe you can't blame them because it's them

they're looking after, too, you know. But we done all we could.

Marcello: So what happens when you get to Garoet?

Rayburn: Well, before we got to Garoet, now we did destroy a couple of automobiles, and I thought it was rather keen. It was a Ford and a Chevrolet, '41 models. And we took an axe and knocked a hole in the pan, pulled the throttle out on it, and bent it down, and see which one of them would run the longest (chuckle).

Marcello: Which one ran the longest?

Rayburn: I don't remember (laughter). But it was a Ford and a Chevrolet, and I don't remember. I was always going to remember that, but I just can't remember which one lasted the longest. Of course, they took axes and chopped them up and knocked the windows out and everything else. The Japs didn't get anything <u>there</u> that they could use.

But now with our firearms, I don't know if they ever used them or not. I'm sure some of those Korean guards that we had later on were carrying some of those old Enfields or the other old World War I popular rifle, which was the . . .

Marcello: Springfield '03's.

Rayburn: Springfield '03, right. And then the Japanese came out to the track there, and they had nothing to say except just a few words to the officers instructing them to drive our

trucks and park them along the road near this tea plantation.

Marcello: So you actually weren't at Garoet very long, other than to stack arms and that sort of thing?

Rayburn: Oh, possibly a couple of days, something like that.

Marcello: And the Japs did not harass you or molest you at all while you were there?

Rayburn: No. They moved us out of there and told us to park our trucks in columns along the road and stay in that vicinity until they came for us. And we moved our trucks over there, and, evidently, this was near the tea plantation. We moved our trucks over there and followed orders.

We were there, oh, approximately, three days. The natives were coming up and down the road, you know, with their little barber shops that they carry with them and their little sewing machines, and the men were having their uniforms made into tropical short-sleeved shirts and pants and just things like that. We just sat around there until we finally got our instructions.

At that particular place, I remember something that happened. My friend and buddy, Grover "Red" Reichle, and I, both being truck drivers, we decided we'd bunk up while we was there in the back of his truck. We put our blankets in there and spread them out, and a couple of non-coms came along--regular F Battery men--and demanded that truck because they outranked us . . . a couple of sergeants, both of them

real good friends of mine today. But they didn't get the truck. They was going to have to whip me and "Red," and they didn't want to do that, and probably they could have. But, anyway, they didn't outrank us for that truck. So we spent our nights sleeping in that truck instead of out on the ground.

Marcello: How did you get from Garoet up to the tea plantation?

Rayburn: Well, this is what I call the tea plantation. I didn't see any tea, but I know it was in the hills, high country, and that's where the tea was grown. This is what I call the tea plantation.

Now the Japanese furnished transportation from there to the railhead, and we rode a train into . . .

Marcello: Tandjong Priok.

Rayburn: Tandjong Priok.

Marcello: Let's just back up a minute. You're at Garoet and then you go to the tea plantation, is that correct?

Rayburn: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, now how long are you at the tea plantation?

Rayburn: About three days.

Marcello: Oh, I see. Garoet and the tea plantation kind of run together?

Rayburn: Run together.

Marcello: And you really don't do anything at either place?

Rayburn: No, just sit and wait. They just had us waiting. And possibly we were there longer than three days, but three or four

days, I think, is probably about the length of time we were there.

Marcello: Now while you're at the tea plantation, were there any Japanese around there?

Rayburn: No, we never seen any until they came after us.

Marcello: You're still waiting for further orders.

Rayburn: We're waiting further orders. They came after us and hauled us to the railhead where they stacked us in these little ol' boxcars, as many as they could get in there, and hauled us into Batavia.

Marcello: And Tandjong Priok is kind of like a port for Batavia, is it not?

Rayburn: Tandjong Priok, yes, it's the port, right on the water. We had transportation from . . . it's about maybe three kilometers from this big, huge . . . it looked something like a dirigible cover. We come in there, and they furnished trucks and hauled us into camp, and we got in there . . . it was late at night, after dark.

Marcello: Okay, now according to my records, you get into Tandjong Priok about March 31, 1942. Does that more or less coincide with your recollections?

Rayburn: Yes, probably. I don't remember the date, but it was the latter part of March. All this took place . . . about thirty days of this . . . probably a month-and-a-half of this maneuvering around and engaging with the Japanese on the front.

Marcello: Is it not about the time that you board that train to go into Tandjong Priok that you get your first hint about what the treatment's going to be like? Isn't this where some of the initial bashing and slapping and yelling and screaming and so on begins? Maybe not a whole lot, but doesn't it begin here a little bit?

Rayburn: I don't recall just a whole lot of it, but they spoke with authority, and everybody moved fast and light. They got the job done, and they got it done well. They got good cooperation, which I'm sure that they had come there to get. I really didn't notice, myself, personally, much of that until about two weeks later. Then I found out about it real good-like.

Marcello: I understand these Japanese soldiers were kind of scruffy-looking in terms of their uniforms and so on.

Rayburn: With their hobnail shoes turned up at the toes and their wrapped leggings and their little ol' caps and their gun belt and rifles--looked like that they were just barely big enough to carry the dadgummed rifle--they were a scroungy-looking bunch of people, I'm telling you. They looked anything but a military man.

They moved us out of there at night, and somehow the British come back into this again, and the Indians.

Marcello: You're talking about Tandjong Priok?

Rayburn: I'm talking about Tandjong Priok. As I mentioned, we moved

in there . . . it was late at night and the exact date, I would just have to say, was sometime in late March or early April. Dates just dismissed (snaps fingers) from my mind along about that time. It was just a bunch of run-down, part wooden, part stone, tile barracks with a barbed wire fence around it, just a short distance from the bay. And they just threw our junk out there, and I think the British were helping move. They unloaded us from those boxcars--"Leave your barracks bag; they'll be hauled in later"--and hustled us into trucks, which they wanted to get as many people in there as they could, and they didn't have room for supplies and men, too, and hauled us into camp. And then whoever was in charge of hauling those supplies in helped theirself to whatever they wanted. That's where Jack and I lost our barracks bag full of chocolate and cigarettes. In fact, we had one-and-a-half bags of it.

Marcello: So they were in effect looted by the British?

Rayburn: Yes, definitely.

Marcello: And this was the beginning of the downhill relationship that developed between the Americans and the British.

Rayburn: Yes, this was the beginning. And there's quite a story to tell about that two or three weeks that we were there.

Marcello: Describe what Tandjong Priok looked like from a physical standpoint. Now you mentioned that the barracks were part wood, part stone, part tile. How big a camp was this?

Rayburn: Well, it was pretty large. They had a lot of Indians in there when we got there.

Marcello: These were the Sikhs.

Rayburn: Well, they had Sikhs, Punjabs, and Gurkhas. Of course, the British had been using Singapore, Malaya. And they were already there and pretty well established. They were milling around--I'd guess the distance from us was a hundred feet or 200 feet--in a separate barbed wire fence, and it seemed like they had water fountains out in their yards there, where we didn't have, and it seemed like they got the best of it, along with the British, of this place.

We had never cooked rice; we didn't know how to cook it. This first meal is really something to talk about. It was probably the sweepings from some warehouse. It was full of "rat pills," all kinds of trash, and unpolished rice. And our cooks boiled this up in these big ol' cauldrons that they gave us to cook in, and you couldn't eat it. Absolutely, you couldn't eat it! This lasted a few days, and somebody, I guess, got up enough guts to complain about it or see what could be done about it, and then there was a cookhouse set up for cooking over near the Japanese cookhouse. And there's quite a story to that.

The Japanese ordered one American officer to come and supervise the cooking of this food, which consisted of rice and a few watered-down vegetables. So they sent a Lieutenant

Morgan over there--big, tall fellow--and he immediately got in trouble with the Japanese that was in charge who we nicknamed "Blackshirt." He come back that evening all beat up and goes to our colonel and tells him that he's sick, that he can't go back.

So they begin looking around for somebody to go over there and confront this mean Jap. Well, the last man on the totem pole is ol' "Stens." "Mr. Bear," we called him.

Marcello: This is Stensland?

Rayburn: Roy E. Stensland. Because he's the outcast. He came in . . . really a lot of the officers would not have anything to do with him at all because there was something mysterious about this man. He comes in drunk with all this money and won't tell nobody nothing and told them very frankly that he didn't have to tell them anything. And so by vote of the colonel, majors, and the captains, he was the man to go to the cookhouse. I recall this very well because three of us had got pretty close to Stensland, and he could come down and visit with the enlisted men because none of the officers cared about visiting with them. I recall this very, very well.

When he was told that he had to go to the cookhouse, he got up, started getting his canteen and his ditty bag. He emptied it out, put it on his shoulder, put on his shirt and shoes, and he turned around, and the rest of the officers are kind of eyeballing him. He said, "Colonel, I'm carrying

out your orders. I'm going to the cookhouse today." He said, "I want to tell you one damn thing. If that Jap jumps on me, there's going to be guts and eyeballs all over that kitchen." He turned around and walked out.

Well, as it turned out then, everybody over there--hell, every officer in our organization--wanted the job because the first night Stensland comes in . . . he's got sugar, which he gave to some of his buddies, people like myself . . . he had sugar, some coffee, tea. He just came back loaded. He had his bag just full! On top of that he and the Jap had got to drinking brandy all day long. So he made out very well with that little "Blackshirt." I guess it was because that the Jap could see right quick he couldn't bully him around, so he just made a friend out of him.

Marcello: Who finally taught the cooks how to prepare that rice?

Rayburn: It was a combination between the Japanese cooks and . . . some of the cooks that were always our cooks didn't want to cook. It was something foreign to them, and, actually, we had men turn out to be cooks, such as a friend of mine I just sent off on a plane last night for San Diego who has cancer--Garth "Pinky" Oliver. He was one of the cooks. "Pinky" was in our group more or less, and due to the fact that he'd volunteered to go over and work in the cookhouse even though he'd been a cowboy all his life, he stayed in the cookhouse for the duration. And they picked it up. They

got to where they could cook that rice pretty good, and we even bragged on ol' "Pinky" so much--this group that kind of ate together and sleep together--that we actually ribbed him into start bringing a little bit extra out of the cookhouse.

One time . . . the Japanese cooks, you know, used any of those fellows that they wanted. If they needed them, they simply said, "You have to come work for me." He got close enough to the Japanese cookhouse, which was right there with ours, that he stole a backbone out of their pot--reached in, boiling, pulled it out, wrapped it up in his apron, and brought it into camp. This was mighty tasty to get something like that to eat after about two weeks of this öl' red rice.

You might say that a lot of men that were cooks in the batteries turned out to be otherwise after we actually got into prison camp.

Marcello: What other food did you get besides rice and some occasional vegetables, or was that about it?

Rayburn: Well, that was about it. Now they brought in a couple of truckloads of cheese--big, huge, round blocks of cheese about maybe six inches, eight inches thick. And they had pulled this stuff out of a rotten warehouse somewhere, and this cheese was just working alive with worms, but that's really no problem for somebody that uses their head. You

could just build a little fire and keep turning this cheese around, and pretty soon all the worms are out of it. If anyone ever was beginning to need some protein, we needed it at that time, and you can bet your life that we ate that cheese even though it was full of worms. But those worms would crawl out when it'd get hot.

We were working on the docks--we had working parties--and we all became good thieves. We had to. On these working parties, they'd take us out in the morning and bring us back in the evening. We were unloading barges mostly and a few ships. If the Japanese brought any supplies in and we got close to them, why, we done quite a lot of looting and smuggling it back into camp, even though they had shakedowns going in and out of camp, checking.

At that time we were around Japanese, and they were a little bit more lenient probably than the Korean guards that we had later. It was at this very camp that Jack Cellum was on a working party, and they were marching in from work, and three or four of those Japs were trying to fix a tire--I believe he told me it was a '36 model Ford--and they had an electric hot plate laying there, and they was fixing to put the jack on it to jack up this car. And, of course, they stopped the guards and wanted these Americans to help them fix this flat. Jack saw this electric hot plate, and he just pulled it aside and told them he knew how to fix it--he

used to have a car like that, and he could fix it--and threw his raincoat over the hot plate. They changed the tire for these Japs, and he just wrapped this hot plate up in this raincoat and brought it back into camp that night.

The minute I saw it, I had ideas for that darn thing. We actually--with maneuvering, wiring, and what-have-you--got it operating there in this camp for the short time we were there. We could boil tea on it and first thing and another. We carried this hot plate with us until later on when we was shipped out for Burma.

Marcello: Were you fed three times a day here at Tandjong Priok?

Rayburn: No, we were fed twice a day.

Marcello: When would you be fed?

Rayburn: In the mornings and then at night.

Marcello: How much rice would you get? I assume the rice was basically all that you got.

Rayburn: We would get, basically, at that time a canteen cup, approximately, full of rice--or about three-quarters full--with about a half of this Dr. Pepper can, a ladle, of a soup with a little chopped-up, some type of vegetable in it. They used most anything they could find.

Marcello: Anything to give the rice a flavor, I guess.

Rayburn: Yes. That was about what we were allowed. At different times, different places, why, maybe you got more or less.

Marcello: I'm referring now to right here at Tandjong Priok.

Rayburn: Right here. Well, they informed us that people didn't need to eat . . . by not doing any work we didn't need to eat three meals a day. But then on these working parties they started carrying food out there to the working parties during the lunch hour. They'd carry out these big buckets of rice and buckets of soup, and they fed us on the working parties.

Marcello: What would you receive to drink?

Rayburn: Just water. We boiled it.

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

Rayburn: Yes, we boiled all of our water. And for quite some time there, tea being plentiful in Java, they would throw a little tea in it. Most of the time it was green tea and just enough to color it. They called it tea.

Marcello: I would assume that the boiling of water was a constant job, is that correct?

Rayburn: That's correct.

Marcello: Water was always being boiled.

Rayburn: Yes. Our cooks boiled off water that we could fill our canteens. Now they told us that this water there in Batavia was fine; we had no worry. And we did use that water, but later on we boiled our water.

Marcello: I'm sure that already, when you're going through the chow line, you're watching those cooks like a hawk to make sure that nobody gets any more food than anybody else.

Rayburn: Well, it didn't take long, you know, for the chow lines to form early and long because everybody was getting hungry. They'd been used to eating all they wanted, and that wasn't the case anymore. And, of course, there was a lot of conversation about the cooks stealing all of the meat and eating it and feeding us the soup and so forth and so on. But possibly a little--very, very little--of it could have gone on, but you're not ever going to make me believe it. The only ones that might have got a little bit extra sometimes were those doing something for the Japs in their kitchen there. They'd reward you with a little extra or something like that. But that's all. Never, never, never would I accuse of one of those cooks, throughout this three-and-a-half years, of not being fair and square with everyone.

Marcello: Does the quality of the rice remain poor the whole time that you are at Tandjong Priok?

Rayburn: No, it was just maybe three, four, five meals. That's when they just had no way to cook it and no place but just trying to cook it outside there. Some change took place when we got this cookhouse, and it didn't take the Japanese long to . . . evidently it was the Japanese cooks that taught these men how to cook it, and they became very good cooks. They'd cook that rice to perfection. Of course, it was our main diet, and you doggone sure ate it. If you didn't you'd starve to death. And it was very good.

Marcello: How long did it take for food to become the primary topic of conversation?

Rayburn: Two weeks. That two weeks.

Marcello: Are you saying that, in effect, during the first two weeks that maybe women or sex or something like that was still taking priority over food in your conversations, but after two weeks it was food?

Rayburn: I'd say after the fourth or fifth meal of this red rice, food was the topic of the conversation. Boy, you could see the writing on the wall. If it was going to go on and on and on like this, oh, it was going to be nothing but very, very bad. Pretty girls and sex, I think, was eliminated very fast there after those first few meals of that red rice. It was food from then on.

Marcello: How strenuously were you worked here at Tandjong Priok?

Rayburn: At Tandjong Priok, the working conditions down there . . . there again, I'm going to say we were under complete control of Japanese engineers and guards. We had a few screaming idiots amongst them,naturally, but they were quite amused with the Americans. I think things turned out that probably Americans were their favorites during the whole three-and-a-half years. We were healthy, corn-fed country bunch of boys, and we could do a lot of work and didn't mind doing a lot of work.

Now bear in mind that all the time we're on these working

parties, now, we're watching and looking and scrounging for anything that we can pick up that would benefit us later. We're looking for it constantly. When we'd get in those warehouses, you know, why, we were looking for anything, and once in a while we'd find a little bit of something to bring back into camp. We really didn't get a big dose of that until later on when they moved us out of this Tandjong Priok. You couldn't get nothing in camp, but if you can get out on one of those working parties, why, you might find something out there, you know. There wasn't nothing in camp. So it was a pleasure, really, to get out of camp on those working parties there in Tandjong Priok.

Marcello: Were the working parties voluntary in Tandjong Priok?

Rayburn: Yes, they'd call out that they'd want fifty men, forty men, or maybe thirty to go here and forty or fifty to go there. It was along about that time that the Japs informed us that we would have to work or we wouldn't be fed. Only the working people were fed. We'd have to be good workers, and we'd get fed properly, which wasn't true. But there it got to be fairly decent in Tandjong Priok before we moved out of Tandjong Priok.

Marcello: And most of the work being done here would consist of clean-up details from the debris of war and loading and unloading ships.

Rayburn: Right. It was more or less stevedore work, and then, of

course, they had a lot of clean-up details out everywhere, you know. The docks there weren't in too bad a shape. There were signs of war, by all means, and there were drums of gasoline, alcohol, oil, and what-have-you that were dumped in the bay. We cleaned up the bay area of all debris, and all of the usable things, such as gasoline and oil, drums of wood alcohol, were stored or loaded on ships. We were also cleaning up the rice warehouses. In other words, I suppose the Japs were using us to kind of take a look-see of what they had, and at the same time we were getting our rations through this group of Japanese. They finally got there to where we were getting sizable amounts of rations because it was right there and we could carry it in.

Marcello: The Japanese did not frisk you or search you when you were coming back into camp?

Rayburn: They let us alone there in Tandjong Priok. I don't recall an incident where we were bothered. We were told that we couldn't take anything in and that we would be severely punished if we were caught. But just like this electric hot plate that Corporal Cellum brought in . . . it was a pretty good-sized item, and he just wrapped it up in his raincoat and marched right on in with it, and they didn't search anyone. Only after we moved into Bicycle Camp in Batavia did they really start searching us pretty well.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had this electric hot plate, so I assume there must have been electricity in the barracks or somewhere around there.

Rayburn: Yes, there was electricity in those barracks.

Marcello: What were your barracks like on the inside?

Rayburn: Well, there at Tandjong Priok there was nothing to them. You could tell that they were native barracks, and there was absolutely nothing to them--just a floor and nothing to make a bunk out of. You just laid down on this tile floor at night to sleep on a blanket. They passed out a few bamboo mats. You'd run into things like that that would make it a little softer out on working parties, and they'd let you bring it in. You'd tell them what you wanted it for, you know, and they'd let you bring it in.

But those barracks there in Tandjong Priok, there was nothing to them. They were pretty much open. They did have a roof on them that would keep you dry. But there was really nothing to those barracks in Tandjong Priok. In fact, there was nothing there, hardly.

It was a huge camp and had British, Indians, and these Americans in there. That's all I recall being in this camp, and they had them in different compounds behind barbed wire.

Marcello: What rules and regulations did the Japanese lay down for the prisoners? Obviously, by this time there are certain

things you can do and you can't do.

Rayburn: There at Tandjong Priok we were pretty much on our own, other than the fact we had to stay within the compound. The rules and regulations that came around during that time at Tandjong Priok, I don't recall many.

I do know that we asked for permission there one day to go outside the compound, where there was a lot of sea grass growing and the turf was pretty heavy, to play football, and they thought that was a great idea. We went out there and actually played tackle football out there on the back, and the Japs rather liked that, you know. They wanted you to be active. They didn't want anybody laying around getting sick because they could see that that'd be a hardship on them, less people they'd have to work, and so forth and so on.

Marcello: So then there are really very few bashings and so on here at Tandjong Priok?

Rayburn: I can't recall any, other than the trouble over at the cookhouse. Now the day that we left there we had a problem, and I was very much in it. As I recall, we were only there about three weeks, possibly four weeks.

Marcello: That's correct. You were not there very long.

Rayburn: When they started to move us out, well, we had to march from our barracks to this railhead to be taken to Bicycle Camp in Batavia, and my friend, "Red" Reichle--Grover

Reichle--was sick at the time. He was real sick. We started out with all our gear, and we're smart enough at that time to realize that we had to keep everything that we had that was usable because we didn't know how long this was going to last. We wanted to salvage everything we had. We had a bamboo pole--carried these three barracks bags on this bamboo pole. As I said, he was sick--real sick. He had diarrhea for about two or three days and was very weak and just barely could walk. Well, it was only a short distance, and he could see that he couldn't make it. So we set down the pole, and I started tying these barracks bags ropes together so I could throw them over my shoulder and carry them.

Lo and behold, here comes this little idiot about four feet high--had a rifle taller than he was--with a bamboo stick about the size of that microphone, and he proceeded to beat hell out of me. He hit me all the way to that railhead. Every step I'd take, he'd knock the devil out of me. And I'm trying to carry three barracks bags. I dropped one and I couldn't stop to pick it up, and, fortunately, by that time, "Red" had got his breath enough that he picked up the third one and brought it on. But that little son-of-a-gun . . . now I got a good taste of the Japanese.

Marcello: Where was he hitting you? Wherever he could?

Rayburn: Anyplace that he could, and, of course, I was getting some protection from these barracks bags, and he didn't like that. He couldn't hit me on the shoulders, so he didn't like that. He couldn't hit me on the shoulders, so he started hitting me on the head. He knocked my hat off; I had to leave it. Hell, he wouldn't let me stop. He beat me all the way to that railhead. And I will guarantee you one thing, the guys in front of me was "hooking 'em up." They didn't want him to get up even with them (laughter) because he was really working me over. That was my first encounter with Dai Nippon, and it was a good one.

Marcello: How badly did he hurt you as a result of that bashing?

Rayburn: Oh, not really that bad.

Marcello: Just a few lumps and some black and blue marks?

Rayburn: Yes, lumps and black and blue marks, pretty good welts on the side of my head and neck. He didn't want to injure me that much, you know--you could feel that--because, like I say, a sick man to those people was no good to them.

But he let me know that I had to "hook 'em up" and stay up with the column, and I doggone sure caught up, too! But the dadgummed guys in front of me just kept walking faster and faster, you know, and I'm running trying to catch up. If they'd slowed up and let me catch up, well, possibly he'd have quit that, but he laid it on my fanny all the way to the boxcars. And we rode this train into Batavia.

Marcello: When we were talking about your entry into Tandjong Priok, you mentioned that encounter with the British where they stole your candy and cigarettes and some of your other belongings. Is there anything else that we need to discuss about the beginnings of this bad relationship that developed with the British there at Tandjong Priok?

Rayburn: Yes. They were going to take command, the best I remember. By golly, they were the British Empire, and they were going to take command over everybody. Well, they could those Indians, but they damn sure didn't the Americans. Why, they were passing out orders right and left down there while we were there. Well, it was just funny to me. I guess it worried the officers quite a bit, you know, because after all we got to live with these people. But those doggone idiots, well, they were just out there . . . you know, the officer of the day was walking around with his little swagger stick and all that kind of baloney, and they were just going to take over. But they didn't. They tried. But that's when we really decided that we didn't want any part of those people anymore. Of course, that wasn't to be true, but then that was the beginning of it.

Marcello: By the time you leave Tandjong Priok, I assume that everybody's health is still fairly good, considering the circumstances.

Rayburn; Yes. We had a few people from this quick change of diet that were having a little dysentery. There was no signs, that I

recall at that time, of malaria. But it was just beginning to show up there at Tandjong Priok when we left there.

Marcello: My records indicate that you got to Tandjong Priok on March 31, 1942, and you left around May 14, 1942. So you wouldn't have been there any more than a month-and-a-half at the very most, I don't think.

Rayburn: I don't remember those dates, but, no, a month-and-a-half would be as long as I'd think that we were there. It was a short time to me, really. I stayed pretty busy while I was there. I got on every working party I could get on, and that made time pass faster.

Marcello: Okay, so on May 14, 1942, you board a train, and you go into Bicycle Camp. This wasn't a very long trip, was it, from Tandjong Priok to Bicycle Camp?

Rayburn: Very short distance. It was just a very short ride by rail, and they marched us from the depot into camp. Some of the trucks were bringing in some of the gear that we had. We were quite surprised when we got into this camp . . . it was a nice camp--real nice barracks, all masonry, tile floors. Down below, in the barracks that weren't really as nice, but livable, were these other Americans, and that's where we got together with the USS Houston.

Marcello: They were a pretty scroungy outfit when you came into Bicycle Camp.

Rayburn: Scroungy is really not a very good description of those poor

guys. Some of them were burnt. They definitely showed signs of battle, and they had no clothes. Oh, it was the funniest-looking bunch of characters you ever saw walking around there, you know. They had made some kind of a G-string out of a piece of cloth, a blanket, or something. They had no blankets; they had no clothes. They just didn't have anything.

Of course, at that time we were still carrying quite a lot of clothes--extra shoes, and shirts, and trousers, and what-have-you--and we began to share with these unfortunate Americans. They were a real nice bunch of fellows. If I recall, somewhere around 370 had survived off of the cruiser Houston, which will go down in history as doing one heck of a job there when the Japanese were landing. I believe the Houston carried a crew something like 1,050 or 1,090 or somewhere near 1,100, and this 370 or so managed to get ashore.

Marcello: I assume that the sharing was a spontaneous thing.

Rayburn: Oh, I thought so.

Marcello: No hesitation on anybody's part.

Rayburn: No hesitation at all because,you know, there's another American in need. I'm sure that some of them were backward and wouldn't ask for anything, but as we lived together there for a few months, we got acquainted with each other more and more. When we'd find out something that someone really

needed, then you'd share with him.

We also, very shortly after arriving there at Bicycle Camp, received a partial payment--$20 for each man. The Houston sailors got $20 as well as we. There wasn't just a lot that you could spend money on, but the Japanese allowed Chinamen to haul things into a little makeshift canteen that we had set up--the Americans on one side, the Australians on the other side of the battery street, the street that ran down between the camps there. We were free to mingle on the Australian side as well as down farther in the sailors' area there. You could buy at this little canteen a few items, such as Tasmanian jam, and Eagle Brand milk, a few bananas, a few peanuts, and so forth and so on.

That's where this hot plate comes back into the picture of this thing. The three of us that lived in this cubicle started a fried pie business, me being the chief cook. I remembered how my mother used to make those things. We could get peanut oil, coconut oil, and we could get a few pineapples that we'd cook down. We'd make your pie crust, cut it out, put a little on it, fry it in the peanut oil or the coconut oil, and it was a pretty popular thing around there. We sold them for ten cents each.

Marcello: *How did you make the pie crust?*

Rayburn: We could get flour in the canteen, but we were getting such a small amount . . . it was costing so much money. Actually,

this is where Ilo Hard, Lieutenant Hard, comes back into the picture. We needed $10 to buy a sack of flour, and we just didn't feel like we could afford it. Ilo was over there one day and found out our problems, and he said, "Well, let me loan you $10 to buy this sack of flour." So we said, "Fine, if that's what you want to do." So we borrowed that $10 from Lieutenant Hard and bought this sack of flour. The pie dough was real easy to make.

Of course, I experimented with both peanut oil and coconut oil. That was the only oil that was available at that time, and both of them did a heck of a job. The coconut oil makes the pie crust a little more tender than the peanut oil. Peanut oil is a heavier base, but we used what we could get.

We'd buy two or three pineapples, cut them up with a little sugar, and cook them down. We also used papayas, mangoes, a little Tasmanian jam--which was a very, very fine jam that came off the island of Tasmania, off the coast of Australia--and just anything like that.

Of course, the officers . . . now, here this money comes back into this thing again, you know, all this money. We all got twenty dollars apiece, and that was nowhere near what we should be paid, you know. How much money came in, no one ever knows. This $200,000 that Roy E. Stensland walked into camp with, it was all intact. There's all this money,

and we only received $20 apiece of this. I've heard people tell me it was only $10, but I very distinctly remember it was $20 each.

Marcello: But all of you were wondering what happened to the rest of that money?

Rayburn: Yes. Yes, we were wondering about that. They set up mess--kitchens. They had good kitchens there, good facilities. The officers set them up an extra kitchen. They ate separately there in Batavia to us, and that didn't go over too well. It was explained to us that with this money that they kept, they would be able to buy extra supplies that the Japanese didn't furnish for the kitchen. I'm sure that they bought extra supplies for the kitchen, that the Japs didn't furnish, and made our food a little bit better there. We lived pretty good there in Batavia. It just wasn't bad at all.

Marcello: What kind of food were you getting there in Batavia?

Rayburn: We were getting practically the same diet that we started off with at Tandjong Priok. Now we might have a little more pork, and our stews are a little heavier with vegetables. There was various types of vegetables we could get. We could get hold of potatoes there and green stuff, such as these white radishes and so forth and so on. Once in a while they'd get hold of . . . maybe the soup would be made out of pork and sweet potatoes. They done the best they could,

but, still, we had this separate mess from the officers.

Marcello: Did the officers seem to be eating better than the enlisted men? I'm sure you were watching their kitchen like hawks.

Rayburn: Well, certainly they were eating better than the enlisted men. There were fewer of them, and it wasn't as hard to cook for them. They were definitely eating better. About probably three weeks after we was in this camp, by doing just a little bit of investigating, we found that the officers were stashing food, cases of food, back in the attic up over the enlisted men's part of the barracks. Jack Cellum, myself, and another man had quite a lot of conversation about that and decided to do something about it. That's when the three of us got court-martialed in prison camp.

Marcello: It sounds like a pretty interesting story, so I think you need to pursue it.

Rayburn: Well, this food was being stacked in the attic of the Headquarters Battery, actually occupied by Headquarters Battery. It was right up over a bunk where three sergeants lived. There was an opening in the attic, and they'd buy this food as this Chinaman would bring it into camp. They would buy it off of him by the cases, and instead of it going to the canteen and be sold out to the men who had the money, well, it was being bought right there at the gate, right there in front of the officers quarters, and they were stashing it up in this attic. They'd pull it down as they needed it.

If they couldn't buy enough supplies that day to feed them that day, well, then they'd take from it. It consisted mostly of bully beef and Eagle Brand milk, which were two terrific commodities at this particular time.

Marcello: I've heard everybody talk about that Eagle Brand milk. What was it that made Eagle Brand milk so attractive?

Rayburn: Well, one thing that made it so attractive was that just a little bit of it on a bowl of rice, as sweet as it is, is a wonderful, wonderful dish after you've been a POW for about six months. It tastes mighty good. Another thing is, you could take that Eagle Brand milk and submerge it in water and boil it slowly, and then when you opened that can you had the best caramel that you could eat. Our hot plate was busy all the time boiling off this Eagle Brand milk. Boy, it was <u>good</u>!

Marcello: I guess you were looking for anything to give that rice a flavor.

Rayburn: Anything. Anything at all to give the rice a flavor. Just little hot chilies or anything. You was always trying to substitute something to make the rice just a little better.

Now we actually got into this attic and hauled out a lot of that food. Jack was kind of the cat burglar of the bunch, and we sent Jack up in the attic with a rope. He crawled up over these three men and got in that attic without waking them up.

Marcello: Oh, this was done at night?

Rayburn: Yes, it was done at night. He'd tie this rope onto a case of either Eagle Brand milk or bully beef, the Australian bully beef--we call it corned beef--and let it down, and Henry Drake and I was taking it and stashing it. Well, we're not a greedy bunch; we were stashing it with other POW's. Of course, you know, we got first grabs on it, but, after all, we're going to share it. We'd made several trips for Eagle Brand milk and bully beef out of there--Jack said that there was a truckload of merchandise up there--and one of the sergeants from F Battery woke up and caught us carting that stuff through this paddy way from one barracks to the other barracks. That's how we got caught. He turned us in.

Marcello: Well, why would he have turned you in since he is an enlisted man, too, and I assume he wasn't sharing in this extra chow?

Rayburn: Well, that's a mystery that's never been unfolded to today. The only thing I know . . . I don't mind telling you his name, where he lives, or anything about him. I speak to him today, but he kind of pulls back from you. He hasn't been making very many reunions. I think the first time we ran into each other face-to-face down in . . . it happened in Dallas in 1978, the first reunion, I think, probably he's made, other than maybe he might have made the first one in Wichita Falls. I don't think the man knew whether to speak or throw up a guard or what. Nevertheless, I spoke to him

and went on about my business. We have a word for that, and it's called "brown-nosing." You know, it could have been a lot of ways. He might have thought that that was food that belonged to the men that we were taking. There could have been a lot of reasons. I won't elaborate on that too much.

Anyhow, we were called in. And the officers also had this supply room in the basement there under their building. Sergeant Schmid was supply sergeant, and Clyde Fillmore was the supply officer in charge at that time. We were called down one by one and quizzed. They were trying to get the truth out of us, how much was taken, and mainly they were interested in getting it back. I don't blame them because it was hard to come by. It was getting harder and harder all the time. Naturally, they wanted all their food back.

Anyway, it finally came out. I know Henry Drake was the first one to go down, and I don't know what Henry told them. I was the second one to go down. I remember ol' Clyde said, "Now, Rayburn, we already know how many cases you guys took, and all we want you to do is bring it back. That's about all we can do." I said, "Why, Lieutenant, I don't have any idea what you're talking about." That didn't go over very good. They said, "Well, now, Henry's already told us." He said, "We know that you've got several cases of food up there, and we want it brought back."

Anyway, he finally dismissed me, and he brought down "Slug," Jack Cellum. We called him "Doc" and "Slug," both. He got down there, and he was quite perturbed over the questioning they were doing, so he just challenged both of them. The lieutenant run upstairs looking for Captain Wright . . . and this is one thing I can say about the captain: he really always took up for his men if he thought they was right--just like back in Camp Bowie when he allowed us to have booze around our tents, you know. He felt like it was personal property, and as long as it didn't interfere with our training, why, it was fine--as long as it was good booze. He told Captain Wright, "Captain, we got one of your corporals down there, and he's just threatened to jump on me and Sergeant Schmid." "Hud" said, "Well, who is he?" He said, "Corporal Cellum." He said, "Well, did the corporal tell you he was going to jump on you?" He said, "Captain, he told me he was going to beat hell out of me." He said, "Well, if he told you that, he will!" (chuckle) That's the truth, so help me.

We decided that to keep peace we had to return part of it. Now this is quite a problem. I've got to go down to my friends P.E. Stone and "Red" Thomas--they're living down there close to the sailors, and, man, those sailors got in there--they was really hungry--and try to gather up all this stuff that I can. Of course, I know that Jack's running

around stashing it every place that he can to keep me and Drake from finding it to take it back. But we did carry back a sizable amount of that food.

To this day you can't convince me that I didn't have just as much right to that food as they did. Just because he drew $125 a month and I drew $36 a month is no sign he should take $100 and give me $10. As far as I'm concerned, I done the right thing there. But what the hell, we gave it back to them. They got their food back.

Blucher Tharp, our colonel, immediately took away all of our rank and busted us to privates, which is quite amusing to the people further on down the road when I was making an affidavit to the officers that interrogated us when we came back into Calucutta, India.

Marcello: Okay. Let's pursue this one step farther now. Was this practice ever stopped? In other words, ultimately, was this money used for the benefit of everybody in the unit somewhere along the line?

Rayburn: The only persons that could answer that question are Colonel Searle, Colonel Blucher Tharp, Major Rogers, Major Elkin, and maybe one or two of the captains that were running this show.

Marcello: You were talking about courts-martial, and another person that I know was court-martialed around this time, I think, was Sergeant Jack Shaw. Do you recall the circumstances

around his court-martial?

Rayburn: I remember when Jack was busted. Jack was with Headquarters Battery, I believe, but I can't elaborate on the circumstances. I know he told them to go straight to hell--I know that--and he was relieved of his first sergeant's duties at that time.

Marcello: Now I do know that one of the officers I've interviewed has told me that a great deal of this company money was actually distributed to people who were going out on work details, and then they would use this money to buy food and bring it back into camp. Do you know anything about this?

Rayburn: I think I made probably as many work details as anyone, and I can't ever recall--not once--anything that was being bought and brought back into camp for everyone.

Marcello: Is this really when the deterioration in the relationship between the officers and the enlisted men begins, or had the deterioration actually begun before that?

Rayburn: Definitely, right then and there was when it started. When you take a group of people--now I can imagine this of the British--you take a group of Americans, and you put them all in one enclosure, then other than respect there should not be one particle of difference between this man and that man. Although probably some of us weren't very well-educated, we're all pretty keen of mind, and this sort of thing just doesn't happen. It's not supposed to happen. Okay, when you're commissioned as an officer of the United States Army,

Air Force, Navy, or what-have-you, certainly it gives you a certain amount of pride because you are commissioned by the United States government, and that entitles you to rule and to live a little differently to the enlisted man. But this is not the case of being a prisoner-of-war.

For example, now when the Japanese came around with this . . . now in the meantime, we've moved into Bicycle Camp. There's where we acquired the Koreans as guards. They're people that absolutely can do very little as far as I'm concerned. I might add here that I think probably the Korean people are the sorriest people that I've ever encountered in my life, regardless. They don't have a sense of humor. They don't think like I think or you think or anyone else thinks. They were constantly running through the barracks, having everybody to come to attention, bow when they'd pass by the cubicle. It'd just delight the devil out of them to run up on you and catch you unaware, and they'd get a chance to bash the devil out of you.

Some of those Koreans were much larger than the Japanese, and they could swing a pretty doggone good wallop. We were taught right quick not to let them get you down because, if you ever hit the deck, they'd get into you with those hobnail shoes, and they can really hurt you. So you didn't let them knock you down. Now sometimes you couldn't help it. But, anyhow, we had those Korean guards from then on.

Then the Japs came around with this paper to sign that we will never bear arms against the Imperial Government of Japan.

Marcello: This is sometimes called the "non-escape pledge," too, isn't it?

Rayburn: Right. Lo and behold, here comes our officers just fanning out all over the place, you know--of course, the lieutenants and captains took their orders from the majors and colonels--sticking their finger in everybody's face, you know, "Don't you dare sign this." Well, in the first place, I didn't even know what it was, but it didn't make a damn bit of difference to me because I'm going to do anything--not do anymore than I have to do--but anything to prolong this stay because I know eventually I'm going to get out of there. There's no doubt in my mind that I'm going to get out. But, anyway, they gave us these orders. "Anybody that signs this will be court-martialed when we get back to the States," yakkity, yakkity, yak.

So the Japanese commander just came in, lined up all the officers, marched them out, and marched them down about six or eight blocks down there to a park. They had a ditch--a trench--dug there, so many feet long and so many feet deep. He walked over and handed all of them a slip and said, "Any of you that don't want to sign it, just step up in front of this trench, and the ones that will sign it, you stand over

here on the side." Well, they all signed it.

Then they came back into camp, "Oh, you've got this! You've got to sign this!" Well, hell, I never did mind signing it in the first place. It didn't mean nothing to me. I knew doggone good and well that it was a very, very remote chance that I'd ever bear arms against them. It didn't make a nickel's worth of difference to me. I couldn't sign it sooner.

That lost a lot of face with the officers.When they backed down like that so easily, why, that made the men think less of them. Actually, I guess they done the only thing they could do under the circumstances.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit more about the food here. Again, you're getting basically the rice. Are you being fed three times a day or twice a day still?

Rayburn: Twice a day.

Marcello: Still twice a day. Are you getting any more in terms of quantity than you had received in Tandjong Priok?

Rayburn: We're being fed better--much better.

Marcello: Is there a chance for seconds?

Rayburn: Oh, a few times we had some of our men that were the first in the chow line and the first in the back-up line. They fed it until it was all gone. But between me and you, if you could do a little hustling outside and bring it in--a little bit of stuff--and first one thing and another, I

don't believe that . . . I know. I never was in the back-up line while I was there. I got all the food I wanted there.

Marcello: Did many fights break out over food or any other trivial incidents and so on in camp?

Rayburn: There were a few squabbles. Actually, some of those people would try to break in the chow line way up, and that was a knock-down-drag-out. It didn't last very long because neither one of them wanted to miss their chow. Yes, there was a little bit of that but just not a whole lot of it. The rest of us just kind of laughed. It was kind of funny, you know, naturally. We had a few chow hounds, and they were picked at by everyone more or less.

Marcello: You could mess with anything but somebody's food?

Rayburn: Right. Right.

Marcello: Of course, you didn't steal from one another. That also was a "no-no."

Rayburn: That was a "no-no." The law of the prison camp life was "No man, but no man, ever takes anything from another man in that prison camp."

Now later on down the line, I was in a position to where I could haul out merchandise and sell it to the merchants--the natives, the Chinese, what-have-you. A Scotchman was bringing me this, and I jumped him. I said, "Where are you getting all this?" "Oh, 'Yank,' I'm picking it up here and there." I said, "Well, I don't want nothing else to do with

it." I said, "We don't believe in stealing from each other, and I don't want anymore to do with it." And that poor Scotchman nearly broke out in tears, and he said, "'Yank,' it's dog-eat-dog in here, but God help me if I ever took anything off of a man that wasn't standing on two feet." Now that was his impression of prison life. It wasn't ours. We wouldn't tolerate it, and I know of--if any--very, very little of it that was ever done. We did not tolerate it.

Marcello: Talk about what your barracks were like on the inside, that is, your living quarters. Describe them.

Rayburn: In Bicycle Camp?

Marcello: Yes.

Rayburn: Oh, it was real nice. We had these cubicles, and there were three to four men in the cubicle. Then we had the big, wide verandas, and, of course, being on the outside, they were covered over. A lot of the fellows preferred to be out there. One reason is because the Japs couldn't slip up . . . the guards couldn't slip up on you. The reason we wanted the cubicle . . . it had this big hallway down it and had sides on it--each side--and they were kind of private. We strung a wire across the top there and made part of a curtain out of a bottom of a mosquito net.

We had this hot plate, and we had it in full operation in there, and it never was discovered. They'd come by there

sometimes, and we'd be cooking on it, and maybe cooking some split peas. You could definitely smell it. Those Koreans, they'd sniff around and kind of look around, but we had it concealed. We had it setting on a little shelf there and kind of had it concealed to where you had to go all the way to the back of the cubicle there to see it. And they never discovered it.

Then, too, on the side it was setting on, well, we had this blanket. We'd open it back enough to where they wouldn't complain about it hanging there, you know, which kind of gave us a little bit of privacy.

A lot of those fellows wanted on the porches or verandas because they had a wide view, and they wouldn't get slipped up on. That got to be quite a problem. Those dadgummed Koreans would slip up on you, and before you know it you're on the deck there, and he's trying to throw a rifle butt into you.

Marcello: About how large was this cubicle?

Rayburn: I'd say it was about six-by-eight.

Marcello: And the whole interior barracks was divided into these six-by-eight cubicles?

Rayburn: Yes, it had them on each side with a hallway down the center of it.

Marcello: And then I assume that each group of men who lived in that cubicle were responsible for keeping it clean and policing

it and so on.

Rayburn: Oh, yes, you had your buddies that you lived with. It just so happened, in this particular one, we wouldn't let the fourth man move in with us because we had to have space for our hot plate. There was three of us. That was Jack Cellum--Corporal Cellum--myself, and Grover "Red" Reichle that lives down at Marlin.

Marcello: You mentioned the three of you living together in that cubicle. Is it around this time that little cliques are beginning to form? When I use the term "clique," I'm not using that in a derogatory sense because you and I both know that the very, very close friendships among three or four men are going to be one of the keys to your survival, perhaps not so much here as later on down the line. But are you beginning to see three or four people band together, so to speak, and look out for one another, not to the detriment of anybody else?

Rayburn: Well, that's very true. It started before Bicycle Camp, but now it's really getting . . . for example, this sergeant that turned us in for that food that we were taking from the officers, well, he had his little group that he grew up with in Jacksboro, and they were together. Then we'd have our little groups, and the sailors would have their little groups, and a few of the soldiers kind of got pretty close to some of the sailors. Now the Marines, they more or less

stayed together, especially if it looked like it might be some type of battle brewing or something like that. Then I think there was probably those guys that were trying to seek maybe some favors, a little "brown-nosing," from some of the officers. I consider myself, and I think Jack does, and probably "Red," and several more in the organization . . . now you've got to remember that we were the C Battery bunch that transferred into F Battery as maybe loners or . . .

Marcello: Outsiders, at least.

Rayburn: . . . outsiders. We got along real well. We got along much better than some of them. We were getting along much better than this group of sergeants that were out on this veranda. There was a wee bit of jealousy there. But it's just a matter of hustle. You got to get out and take care of yourself, and some people are not capable of doing that. I thought most anytime that they might have our hot plate taken away from us but it never came to anything that serious. In fact, the officers, they had the most money, and they were our best customers when we were selling those pies.

We had a real good salesman. He's an executive for Exxon Corporation, just retired here a short time ago. His name is Al Carpenter, and his nickname to us was "Buttercup" Carpenter. He was our number one salesman. We got along real well. He and I had something in common. He grew up in a Humble oil and gas camp, and I was an ex-roughneck, and

he was an ex-roughneck. It seemed like the cliques, you might say, were people like that, that had something in common, that just kind of buddied up together as time passed.

But as far as any cliques, oh, yes, I've heard rumors of it that the sailors were mad at everybody, and I've heard that this bunch over here is mad at that bunch. But I can't recall anything very bad.

Marcello: Well, again, when I use the term "clique," I'm using the term in a dictionary sense. In other words, a "clique" is a group of people who band together for the common good. And this was a very, very common occurrence throughout prison camp life, was it not?

Rayburn: Yes, I think that part of it was just unwritten language. It was just there throughout the whole prison life. Yes, you'd get mad at somebody that you'd feel like you was doing his part of the work, but unity was there. They were bound together, if that answers the question. Sure, there was quite a number of those people that took over and ran these working parties and different things. Believe me, they weren't all officers, but even non-commissioned officers did this.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the working parties. Again, were they voluntary here, or was everybody assigned to working parties? I'm referring to the situation here in Bicycle Camp.

Rayburn: Well, the Japanese would ask for so many men for a working party. They divided it up amongst so many men out of the

Service Battery, so many out of Headquarters, F, D, and E Battery. The first sergeants would detail these men. He kept a roster. But after a short while, he could probably get all the volunteers that he wanted because if you could get out of camp you could do some good. If you were called out on a working party, and maybe you didn't hardly feel like it, you could always have somebody that wanted to take your place. Of course, you made it all right with the "topkick." In other words, he had you down for one day's work even though maybe somebody else took your place.

Marcello: I gather then that work on the work details was not too strenuous.

Rayburn: Well, it was hard, damn work. Anytime that you get on a rice detail, just remember that that bag of rice weighs 220 pounds. If you start hauling that baby around up a gangplank, if you're putting it in a barge or bringing it out of a barge, carrying it into a warehouse and stacking it up high as this ceiling, yes, sir, that's strenuous work, and there was plenty of that.

Marcello: Did you have much contact with the Dutch civilians when you were on these work details?

Rayburn: Very little because most of the time we went out by truck. Sometimes they would march us to where we were going to work, and when we did, why, the Dutch civilians, most of them, were women. They would try to get close enough to give us a

little news. In fact, I've even seen those women beaten pretty bad by the Japanese for hollering something at us as we came by, you know, close from the curb and stopping the truck. The Japs, if they could catch them, they'd give them a pretty good working-over. The most courageous people that I saw in Java were the women.

Marcello: I've heard other prisoners say this, too.

Rayburn: They had no fear for the Japs, and they suffered for it. I guarantee you, I've seen a many of them that took a terrific beating. I know at this one drainage ditch that we was working on, that lady took one heck of a beating, and in three days she was back out there again. I remember one time she hollered, "Don't worry! They won't catch me this time!" Of course, most of the men were locked up.

Now quite a few of the natives were running around pretty free, but the ones that had any education or served in the service . . . there was quite a few of them also interned like ourself. But there were a few of them that were still out walking around, and they seemed to be pretty loyal. But they had to be awful careful because they didn't want to get in the same situation we were in.

Marcello: What did you do for sports and recreation here at Bicycle Camp?

Rayburn: At Bicycle Camp, for sports and recreation, we had boxing events--the Australians, the sailors, Marines, the soldiers. We had this going on, and the Japanese got us some volleyballs

and volleyball nets, and we had those volleyball tournaments. Even the Japanese competed with us at times. They were very keen about that. They wanted us to be active, and they never discouraged it. Even way on into the jungle, they encouraged it. We even had quite a number of them that participated with us in those events.

Marcello: I understand there were stage shows put on, also.

Rayburn: Oh, the grandest . . . you can't believe it. Now, absolutely, you cannot believe it! There in Bicycle Camp there was a lot of talent there that no one knew about, and I think probably the most of it was amongst the sailors. And the Australians had a lot of talent. They put on some shows there, and where they got the materials for the props and the dress . . . it's unbelievable. They put on some of the best shows, and we had some of the best musicians that I've ever heard. We had a man, that just died a few years ago, that could play a piano better than anyone I've ever heard, and I've heard some good ones. We had a sax player that was out of this world. We had good, good entertainment there. They put on some beautiful shows.

Marcello: Where did the musicians get their instruments?

Rayburn: The Japs dug them up for them. Just like I say, things like that they really went for, and those Japs, hey, man, they got the front seat, if they weren't on duty, for these shows. Well, they'd pull jokes against them--these shows,

you know. They were picking at the Japanese all the way through it. If any of them ever knew it, they pretended that they didn't know it. I'm sure that there's several that did. But any kind of amusement like that . . . of course, I'm sure that they wasn't getting very much, and they went for that hook, line, and sinker.

And those boxing matches . . . now we had some good boxing matches. Now you understand that this is before that we really got in bad shape. We were eating pretty good and exercising pretty good there in Bicycle Camp. Actually, what they're doing is fattening us up for the things to come. But those boxing matches were real good. This Ben Dunn--you read his book--was a very, very good boxer. We had a man named Glen Self in our outfit that was real good, and then, of course, we had "Zip" Zummo. We called him the "Fighting Dago." You didn't call him that to his face, or he'd jump on you. "Brodie" Miller was an ex-boxer and football player at Texas Tech. Glen Jones,our first sergeant, was pretty good. We had those things there the whole time we were in Bicycle Camp.

Bicycle Camp was a wonderful, wonderful place as far as prison life is concerned.

Marcello: I have a few more questions on Bicycle Camp. Let's pursue the subject of military discipline a little bit farther as it develops here at Bicycle Camp. We've talked about this

a little bit, but let's expand somewhat. What sort of military discipline were you expected to have in the relationship with your own officers? I would assume that saluting had gone by the wayside, obviously.

Rayburn: That's true--no more saluting. In fact, they didn't want to be saluted.

Marcello: I'm sure there was a chain of command.

Rayburn: And we really got away from that even before we were captured, more or less, to a certain extent, other than that you respected rank.

Now some of this trouble began over that, you know. In other words, probably Jack Shaw's trouble was that, not being respectable to an officer or some officers.

But I didn't have any problem with it, personally. I can't recall along that time of ever having any words with any of the officers, even Clyde Fillmore, after we got caught stealing the officers' food. If he got hard with me, I got hard with him. We parted very well under the circumstances. There was no cussing or anything like that. The officers pretty well stayed to theirself in their compound.

Marcello: But there still was a chain of command, was there not, that was being maintained in this camp? Is it not true that, generally speaking, orders would go from the Japanese, to the officers, to the non-coms, and then right on down the line?

Rayburn: That's right. Yes, the orders came to the officers, and,

of course, Colonel Searle was actually in charge at that time because he outranked Colonel Tharp. The command would come through the officers' compound. Then the officers would call the first sergeants together, and the first sergeants would put out this information--we had to do this, or we had to do that.

Marcello: A certain amount of discipline was ultimately going to be necessary for your survival, was it not?

Rayburn: Absolutely.

Marcello: You simply couldn't be a rabble or a mob.

Rayburn: No, sir. I can't recall just a whole lot on that, but I think everyone realized that. If a command came down, you might walk off grumbling about it and didn't like it, but it was carried out. That's where, like I mentioned a minute ago, concerning a lot of that command responsibility, there was some of the ranking non-coms didn't want it, and it came down to people that didn't really have much rank in certain circumstances. But if our first sergeant came in and gave us some instructions, he didn't have to come back and tell us twice. I think he'd tell you that today if he was sitting here. I believe our outfit . . . I believe Battery F was a very, very disciplined battery. Now there was some of that going on, naturally, between the officers and the enlisted men, but I never got into any of it. I stayed away from it if I possibly could.

Marcello: What sort of military discipline existed in the relationship between the prisoners and the Japanese or Korean guards? What were you expected to do in their presence and so on?

Rayburn: The Japanese and the Korean guards . . . anytime a guard passed you, you had to come to attention and salute or bow. You had to bow to every guard. When one of them walked in the barracks, somebody, the first person that saw him hollered, "Ki-o-tsuke!" You'd come to attention, stand outside your barracks and let him pass in review down through there. If he didn't like the looks of you, he'd stop and mumble a few words and might walk on, or he might try to tell you what he don't like about you and slap you around a little bit and go on. But after awhile we got used to it. It always bothered us, but then we could cope with it. We knew how best not to get beat up.

The Koreans were treated the same way by the Japanese. The Imperial Japanese Army works this way. The higher rank can slap the lower rank around, and it goes all the way down the chain. But the lowest private in the Japanese Army can beat up on any of those Koreans that he wants to and very frequently did.

Marcello: And the Koreans had only the Americans to tromp on.

Rayburn: They had only the prisoners to take it out on, and they did a pretty good job of it.

Marcello: What were some of the usual types of bashing and so on that

the Koreans would utilize?

Rayburn: Well, it was mostly for nothing, you know. They'd come through the barracks, and maybe this man is not standing at attention the way that this Korean thinks that he should stand at attention. Well, he's liable to stomp on his bare feet, and then when he reaches for his foot, well, then he hits him two or three licks.

That's the reason I said awhile back that they had no sense of humor. You can't converse with them very much. I know they've been beat around probably ever since Japan took Korea. These people were actually brought in, I think, to do the coolie work, and it so happened that they had this particular bunch doing this guard duty. I don't think they ever had a cartridge for their rifle. They didn't trust them with it. They took it out on us. They needed no reason--no reason whatsoever.

Marcello: What would be some of the forms of punishment that they would give to the prisoners?

Rayburn: Well, outside of making you stand at attention while he slapped both sides of your face until it was red as a beet, well, they had this favorite one of bringing you to the guardhouse and making you stand at attention there for hours. There was various ways . . . but they would go into a rage, you know, and if they could beat on a couple of guys for maybe ten or fifteen minutes, why, they were all right.

And they done plenty of that--for no reason.

Marcello: Would they also use clubs and gun butts and things like that?

Rayburn: Oh, they always had their guns. Oh, they was real handy with the butt of a rifle, you know; I mean, that was one of their favorite things, you know. If he slapped you around to where you'd turn around, well, he could get you in the kidney with that rifle butt.

But in Bicycle Camp there wasn't just a whole bunch of that going on. Oh, if they'd catch somebody way off down from the barracks down there, you know, out away from the guardhouse, then somebody down there might take a real good beating. But the sticks didn't come into this or the bamboo didn't really come into this until after we hit the jungle because it was so handy--bamboo grows everywhere.

Marcello: I also understand that one of their punishments in extreme cases was to place a bamboo pole behind a prisoner's knees and make him lean on it for an extended period of time.

Rayburn: Oh, I'll tell you, there was several little tricks like that, and I know that later on they practiced this farther down the railroad. But I didn't see any of that in Bicycle Camp. They had some "hot holes." They had some little deals, you know, where they put you in a hole, covered--and it was dark--for two or three days. There's probably no telling what degree it was in there.

I believe, probably, one of their favorites was this

standing at attention in front of the guardhouse, and for two of our prisoners that lasted seventy-two hours. Jack Cellum--Corporal Cellum--was one of them.

Marcello: What were your bathing and sanitary facilities like here at Bicycle Camp?

Rayburn: At Bicycle Camp they was very good. We had plenty of water. We had nice, clean latrines. We kept them clean. Bathing there was real good. I know that some of the sailors, we didn't think, kept clean enough, and they were told about it there where we had plenty of water and latrines. That was something else . . . if we had a man that wasn't keeping himself clean, somebody told him about it; and if he didn't do anything about it then, he was taken and scrubbed by the other POW's.

Marcello: Was there an opportunity to take a daily bath, so to speak?

Rayburn: In Bicycle Camp?

Marcello: Yes.

Rayburn: Yes, and at quite a number of other places because the Japanese are very clean people. They believe in it theirself, and if it's possible, they got it for us.

Marcello: What do you know about Jess Stanbrough and his shortwave radio?

Rayburn: I know quite a lot. Jess is an oceanographer now and a very, very good friend of mine. In fact, I just took your letter the other day and laid it up right beside his, one I'd received from him from Massachusetts. This was Jess Stanbrough's

bunk that we crawled up over to gain entrance to this attic to get this food--he and Pat Patterson, Sergeant Patterson. He operated that radio.

Marcello: Did he construct it himself from parts that he found?

Rayburn: We had a sergeant that had carried that radio with him--I'm sorry, I can't pull his name right out now--but Jess was a wizard at electronics, and all he needed was just part of a radio to get BBC. That's where we got all our news from, and we got news there in Bicycle Camp, oh, every week, two or three days a week. At a certain time it went on, and we'd get that BBC broadcast. It wasn't good news, but it helped quite a lot.

Marcello: How would the news be spread around? By word of mouth?

Rayburn: It was typed or written, and the first sergeant probably would get three or four of his buddies around and read it to them, and then it'd be destroyed, and then it just got around by word of mouth. We were very careful not to gather, you know, too many people in one bunch because some guard might see us, and here he'd come and want to know what's going on.

We were pretty reasonable about that news. We certainly didn't want to get anybody caught with that radio. Of course, everyone was interested in it, and that news got around. It got around pretty fast, and it was fairly accurate because . . . maybe Glen Jones, our first sergeant, would read it to

four or five other sergeants, and they were all mix-mingled in with everybody all over the camp. In other words, the sergeants didn't live together and the other enlisted men lived together; I mean, we were all pretty well bound together. We'd get this information. Oh, maybe later on I'd run into Jimmy Lattimore or Ilo Hard or some of those guys that came around pretty often, or Roy Stensland, and maybe two or three of us would have a conversation about it and get his opinion on it, so forth and so on. Such as it was, it was accurate.

Marcello: Now, obviously, the radio was forbidden. What other items did the Japanese forbid you to possess?

Rayburn: Nothing that I ever had.

Marcello: How about writing material?

Rayburn: You wasn't supposed to have writing material, but you could have a little ol' pencil laying there. They might pick it up, and they might not. I never had any taken away from me the whole three-and-a-half years. But you weren't supposed to have any.

Those guys that made those props for these shows, well, they had all kinds of paint and so forth and so on, and the Japanese got it for them, you know. They had to have something.

They didn't bother us too much there in Bicycle Camp about that. Of course, we were well-boxed in. We had plenty

of barbed wire around this camp, and it was inside of a high, stone, masonry fence to begin with, and there was only one gate, entrance. In that particular camp, it was pretty escape-proof. There was nowhere to go if you got out.

Marcello: What did you talk about in your bull sessions when you had spare time and so on?

Rayburn: Well, we talked about our girlfriends back home. We talked about Saturday nights or our weekends in Fort Worth and Dallas and in our hometowns. We always ended up on the subject of food. Now Al Carpenter and myself . . . Al's father was superintendent for Humble Oil and Gas Company, and they had just started this offshore drilling program. I know Al and I sat for hours and hours discussing the offshore drilling rigs and the Birds-Eye frozen food that was just begun on the market more or less and how well they fed on there, and that was going to be our first project when we got out--to go out on those offshore rigs. You go out three days and you're in four days. Why, that was the keenest thing in the world, eating all that Birds-Eye frozen food (chuckle).

Marcello: I guess as a result of these bull sessions you very quickly knew everybody's family history and everything there was to know about everybody else.

Rayburn: Quite a bit of that went on. A lot of people didn't want to talk about their family much. They wanted to dismiss that. But I've heard a lot of good stories about a particular little

fellow in Bicycle Camp. He found out that I, before World War II, had driven a little bit in junk car derbies. Another fellow and I had a hot rod Ford that we'd built up and took a lot of races with it. He was a runner. He was from Tennessee, and that was his job when he came into the service. He was hauling that booze into Memphis and Nashville from the hills. All he could talk about is his '40 model Ford that he had souped up to haul this booze in--this corn liquor.

Marcello: Incidentally, what did you do with the profits from your fried pies?

Rayburn: Well, we spent it on food (chuckle). That was extra food. That was bananas and duck eggs. Why, golly, you couldn't get hold of any meat other than canned meat, but can you imagine a can of bully beef mixed in with a great big bowl of rice with a few little onions and chili peppers chopped up in it? Man, that was good eating! I eat it today. This very day I still eat things like that. That's what we'd do with that extra money. We'd eat it up just as fast as we could get it. That's the reason we didn't have ten dollars to buy the sack of flour with; we'd eaten up all of our profits.

Marcello: Okay, sometime in late September or early October, the first of the group of prisoners left Bicycle Camp. Among the Americans, they were a part of the Fitzsimmons group. I'm referring again to the first group that left Bicycle Camp.

Rayburn: That's correct.

Marcello: As I recall, you were a member of that Fitzsimmons group.

Rayburn: The first group to leave Bicycle Camp was the Fitzsimmons group. Yes, I was in that group.

Marcello: Approximately how many Americans were in that group?

Rayburn: I think about 190.

Marcello: And it was called the Fitzsimmons group because Captain Arch Fitzsimmons was the ranking officer of the group.

Rayburn: That's right.

Marcello: How did this process take place? Were you prepared a week ahead of time for this move, or how did it occur?

Rayburn: No, it just happened one day. "Be ready to go tomorrow."

Marcello: Was this upsetting?

Rayburn: Well, I didn't hardly know how to take it. I know that's where Corporal Cellum and I got separated. Well, it was rumored, you know, that we was going here and we was going there, and we had no idea where we was going. I don't know . . . there again, it was adventure. We're going to see something different, going to do something different.

Marcello: But your little group has been broken up now.

Rayburn: Yes, yes.

Marcello: That must have been a little bit upsetting.

Rayburn: Well, it was. In our group, you know, we had a number of sailors and a number of Marines and the biggest portion of F Battery--of course, we didn't have E Battery with us--and some of the men from maybe Service Battery or Headquarters

in this group of 190. I'd say around 200 people were in this group. So you're getting away from some of your buddies that you've been sharing with, and you're going someplace where you don't know. Then here comes some strange people into the group that you haven't been around so much. They've been there in the compound, but then you haven't been associating real closely with them. It's a little bit disturbing. I never really was around the sailors very much until this group left Bicycle Camp, and then I got to know the sailors and Marines pretty well.

Marcello: Incidentally, had the Japanese ever processed you at all during this entire time thus far?

Rayburn: Yes, to an extent. They wanted to know everybody's occupation, and those men, about probably seventy or eighty of them, were pulled aside. They called them technicians, and they immediately took those people to Japan.

Marcello: But did they give you a serial number or any sort of identification as a prisoner-of-war or anything of that nature?

Rayburn: Not there. But when we hit Burma, they do. Each person has an identification tag.

Marcello: Okay, so describe your move. What can you take with you?

Rayburn: Everything that you own. I left some things behind that I decided I didn't want to carry--not much. I had a shaving kit that I'd carried all the way from the States,and for some reason or another--I don't know--I didn't want to take

it. Of course, I couldn't take my electric hot plate because it actually belonged to Jack. I had to leave it. But I took my mosquito net, blankets, and all the clothing I had. Those things I definitely hung on to pretty close. I'd given some of them away; I didn't have quite as many to carry. And, of course, my mess gear and canteen stayed with me all the way through.

Marcello: And at this time, I guess, everybody's still in pretty good shape yet.

Rayburn: Physically, yes. We'd had very, very little bit of sickness in Bicycle Camp. As I mentioned before, I think they were just kind of fattening us up for the things to come.

Marcello: And even for whatever sickness you had, I guess the hospital facilities there weren't too bad, considering what they were to become later on.

Rayburn: We had medics with still some . . . we had Captain Lumpkin with us, a good doctor from Amarillo, Texas, and we still had quite a bit of medication.

I did have yellow jaundice there, but the reason for it, I must say, was from drinking distilled alcohol. They'd brought this in off a working party, and it wasn't fit for human consumption. A medic off a freighter by the name of Gray . . . his ship had been sunk by the Japanese, and he had been picked up and brought to Surabaja, and naturally he ended up with us. He explained to me that the only way it

could possibly be drank--fit for human consumption--was to strain this through rice bread. We had these little loaves of rice bread, and he strained up some of that,and we drank a little bit of it. Boy, it turned me yellow as a lemon, and it kind of scared me. Doctor Lumpkin told me, "Well, you've got yellow jaundice. Try to get hold of all the fruit you possibly can and eat some sweets along," and he said, "You'll probably be all right."

And there again, that's where some of that money went that we was making off the fried pies. One of my friends, Jessie Bumpass, who lives down in San Antonio, had been on a working party and had found eighty or ninety dollars. They was cleaning up this barracks, and it was just rolled up with a rubber band around it. He had this money, and it was more money than he knew what to do with, you know, and he loaned me ten dollars to buy canned fruit with. Of course, you couldn't buy very much of it, but I got enough of it that I got over the yellow jaundice.

Marcello: I gather the natives would take any kind of money.

Rayburn: Oh, yes. They preferred silver, especially the Chinese, who were keen on that silver. But they would take American money. Of course, you know, it wasn't long until the Japanese had their script money in there, and that was the only thing to buy with.

But this native could always go to a Chinaman with this

American money--the Chinese were the merchants--and get more for it than he could for the script money. The Chinese people were very thrifty people, and they knew that someday that that dollar would be worth something. I'm sorry to say that I wish I could say that now, but I'm afraid it's not going to be worth quite as much as it used to be worth.

Marcello: Okay, describe your move from Bicycle Camp and your next journey.

Rayburn: We left out of Bicycle Camp and loaded on a Japanese freighter.

Marcello: I know a later group went aboard the Dai Nichi Maru. I don't know if maybe you were on the same one, and it simply made that trip on several occasions.

Rayburn: Well, it was a maru. Remembering the name of it . . . that didn't mean a whole lot to me, but I remember the part maru.

Oh, man, hell really broke out then! They loaded us on this ship and, of course, put us right down in the hold. There we stayed for days and days, and, believe me, mister, that is something else! You don't get any air down there. There's no room hardly to lay down; you can sit down. It was so crowded, and they will not let you come on the top deck.

Fortunately, it wasn't too far from Batavia to Singapore. We were unloaded in Singapore and hauled by trucks right past the Changi Jail.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit more about this voyage, though, before we get to Changi Jail. You mentioned that you're crowded

into the hold of this ship. I understand they had actually divided the hold by means of platforms, did they not, so that they could stack more prisoners in there?

Rayburn: Oh, yes. In this dadgummed thing they had decks on top of decks, where, you know, maybe there might have been room in there for fifty, they probably had 150 or 200. See, we had a lot of Dutch and Australians with us, also.

Marcello: And I guess basically, like you say, you had to sit down. You really couldn't stand up, and you couldn't lay down, either.

Rayburn: No, you couldn't. The best I remember,we only got one meal a day on that ship.

Marcello: And how was it served?

Rayburn: It was prepared above deck, and they would let us come out to eat and let us come out to use the . . . the restrooms was nothing but just a thing built over the side of the ship. They did furnish us water for us to wash our mess gear with, you know. And just as soon as you got fed, why, you was back in the hold and stayed there. That's the only time you got out. Now you would have to ask permission to go out and go up on deck to use the restroom. If he felt like it, you did; if he didn't, you'd wait. It just depended on the guard.

Marcello: I guess you're really lucky that dysentery hadn't become rampant yet.

Rayburn: Dysentery at that time wasn't much of a factor. A few of the sailors did have a little taste of dysentery or diarrhea because they had it pretty rough when they first hit the beach, you know. They had nothing and they went for hours and days without any food nor anything else. They'd just eat anything they could get their hands on, and they were in worse shape than we were. But dysentery really wasn't a factor there.

Marcello: I guess you were constantly thirsty, too. You had to have been under those conditions.

Rayburn: Water was a big factor, and it was hard to come by. You could scrounge it maybe a little bit one way or another. Some of those guards you could con a little bit, you know, for a couple of canteens of water. It was just a pretty dadgummed bad thing, really. You just had to do the best you could.

Marcello: I know you were hungry, and I know you were thirsty throughout most of this . . . you were hungry just about the entire time you were a prisoner-of-war, and, of course, there were certain periods when you were thirsty, too. What does it feel like physically to be thirsty, I mean, really thirsty?

Rayburn: Well, that's a hard thing to describe--for me. Well, your mouth gets full of cotton, and your body is practically dehydrated. You just get to the point where you just don't want nothing. I don't know how to describe it. But perhaps

I wasn't that thirsty at any time, but if anybody could have wanted water any worse than I wanted it, well, I don't know when or where it was. You can live on water alone for hours and days, but without water you can't. Of course, I'm sure that there's just a matter of hours a lot of times there that we had to wait, but that's a long time to wait if you're really thirsty.

Marcello: We're talking about temperatures that obviously are well over a hundred degrees down in the hold of that ship, given the fact that you're already in the tropics.

Rayburn: I'd think that topside the temperature is probably a hundred degrees, and I'd say it'd be about 120 or 130 degrees down in the hold.

Marcello: Like you say, fortunately, this is a pretty short trip. You get out at Singapore, and you're marched past Changi Jail on your way to Changi Village, is that correct?

Rayburn: That's correct.

Marcello: Okay, describe what Changi Village looks like from a physical standpoint first of all.

Rayburn: Well, it's quite a nasty-looking place. As we drove by . . . we drove. We had to march a small distance, but we were riding going by the Changi Jail. And when we drove into the "King's Land"--I call it the "King's Land because the British were already there--it was quite a sight. Of course, we're going to the run-down part of it that's been looted

for every loose board, for anything else that they can haul into their compound, and there's not much there. We barely have a roof over our head.

And we don't no more than get unloaded until here comes the British with orders. Golly, our officers, Captain Fitzsimmons, Jimmy Lattimore, Roy Stensland, Dave Hiner, they don't know what to take or what to think of this, you know. But they get their orders, and, of course, they pass them on to us. We're not allowed out of the compound; we can't go over and bother the "king's coconuts"; and everything around there belongs to the king.

I think I probably made the statement there one morning, I said, "The king, hell, it belongs to the Japanese," and that's so much for that, you know. Well, we got to get along with these people now, you know; we don't know how long we're going to be here. We've got to get along with them, but I had my mind made up that I didn't have to get along with them. I wasn't going to go out asking for trouble with any of them, but then I wasn't going to be dominated by them, by no means. Just because that man was a major in the queen's army, it didn't cut no ice with me.

We let them know that right away, and probably we made it harder on the next group that come through there because they really had their laws laid down on the second group when they came through. We done the best we could there,

and we weren't there very long. I've heard stories that we were there three weeks, but we weren't there that long.

Marcello: Did you do any work while you were there?

Rayburn: Very little. We had water details, wood details. I went out on a cleaning detail, I think, a couple of times while we were there. I think really what we were doing was policing up the British officers' compound more or less. Then they had a garden crew. They had a crew that they took out,and they were spading up land where they were going to plant this huge vegetable garden. I think I worked out there one day. Then I got on a clean-up detail, and that's when I really got acquainted with the British. We worked around cleaning up the officers' mess, the officers' quarters, and policing up around it and just things like that.

And then, too, there is where I got acquainted with the Sikhs and the Punjabs--damn Indians, I'll put it that way. We were waiting there for a truck to pick us up and take us on a working party, and they drove by in this truck. We didn't know. You know, when the truck drives up, well, we start edging toward it, you know, get the best seat in it that we can. And those lousy son-of-a-guns jumped out of that truck and started swinging their rifle butts at us, backing us off the pavement, you know, and giving us a good cussing.

Marcello: Now these were the turncoats, is that correct?

Rayburn: That's the turncoats. That's correct. What information I could get from the British--English--that I got acquainted with, the most of them were Sikhs, some Punjabs. The Gurkha was not a turncoat. He was a little night fighter. He was loyal to the British, but these characters weren't. I have no use for them. To this day I have no use for them. That was the only problem that we had there, probably, other than "reading" the British off. They'd come roaming through there with their swagger sticks, you know, and they're liable to ask you if you recognize his rank. If you do, why didn't you salute him? All I ever said to them, "Hell, I'm in the American Army, not the British Army!" They didn't like it.

Marcello: What were your barracks--living quarters--like here at Changi?

Rayburn: Why, they were nothing but just vacant barracks.

Marcello: I know that some groups found that these barracks were infested with bedbugs.

Rayburn: Oh, yes! Oh, certainly! They were run-down, and, like I mentioned, the barracks had been looted--doors taken off of them and every loose board that they could scrounge around there to take and build something. Oh, yes . . . I don't know . . . probably native troops had lived in those barracks. I don't know who lived in them, but, oh, there were bedbugs as big as the end of this cigarette. It was unbelievable.

Marcello: How did you get rid of them?

Rayburn: We had to boil all of our clothing and blankets. That's the

only way you could get rid of them.

Marcello: Did you find that the sanitary precautions and habits of the British left something to be desired?

Rayburn: Well, there was a lot of things about the British that was "left to be desired." They had their ideas about things that certainly weren't the way we done them. The least that you could have to do with those people, the better off you were.

Marcello: What kind of food did you get here in Changi?

Rayburn: It was about the same thing. I think probably if any meat came down the British officers got it, and we got what was left.

Marcello: They definitely ran the camp, didn't they?

Rayburn: Yes, that's correct.

Marcello: This was a huge camp, I guess, with thousands and thousands and thousands of prisoners.

Rayburn: Oh, yes, 50,000.

Marcello: And the Japanese evidently allowed the British to control the internal organization of that camp.

Rayburn: That's correct.

Marcello: And the British made sure that everybody knew that they did control it.

Rayburn: Oh, you bet! It didn't take them fifteen minutes to get down there and let us know who the boss was, but it didn't cut any ice with us. They came to our officers and said,

"Well, these men here, they've got to be punished." Our officers would tell them, "Well, we'll do our punishment within our own group." They didn't like that. They wanted to do it theirself, you know. Well, they just absolutely weren't people to be reckoned with. That's all there is to that.

Marcello: Were there ever any incidents involving the "king's coconuts" here?

Rayburn: We weren't there long enough to wise up to that. I think the second group that came through done away with the coconut grove out there pretty well from what I've heard. We didn't really have time. We weren't there that long to venture that far away from camp. Now I think the second group that came through there, they were having a bit of a problem coming to where we were, and they were there quite a lot longer than we were.

Marcello: Even though you weren't there very long, I assume that you were still glad to leave. It was not a very happy place.

Rayburn: There was nothing there that I wanted. I couldn't see any future in staying there. Some of us would have got killed, I'm sure, because that kind of business wasn't bred into us. I think we were very good, disciplined soldiers, but after you became a prisoner-of-war, that saluting and standing at attention to an officer, we didn't believe in it, and we weren't going to display it for the British.

Marcello: Okay, what happens at this point? Where do you go from here? Changi is only a transit stop?

Rayburn: Changi is just a stop for us, a few days. I'm going to say we were not there not over ten days or a week probably. We're back on the trucks again, going toward the docks. They put us back in the hold again on another maru.

Marcello: Right there at Singapore?

Rayburn: Yes, right there at Singapore. We hightail it out of there.

Marcello: What are conditions like aboard this ship? Describe them.

Rayburn: Just the same, if not worse, because I think they picked up more people there, you know, picked up some more that didn't come out of Java with us. Oh, there was a huge amount of people on this little ol' freighter. It was a rusty little ol' thing. Doggone, they'd kept that thing in the water going so fast that they hadn't had time to do any repairs on it much, and, dadgum, it was just as bad as the first one.

Marcello: By the way, where were you located on this ship? Do you recall? Did you get lucky or were you unlucky on this one, too, in terms of your position in one of these holds?

Rayburn: I was in the very bottom of that hold, and the deck of that ship was so hot that you couldn't hardly sit on it. You just rolled up your blanket, sat down on them, and just done the best you could.

Now I got sick on that trip. I came down with a fever. I don't think it was malaria, but I was burning up--I was

burning up. When something like that happens to you, well, there's no point in telling anyone about it or complaining to anyone. There's no first sergeant to go to get permission to do anything. You just done everything on your own. I just got to watching that hold there and grabbed an empty canteen and thought I'd try it and see how I made out.

I went up topside, and, fortunately, I caught a Korean guard there standing guard that would visit a little bit, you know. I put my hand up on my forehead and shook my head, and I showed him I wanted some water. "Just go ahead." I went over there and filled my canteen, you know, with water. I come back and I just sat down on this bulkhead right by him, you know. He didn't say anything to me. I more or less got through to him, you know, that I needed to stay topside for a little bit, and he shook his head and motioned me over there to lay down on this canvas decking, you know, wood and canvas deck that they used to close the hold with. I was there and everything was going fine. Sweet! Man, how wonderful, really, a little breeze!

And then the dadgummed guards changed. When this new guard came up and relieved this old one, well, there I was, laying there, and it lasted about ten minutes. He jerked me up off of there, and he worked me over pretty doggone good, and I couldn't get in that hold fast enough (chuckle). So I did get on top deck for about an hour there one day.

Marcello: How long did this fever last?

Rayburn: Oh, probably twenty-four hours. I know I was glad that it had pretty well gone by the time that we got to Rangoon because we set there in that harbor in Rangoon, it seemed like to me, three days and nights--just setting there. Of course, you remember a little bit of Kipling. When we could get out for mess, for food or water, or go to the restroom, you could see the pagodas glistening in the sun. That gold looked pretty good to me on those pagodas. We must have set there for three days and nights. I don't know . . . it seemed like a long time. They finally pulled anchor and sailed on around to Moulmein, Burma, and there's where the railroad began.

Marcello: So you get off the ships at Moulmein, Burma. Up until this time do you know that you're going to be building a railroad? Do you know what your fate is?

Rayburn: No. No, we certainly don't. We don't know what we're going to do there until this Japanese colonel makes this famous speech to us.

Marcello: This is Colonel Nagatomo.

Rayburn: Right.

Marcello: And he makes this speech at Thanbyuzayat. So you go from Moulmein to Thanbyuzayat.

Rayburn: We went by rail almost to Thanbyuzayat. We didn't quite get there. We had to march a little ways into Thanbyuzayat.

Marcello: It was a dusty road, too, was it not?

Rayburn: Oh, wasn't it dusty! And those people in the village there . . . when we was marching through Moulmein to the railhead there, those women would run out there and give you whatever they had--some kind of a rice cake or some kind of a patty or maybe two or three bananas or an egg, a boiled egg, or anything. They felt awful sorry for us. They would try to give us something. They weren't bothered, but they didn't have much to give.

We spent that first night in that dadgummed leper colony there in Moulmein. That was terrible, terrible, terrible. We didn't know what it was until we'd been there a couple of nights. We got in there and it was dark, and we discovered in the daylight what it was. That scared all of us half to death. But it was a well-constructed place, and evidently it was all right.

Then we left from there to the railhead and out to Thanbyuzayat. That's where the colonel made his speech to us and told us what we were going to do.

Marcello: Describe the speech, not only in terms of what he said, but his actions and the manner in which he delivered it and so on.

Rayburn: Well, it was quite a speech. I suppose that I listened to everything that he said, but the main things that interested me was, of course, that he downgraded us. He said we dishonored

our country by surrendering, which we had nothing to do with. We were under the Dutch command, and they done all of that and then handed orders down to us. Therefore, we was working for this great nation that wanted to progress in the free world, and we would be better off later on after they took rule of the United States. We would go down in history of having helped them build this railroad, and yakkity, yakkity, yak. But the thing that I remember most about his speech was, "If you try to escape, you have the Indian Ocean on one side and 800 miles of jungle on the other side." And that's all I wanted to hear. I wanted to find out for sure where I was, and then I dismissed that from my mind. There wasn't any escape in my mind from then on because I knew it was impossible, which was proven later on.

Marcello: Did you stay at Thanbyuzayat very long?

Rayburn: No. We only stayed there maybe overnight. Yes, I guess we stayed there overnight. They started moving us out by trucks and moved us up the jungle over these dusty, dusty roads.

Marcello: This is the dry season.

Rayburn: Dry season--dusty, dusty roads. I sometimes called it the 35 Kilo Camp. I've been corrected many times that it is the 40 Kilo Camp. Nevertheless, that's where we went first.

Marcello: I assume the camp was already built for you when you got there.

Rayburn: They made these long huts out of bamboo and atap for the roofing. Believe it or not, they would turn rain pretty well. They eventually started leaking.

Marcello: Describe what they were like on the inside.

Rayburn: Just absolutely nothing but a dirt floor and a bunk built up off the floor approximately two, two-and-a-half feet high and just one long string of bunks.

Marcello: It was really a bamboo deck, wasn't it?

Rayburn: A bamboo deck put together with bamboo and with bamboo woven in and out of it.

Marcello: Was the topside of the deck split bamboo?

Rayburn: Split bamboo, right, with, of course, the round part of it on top and the rough part turned down. That was the way they were built. Some of the huts had those on each side with a big hallway down them, and some of them were smaller and just had the bamboo down one side of the hut and open in the front.

Marcello: Approximately how many men would be housed in one of these huts?

Rayburn: That first camp we went into, I believe, had all the Americans in two huts. That's where we got the Dutch interpreter and the Dutch doctor, Dr. Hekking.

Marcello: About how much room did each man have in one of these huts?

Rayburn: Well, he had approximately three feet for his . . . a blanket folded.

Marcello: And about six feet in length maybe, something like that?

Rayburn: Seven.

Marcello: Seven feet.

Rayburn: Approximately seven feet.

Marcello: And that was your home.

Rayburn: That was my home. We could have small fires where we could boil water, wash our clothes. Water wasn't always plentiful. We had problems at times, during the dry season especially, getting water. But they allowed fires, and we could do a little cooking. We'd take that rice and put it on an ol' beat-out iron pan and cook it over the coals there and kind of change the taste of it a little bit.

Marcello: Now you're talking about rice above and beyond what you would be issued as you went through the chow line.

Rayburn: Well, that's the same rice, only we would sometimes try to do something else to it to make it taste better if it was at night and we had time.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had all these fires and so on going. My next question sounds like a stupid one, but I'll ask it, anyway. Where did you get matches and so on for these fires?

Rayburn: Well, of course, I'm sure that there was some men that carried matches all the way through. In fact, I think I had a little tube with a few matches in it. But we'd get the fire from the cookhouse. The Japs would furnish coals. The guards would see that we . . . and the cookhouse had a

fire going constantly. It never quit. So you could always run up there with a bamboo, pick up a live coal, bring it back, and start you a little fire.

Marcello: In this 40 Kilo Camp, about how many people would be here altogether?

Rayburn: As best I can recall, in that first camp there, there must have been a thousand of us or 1,500 maybe. Now we didn't stay at this camp very long.

Marcello: About how long?

Rayburn: Oh, I think, probably . . . let's see . . . we arrived there a day before Halloween, and the next morning we got up was the 31st of October, 1942. We just barely got started there, and I guess the Japanese engineers could see that they were overshooting themselves. They moved us back to the 25 Kilo . . . and I refer to it as the 26 Kilo Camp.

Marcello: And again, physically, I'm sure the 26 Kilo Camp was very, very close in resemblance to the 40 Kilo Camp.

Rayburn: Much larger. It had a road--the road going up into Three Pagodas Pass and on up into Thailand. They had a camp on each side of it. When we were moved down to the 26 Kilo Camp, we were on the other side of the road, and there we started making fills and cuts on this railroad.

Marcello: Describe what a typical day was like working on the railroad from the time you get up until you went to bed in the evening. See if you can reconstruct a routine day on that railroad.

Rayburn: The Japanese required every man that was physically able to work for his food.

Marcello: You're still in pretty good shape at this time then.

Rayburn: Pretty good shape, yes. Then they would assign these kumi bosses. They told the officers, you know, "All right, you have twelve men here and twelve men here, twelve men here and twelve men here, and each one of them is a kumi, has a kumi boss." They'd want so many men the next day for work, so they'd come around to each one and say, "Well, we've got to have ten people, or eleven people, out of this bunch tomorrow." If there was somebody that we knew that was pretty sick, you know, well, he'd get to stay in. We didn't argue much about that. Everybody seemed to want to do his share.

Marcello: What time would a day start?

Rayburn: It started out about six o'clock in the morning.

Marcello: How would they roust you?

Rayburn: By coming through the hut screaming and hollering. You got your butt up and got out. Of course, you were fed, and there was nobody late for chow at this time. So that's the first thing you do.

Marcello: You're still getting rice.

Rayburn: Yes, and soup. The Dutch were the worst. Well, they were the biggest chow hounds of the bunch. When you hear those Dutchmen holler, why, it was time to go eat. Of course, we

had separate kitchens most of the time, and we didn't eat in their kitchen. The Americans and the Australians ate together quite a lot, and the Dutch were separate.

Marcello: Would they have roll call every morning?

Rayburn: You bet!

Marcello: Would that be before or after chow?

Rayburn: After chow, just before the working party. Then you fell out and got your gear and lined up for the working party.

Marcello: When you say you got your gear . . .

Rayburn: Well, you'd take your mess gear and your canteen with you.

Marcello: How about the tools? Would they distribute out at the job?

Rayburn: Most of the time you'd go by the engineer's hut and pick up the tools because they took care of the tools. They counted those and kept count of them because our men, and especially the natives, would haul them off. We had a huge number of natives working on this railroad, also.

Marcello: What kind of tools are we talking about?

Rayburn: Well, they weren't good American-made tools, by no means; but they had shovels, fairly decent shovels, picks, grubbing hoes. Most of the tools were fairly decent, but we wore out a few of them, too.

You had so much dirt to move. In other words, they assigned each man so many meters of dirt to move. For a long time there, well, you moved . . . they'd mark it off, and you moved your work. Maybe there was two men filling

baskets, and you'd carry it and make this huge dump for the railroad, you know, fill. It was the same way on cuts. You'd move it out, move it on down, and later use it for a fill. You had so much to move, and a lot of times, our bunch . . . we always liked to work together, but that didn't last. They could see right quick that we'd get the most work done, and there was a little trouble there when they'd throw the Dutch and the British and the Australians in with us, you know, just one big group. I think it actually made it harder on the Americans because we could carry our load, but some of those people didn't carry their load or didn't want to carry their load or wouldn't carry their load. They somehow or another got out of it. But if we used this amount of dirt they were usually satisfied.

Of course, the Korean guards, there again . . . they weren't too keen to jump on us out there. The engineers were fairly decent. Once in awhile you'd get to working with a hothead, and he would give you a good cussing and maybe whack you a few times with a piece of bamboo. But the guards weren't too eager to jump on us out there because they were afraid of the engineers. The engineers had no use for them whatsoever--the Korean guards. So we had it pretty good on the working parties for that part of it.

Marcello: In other words, one person might be picking, and another one would be shoveling, and you would put this dirt in a

sack. Then would maybe a couple of you haul this sack away, or how would that be done?

Rayburn: Well, we worked it both ways. They'd team up in twos and carry a huge burlap bag full of dirt. They were experimenting. The natives, they carried two bamboo baskets on their shoulders, and they'd kind of go in a little trot. They tried it both ways, but they soon found out that by working in pairs we could get more done than the coolies could with their two little baskets on bamboo trucking down through paths and up and down and over, you know, to these fills where we would fill in these low places and cut out the high places for a railroad.

Marcello: I guess with a thousand or more prisoners working on one of these projects that it just must look like a giant anthill or something.

Rayburn: Well, there weren't that many in each camp. Now a total of 70,000 or 80,000 people worked on this railroad--that many POW's. God only knows how many natives that worked on it. But there were just not that many in any one camp. I think probably the largest camp that we ever had was maybe 3,000 people.

Marcello: Well, still,3,000 people working on one of these cuts or fills seems like a lot of people to me.

Rayburn: Well, that's true, but then, you see, they'd have maybe 500 or 800 working here making this cut and doing this fill, and

then on down the road there a mile or two they'd have another group and another group, you see. We didn't all work at the same place at the same time.

Marcello: How large were one of these cuts or fills?

Rayburn: Some of those cuts that we made over there in Burma, especially along there about where the three pagodas are, I'd say that they were approximately sixty to eighty meters deep. Probably some of those fills that we made were forty or fifty meters.

Marcello: Easily as large as a football field then?

Rayburn: Oh, yes! Oh, yes, much larger! We went through some pretty good-sized hills and mountains.

Marcello: Now, at this stage, that is, when you're here at the early part of this railroad, what happened when you fulfilled your quota?

Rayburn: That got to be a problem, too, because some of the guards would give you a long rest period and let you clean tools and maybe go down to the river if there was one nearby and get a bath. Then there's always this slower working party, and it got to be where it wasn't wise to hurry and do your job because they would only put another half-meter on you later on.

Marcello: They would keep increasing the quota, in other words?

Rayburn: Keep on increasing the quota. So we more or less just kind of got in groove. We knew just about what we could get by

with, and that's what we done. Now we might get an engineer that was disgusted with what we'd done that day, and he'd turn around and give the Korean guards quite a talking to, you know. Then he would give us quite a talking to with the sting of a bamboo pole. A lot of that went on. It seemed like to me there was just plenty of times that you couldn't keep from getting a beating. There just was no reason for it, but you couldn't get away from it.

Marcello: Would you normally take the noon meal out on the job?

Rayburn: No, it was brought out to us by the personnel that worked in the cookhouse. Sometimes when it was a long ways from camp, the Japanese . . . well, when we first started, it was brought to us. It was just carried out there by hand. Later on, they had some transportation--trucks. They'd drive it out in a truck. We got that noon meal out on the working party.

Marcello: I assume we're talking about the same rice and soup.

Rayburn: Just rice and a very, very thin soup because they tried to hold back most of the vegetables and what little meat we got hold of . . . like, you know, we might get a hundred pounds of meat for 1,500 people, and it would be just enough to flavor it. They'd try to hold it back for the night meal because that was the most important one. It was only gruel, you know, just plain rice for breakfast. A cup of tea and rice is all we'd get for breakfast, with nothing on the rice.

Marcello: Did you ever see examples of where people tried to cheat, that is, move back those stakes and so on so that you would actually be doing less than the engineers had assigned?

Rayburn: Oh, yes, yes. It was definitely done and done many times without getting caught, but you're going to have to remember that all good things don't go on forever. They were caught several times. Sometimes you could nearly laugh it off with them, you know, pass it on as a big funny joke, you know. But then they got to watching us closer and closer, so you couldn't try much of that anymore. They were wise to us. We gave them a pretty bad time as long as we could about things like that. We outmaneuvered them many, many times in many ways, but they wised up to that pretty quick.

Marcello: What time would you normally get back into camp in the evening?

Rayburn: Right at the beginning of the railroad, why, we'd get in at a pretty decent hour. But as the railroad got farther along, the hours got longer.

Marcello: We'll come to that in a moment. Incidentally, I assume that officers were not working on the railroad.

Rayburn: That's correct.

Marcello: What were they doing?

Rayburn: The officers would go out with the working parties. They didn't have to work, but they'd go out with a group as kumi bosses. They did not have to work. The Imperial Japanese Army did not believe in working officers, and they never had

to work during the whole imprisonment.

Marcello: What happened to a man who was too sick to work? What happened to him in terms of rations?

Rayburn: They were supposed to be on half-rations, but we would see that they got their fair amount of rations. Probably during the first six months, everybody was shouldering their load pretty well, especially there at the 26 Kilo Camp.

We moved from that camp back to the 18 Kilo Camp and worked there for several months.

Marcello: And this is still in the dry season yet; it's relatively good weather.

Rayburn: Yes. In fact, we had just . . . no, I beg your pardon, we did not move back to 18 Kilo Camp then. They set up more engineers across the road from us there at the 26 Kilo Camp, and we moved just across the road to the 26 Kilo Camp. We stayed there a long time. That's where we spent the first Christmas in Burma.

Marcello: What was the first Chrismas like?

Rayburn: Well, it wasn't much of a Christmas, but I recall it very well because there was some things that happened that I remember real well. The Jap engineers took it on themselves to give each man about two shots of brandy.

Marcello: Did you get a day off?

Rayburn: Yes, we got a day off. They came over with their bottles and saw that every man got about two shots of brandy. At

that time my kumi boss was "Big John" Owen. There were about eight officers living on just the other side of the hut there. One of them was Dave Hiner, Jimmy Lattimore, and Roy Stensland, and there was two Australian flight officers, I think, and one Australian Motor Transport officer living there. Lieutenant Stensland, when they came over with that brandy, why, that just gave him an idea. He just put on his clothes, his shoes, and along there after they got to drinking pretty good, he just goes over across the road and joins the party.and comes back with about four or five bottles of that good Moulmein brandy.

And at the time that dust had got my feet in real bad shape. They were just one solid sore, and I wasn't going out on working parties. I couldn't. I still have some of that. It's on my arms now to a certain extent. So the next day after the working party left . . . of course, my job was to boil off water for everybody. Man, I'll tell you, you don't know "Big John" Owen. You better have all that water boiled off when they get back in because they're tired and hungry, and they're wanting water. You can bet your life that I certainly had plenty of it.

But Lieutenant Stensland hollered at me that morning . . . he knew I was over there, and I went over and looked over the atap, and he said, "Come on around and have a drink." I was a little hesitant, you know, because in a weakened

condition, you know, a little bit of booze goes a long way, but I had to go around and have a few drinks with him. And lo and behold he had me tighter than a hoot owl by the time the guys got home that night, but I had the water boiled.

It was just about that time that "Big John" and Sergeant Martinez had their fight. Now that fight was partly over me, and it was kind of funny, and it was kind of sad because Homero Martinez is a real good friend of ours. In fact, he took John's wife and my wife and another fellow and his wife to Acapulco--his company has a big condominium down there--a few years ago, and he's one heck of a swell person. But John weighed like 200 pounds at that time, and Martinez weighs about 140 pounds. John would knock him down, and he'd just bounce back up on his bare feet, you know, and throw up his guard again. I guess he knocked him down about three or four times. Anyway, by mutual agreement, they decided that that was enough. It was over our kumi being short. Of course, there again, you see, was a case where a sergeant outranked a three-striper, but the three-striper was in command.

It was decided that everybody was going out of there that could possibly go. I felt like when the Jap guards came around and checked you and seen your condition, if they felt like you didn't need to go to work, then that was all I had to answer to. Of course, I had to answer to my buddies, but if I was able . . . I know that by going out there in

that dust, I couldn't keep enough hot water and salt on my feet, and that's all I had to bathe them with. I had holes in the top of my feet as big as my finger and thumb, holes that were a quarter to half-an-inch deep. I got over that, and, of course, I got back on the railroad.

Marcello: Now all this time the others have not caught up with the Fitzsimmons group yet?

Rayburn: That's true. At the time that we were at the 26 Kilo, I believe they were at about the 12 Kilo.

Marcello: Twelve or the 18 Kilo, one or the other.

Rayburn: Well, about the 12 Kilo at that time because we moved from the 26 Kilo during the monsoons. During the rainy season, we moved from the 26 Kilo back to the 18 Kilo to handle supplies there.

Marcello: This was during the monsoon season that you made that move.

Rayburn: Right, yes. The monsoons come in January, February, in those months, I believe. They had a bridge that washed out, and they couldn't get supplies through.

Marcello: Well, now during the monsoon season, then, the others evidently had gone around you people because they were up at the 80 and the 100 Kilo Camp during the monsoons.

Rayburn: They had moved on up to the 55 or 60 Kilo Camp, I believe it is. We were handling . . . see, the rails had been laid out there a way, and we were handling supplies. They were taking supplies by truck when they could, ox cart, any way

they could, on down the railroad. We got this job of laying rails and handling supplies, also. We laid rails on up to the 26 Kilo Camp. They had laid rails up to about the 18 Kilo Camp. Then they moved them on up, and then we started laying rails on up to the 26 Kilo Camp.

Marcello: And you were doing this during the rainy season?

Rayburn: Yes.

Marcello: Okay. Now I do know that the rainy season and the so-called "Speedo" campaign started at the same time. How did that affect your particular group. What was it like working in the monsoon season during this "Speedo" campaign?

Rayburn: Well, that "Speedo" was on definitely then. All right, you went out early in the morning, and you came in late at night. You went out when it was barely daylight, if it was daylight, and you came in after dark at night. You had very few clothes, and, therefore, you couldn't afford to get them wet, so you worked in G-strings. You kept your dry clothes to put on when you got in from work because it was cold. If you could get warm, you could get some rest. But if you couldn't get warm, you couldn't get any rest.

Marcello: Okay, what was it like working in that monsoon season? Describe what the monsoons are like.

Rayburn: Well, it's just constant rain. Eighty, ninety, a hundred inches is nothing for one of those seasons over there. It's raining all the time. You slip and you fall, and it's dangerous.

Believe me, I don't know how we kept from a bunch of our men getting seriously hurt. Can you imagine a group of men going up there and shouldering up a railroad track and moving it down and all and set it down for the men to spike it in, and handling that steel on rails with everything wet? I don't know how in the world we kept from some of us getting killed.

Marcello: What sort of jobs were you specifically doing during this period?

Rayburn: Oh, I done them all. I tried to get the easiest one I could, which didn't happen. I know for days there I just stuck with it. It seemed like they'd let us move in a very slow pace, and we had pretty good strong men on those rails. I stayed on it for quite some time there. Then these little cars that roll along as you lay the rails--they were bringing the rails up--maybe one day I'd get on that, you know. We'd have to keep pushing the cars on. As they'd lay the rail, we'd just keep pushing the cars with rails on it, on down the track there. They had these little ol' trucks with railroad track wheels on them, you know, and they would shove these little cars around with the rails. They'd haul supplies up in them, and first one thing and another. Sometimes you might get a job swamping on that.

Once in awhile, if you was lucky, you'd get better duty than the plain ol' spiking the rails. I never was very good

at that, but some of those guys that got used to it, and they liked it. They'd drive those spikes in with the greatest of ease. But I never was too good at it, and I always liked to try to do something that I felt I could do pretty well. There wasn't much scrambling for the best jobs, not too much of it . . . a little of it going on.

I knew this, as long as I was around pretty close to those little engines that were pulling up rails and supplies, there was something I might get my hand on, such as potatoes or some onions or some dried fish or maybe even some peanut oil. I know "Red" Reichle and I one night got a can of *peanut oil off of the car there while they was unloading* it and got it off a little way in the bush without being seen. He was waiting for an opportunity--it was about 300 yards into camp--to grab it and slip it on into camp, which he did later on. But he picked up this five-gallon tin of peanut oil and started off in a lope. You can imagine it sloshing against the ends of that tin and how much noise it made. Of course, one of the guards heard it, you know, and started looking around. Fortunately, he got it on into camp. Of course, there are not many places to go with something like that. He went right straight to the cookhouse with it, with the understanding with the cooks that we got a couple of canteens of it for our personal use and the rest of it went to the cookhouse.

Marcello: Describe the disposition of the guards during the "Speedo" campaign.

Rayburn: Well, the disposition of the guards . . . it was just about as bad on them as it was us. They were really hard to get along with. We had any number of them that we had to duck and dodge when they were coming around because they would literally beat the devil out of you. They didn't like it any more than we did; they were having to live with it the same as we were. Their disposition wasn't too good. You've probably heard the name "Liver Lips?"

Marcello: Yes. "Hollywood," "Pock Face."

Rayburn: "Hollywood," "Pock Face." But it was bad. They had no patience with us. Then it was getting to be a daylight-to-dark proposition. Everybody was on edge. They were driving like the devil on that railroad.

Marcello: You must have been a pitiful sight when you came in in the evenings.

Rayburn: Oh, pitiful sight! There's no way to describe it. You were just beat down; you were so tired you could hardly move. You'd get you a fire started and try to dry out that G-string, or if you'd wore a pair of shorts that day, you'd try to get it dry so you could wear it the next day. You'd be walking around there with a blanket throwed over your shoulders trying to keep warm. It was cold there. It was cold also in the dry season in the mornings.

Then there was men around that were really sick. By that time there was a lot of dysentery; there was a lot of malaria. It was getting bad--real bad.

Marcello: Did you personally come down with any of these diseases?

Rayburn: I've estimated to the VA (Veterans Administration) doctors that I had malaria over fifty times. In fact, I had it so many times that I didn't have chills. I didn't have enough resistance to counteract the poison. I didn't even have chills. And tropical ulcers, I've got scars, and plenty of them, all over my legs, feet.

Marcello: Describe what these tropical ulcers were like and how you would get them.

Rayburn: A tropical ulcer is something that begins from just maybe a little scratch. Or, like, we done quite a bit of making little rocks out of large rocks, and when you hit that with a big hammer, and it hit your leg, you had a tropical ulcer.

Marcello: You mean, if one of the splinters off one of those rocks hit your leg?

Rayburn: Right. If it broke the skin, you had a tropical ulcer. It would start out just like a festered pimple, and it would grow and grow and grow. I've seen them lose their legs from these tropical ulcers. I've got a friend walking around in Lubbock, Texas, right now that's got one on one of his legs, probably three-and-a-half to five inches in diameter,

clear around the bone. The shinbone is exposed for a good two inches. We lost many, many men from tropical ulcers.

Marcello: To begin with they are very, very painful, are they not?

Rayburn: They are worse than painful. You try to keep them clean. The only thing you can keep them clean with is just bathe them in hot water. Maybe you can get hold of a little salt. We got hold of a little bit of penicillin. I can't recall who brought that bottle of penicillin pills in there. Then Dr. Hekking would spoon out these ulcers.

Marcello: Describe the spooning-out of those ulcers.

Rayburn: Well, it was just nothing in the world but just a small spoon that had been sharpened as well as they could sharpen it, and it would scrape that ulcer--get all that dead flesh off down to proud flesh.

Marcello: I assume it would take three or four people to hold the patient down while this process was taking place.

Rayburn: Well, for some patients that's probably true, and there was some patients that knew that they had to bear with him, and they did. There were occasions where a lot of men had to be held. And all this amputation that went on . . . there wasn't none in our camp.

Marcello: I don't think there were very many amputations at all among the Americans, were there?

Rayburn: Yes, Jones and . . . well, it was all in Camp 2. Now in

Camp 1, we didn't have any of that. In the first place we didn't have a doctor that was capable of doing it. But there was quite a few of them. I can't recall all of them, but Jones, over at Decatur, is one. I don't remember.

But our doctor, Dr. Hekking, was born in the Celebes, educated in Holland, and lived in the islands all his life. He knew something about tropical diseases. Although we had very little medical supplies, hardly any medication, that doctor could do things that our American doctors could not do because he had worked with it all his life.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit more about these tropical ulcers. Now you mentioned that you had them. Where, specifically, did you have your tropical ulcers?

Rayburn: Why, I had several on my hands. I was fortunate enough to get at them early. I had quite a few around my ankles and on top of my feet. I stayed right with it, keeping them clean, keeping them clean, keeping them clean. I'd throw a little salt . . . "Snake" Ogle and I were both in camp on sick call, and we took off through the jungle, probably four or five kilometers, to a little village and picked up a basket of salt, probably about six inches in diameter and probably twenty, thirty inches long. You weren't supposed to do things like that, but then you'd try anything.

While we were in this small native village, we saw this fight between an old man and a young man. That's the

first time I ever saw them use their feet to fight. This old gentleman probably was the boss of the village, and evidently this young man had done something. This old man could really use his feet. He could kick him up side the head with his foot and just turn him a flip.

One of the younger men came over there while this was all going on, and we showed him what we had to trade and told him what we wanted. He brought us this basket of salt, and we headed back to camp without . . . oh, I seen some Japanese engineers, but they didn't pay no attention to us. Of course, this salt was divided amongst his kumi and my kumi. This little bit of saltwater and hot water was what I used on my ulcers.

Marcello: Were your ulcers bad enough that you were off the job for a while?

Rayburn: Yes, I was off the job there at 26 Kilo Camp. As I said before, that was partly what that fight was over. "Big John" was in charge of our kumi, and somebody said that we weren't putting out enough men to work. I was off there probably three weeks with my feet.

Marcello: Did you ever get dysentery?

Rayburn: No. As far as I know, I never did. I probably had a mild case of it. I did go back to the base camp, which is . . .

Marcello: Thanbyuzayat?

Rayburn: . . . Thanbyuzayat for two weeks once because of malaria and

dysentery. I stayed down there two weeks. Captain Fitzsimmons was our supply officer for the Australians and the Americans, and he would go in about once a week on the truck. They sent me back down there for two weeks. At that time I was there, it was just a place to rest. No one harassed you, and no guards bothered you, and you'd just lay around and rest.

At that time I was there, an Australian had been running off and running off and running off from camp. They finally caught him in a village twenty-five or thirty kilometers down the road. He and two or three of us was standing around a fire out there one day in front of these huts. They drove up there in a truck, and two of the guards came over and got him, put him on the truck, tied his hands, and drove him off out there about 300 or 400 yards, and this Jap captain in charge of the camp shot him.

Marcello: Did you actually witness this?

Rayburn: I saw that with my own eyes. That's the only man I've ever seen executed.

Marcello: How did this process take place, that is, the actual execution?

Rayburn: They drove up with a flat-board truck, and there was about four or five guards standing on the truck. They come over and got him where we was standing around this fire. It was kind of chilly. They just carried him over to the truck and put him up on the truck. They drove off in some bamboo

there, I'd say a good 300 yards, and tied his hands behind him and kneeled him down and shot him in the back of the head.

Of course, I know that there were three more than tried to escape, and they executed two of them. But I wasn't there, and I don't know about it. They were Australians, also.

Marcello: They weren't bluffing when they said they would execute anybody who tried to escape.

Rayburn: No, they weren't bluffing. This was done to prove it.

Marcello: What is the condition of your clothing by this time?

Rayburn: Our clothing is getting very, very thin by this time. Now I'm carrying one shirt and one pair of shorts and my cap with that red braid on it for the day to come. I used it as a pillow and kept it well-hidden so no one will take it. We didn't have much of that, but there was a little bit of that. Some of it, such as the green Dutch coats that some of the sailors got, it was very easy to mistake somebody else's coat for yours. I was taking care of that and my mosquito net and my blanket.

Now I was wearing G-strings there. My skin is pretty thin, and I was going out most of the time in a pair of real ragged shorts or a G-string. When I'd come in at night, of course, I'd dry those out before the next morning, and I had something dry there to put on until I got warm. I slept just

rolled up in a blanket buck-naked, and so did most of the other men.

But the sailors and Marines that didn't have any clothes to begin with, they were getting to be a pretty sad sight. They were making clothes as fast as they could, such as . . . I told you once that when we were at the tea plantation, we was cutting off our shorts. Well, we kept that material--the arms and the legs. You'd be surprised. In fact, my friend, "Buck" Lawley, George Lawley, who bunked up with me and "Red" Reichle in the jungle, was quite handy with a needle and thread. He could actually make a pair of shorts or little jackets. You know, we'd make a little jacket with no sleeves in it, but you could button it up tight across your stomach there, your belly, and it'd keep you warm. If you keep your stomach warm, why, the rest of your body would pretty well stay warm. That's even something the Japanese taught us. They wear these cummerbunds, you know, wrapped around their waist.

Marcello: Here at the 26 Kilo, during the monsoons and the "Speedo" campaign, do you experience a great many deaths?

Rayburn: Not at the 26 Kilo. We got through that pretty well. We moved from there to the 40 Kilo Camp. Now when we got to the 40 Kilo Camp, things are beginning to happen.

Marcello: Is it still the monsoon season and the "Speedo" campaign? Is that still going on?

Rayburn: I don't recall. I think we're back pretty well at the dry weather because seemed like to me that that doggone river dried up while we was there at the 40 Kilo Camp. Some call it the 45 Kilo, and I call it the 42 Kilo.

Marcello: What sort of work were you doing here?

Rayburn: We're doing the same kind of work. We're bringing the railroad track on up. You see, we've got the railroad track now to the 26 Kilo Camp.

Marcello: So you're off cuts and fills, and you're strictly on the track-laying detail at this point?

Rayburn: We'd lay rail up as far as we can, and then we'd go back building bridges and making cuts and fills. Now at the 40 Kilo Camp we built a huge bridge.

Marcello: Describe the bridge-building.

Rayburn: Well, it was quite a thing. I got me a good job there, and I liked it very much. The first few days I was out there, I was driving piling. They would take these big, huge trees--beautiful wood, might even be teak or ironwood, beautiful, beautiful wood--and sharpen the ends and start them. They'd bore holes in this . . . built scaffolds around it. They'd bore holes in this and put a big, long, solid iron pipe. On top of that pipe they had a pulley and rope going down to this huge driving iron that come down and hit this flat piece of iron on top of this piling. All this was going over this--with a hole in it, you know--over this big rod that

was in the top of it. So they'd put about fifteen or twenty men out there with fingers of ropes running everywhere, you know, and you'd pull this up to the top and let it drop, pull it up to the top and let it drop. In other words, "Ichi, nichi, san-yo!"--drop! That'd go on for hours and hours and hours. And as they'd drive these pilings into the river to the depth that they thought was sufficient, then we'd drive another one.

That wasn't just my exact cup of tea. I felt like I could do a little bit better than that, and I got me a job there swamping behind an elephant. We were pulling this timber in. The natives were cutting this timber and skinning the bark off of it, and this native and this elephant would pull this timber up to the bridge. My job was to walk along and tie this chain around this big log, and he wouldn't have to ever get off the elephant, you see. And he'd pull it back up to where they were building the bridge and the trestles. I'd done that for quite some time.

This little ol' elephant that I worked behind, a lot of times I'd jump on the end of this log and ride it, you know, and she'd stop and look around and really squeal at me. And this native, he'd holler, "No, no, no, don't do that! Don't do that!" I didn't realize what I was doing until later on. We'd get a ten-minute rest period, and those elephants would all be around. A lot of guys, they'd just

mill in and around those elephants and slap them on the head, and what-have-you. That native watched me real close. He finally got around to telling me, he said, "Don't get in reach of this elephant because this elephant don't like you, and that's bad." So I stayed clear of that little ol' elephant.

But we built that bridge, and that took quite a while. Then, of course, we moved. They took seventeen of us from there back to Thanbyuzayat. In the meantime, they had moved Thanbyuzayat to the 18 Kilo Camp and made a hospital camp out of it.

Marcello: Eighteen Kilo Camp was a hospital camp? I knew 80 Kilo Camp was ultimately made a hospital.

Rayburn: This is 18.

Marcello: Eighteen Kilo?

Rayburn: Yes. They took seventeen of us back down there, and that was the best duty I had in Burma. We had a job of loading . . . at that time, the steam locomotives were going up the camp as far as about the 40 or 50 Kilo Camp, you see, hauling supplies up there. Our job was . . . when those locomotives came into Thanbyuzayat, we loaded them with wood. So Lieutenant Hiner, three Marines, two Australians, and the rest of us were soldiers, went back there for this duty. We took two guards with us. One of them's name was Konashiro, and the other one was Konakamoto. The little one, Konakamoto, was

a student. Konashiro was a screaming idiot--bad, bad, bad--but we tamed him while we were down there, of course, after a few days there in camp. We had a camp just down about 200 yards from the engineer's camp. We ate out of their cookhouse.

And Konashiro decided he needed a cook, a batman, and I was nominated. So I was the batman for the two Korean guards. I washed their mess gear, helped them cook their meals, you know, extra meals. We all got food up at the cookhouse. We divided our group to where every eight hours we'd send somebody out. That way we weren't all out at one time. We just had three eight-hour shifts, you see, for loading the trains. That worked out real good for us because we got lots of rest.

Of course, I was a batman for the two Koreans, and I didn't have to load. The only time I'd go out, maybe, was if they was short-handed or something. Konashiro didn't even want me to do that, you know. He wanted me to rest so I could take care of him, which I didn't mind. After all, you know, you just got to do the best you can for the time you have to do it in.

But we could get a lot of things out of him by just being patient with him. He was meaner than the devil, he really was, but he never touched a man. I'm the closest one he come to beating up down there. He and I got in one heck of an argument. I knew he wasn't going to back down,

and I knew I wasn't, but I just wanted to see how far I could carry it. We finally compromised on the issue.

We'd go into the village and pick up a little extra food in there. By that time, you know, we was making about twenty-five cents a day. The Japanese were paying us. We'd go into the village once in a while and maybe get hold of a little fruit or a fish or a few duck eggs and things like that. We finally built up enough nerve in us to get Konashiro to ask the Jap cook up there to give us a little bit more food. We were big men, and it took more food. It was really no problem. If we'd asked for it in the first place, we'd have got it. Why, he just laughed and started shoveling in some more. We ate pretty good. We ate just exactly what the Jap engineers were eating.

So that was good duty. The time that we were down there, we put on some weight and got back in pretty good shape--that seventeen men that went on this special detail. Now I never joined my outfit anymore. I came back through the 18 Kilo Camp, and we were getting lots of bombing. The Allied bombers were coming over pretty frequent then.

Marcello: This was when you were back at the 18 Kilo Camp?

Rayburn: That's when we were down loading the engines. They were bombing it pretty often.

Marcello: Yes, because the 18 Kilo Camp, as you mentioned awhile ago, had actually become the railhead, so to speak, is that correct?

Rayburn: Well, yes, the hospital camp. Of course, all the locomotives were still down at Thanbyuzayat, but that was where their water was and their wood and everything. That's the reason we were down there loading them. But on going back up the railroad, we stayed there in the 18 Kilo Camp, I guess, just waiting on transportation or something for three or four days.

They had this crazy lieutenant--this captain, I guess, who had been transferred--running it, and he was crazy. He eventually done something real bad, tried to shoot an Australian or an Englishman . . . I don't remember which one it was. I wasn't in the camp. But I know one of the Korean guards ran for about five or six kilometers to get some help, you know. They finally ended up taking him away.

Now I ended up on an air raid one day out in a slit trench with that son-of-a-gun, and that scared me to death. He pulled out that little ol' small Japanese-made pistol, you know--it was about the size of half of your hand--and was shooting it at those B-17's that were probably 15,000 feet high that day. It scared me. I was afraid he was going to shoot me. I got away from him. He wanted to talk. I had to stick around and talk to him for a while. He could speak pretty good English. But he was definitely nuts and proved that later on. He was taken out of the jungle camp.

We eventually got on up to . . . at that time, our

bunch had moved to the 65 Kilo Camp. I walked into that 65 Kilo Camp, and, say, mister, that was a death place! It wasn't as bad as another camp.

My friends, George Lawley and "Red" Reichle, were there. Of course, I started looking for them to bunk up with them. George was plumb down. "Red" asked me, he said, "What are we going to do about George?" I said, "We're going to get him out of that bunk someway or another." I really did. I got him out. I made him get up. I talked to him pretty bad, but sometimes you have to do that to get people up. If you don't, they'll just lay down and die.

Marcello: Okay, this brings up another subject, and let's pursue it just a little bit farther. You come into the 65 Kilo Camp, and, like you mentioned, it was one of the "death camps," so to speak. What kind of work had they been doing? Cuts and fills?

Rayburn: They'd been doing the same thing--making little rocks out of big ones, mostly, for this railroad.

Marcello: In other words, they were making ballast?

Rayburn: Ballast, for the railroad. They had just about worked that area out pretty well because we didn't stay there too long until they moved us to the 100 Kilo Camp.

Marcello: Okay, about how long were you at the 65 Kilo Camp?

Rayburn: I don't know how long they'd been there, but I don't think that I was there over three or four months maybe.

Marcello: What kind of problems were they having at this 65 Kilo Camp? Were they experiencing all the usual things?

Rayburn: They were experiencing a lot of sickness--an awful lot of sickness. There was an awful lot of people awful, awful sick. We had some working parties. They were doing the same thing we always had been doing.

The food wasn't getting any better, by no means. We hardly ever got any beef anymore. We started out, you know, with a herd of cows. The food consisted of nothing but white radishes and rice, and there is no food value in those white radishes. They were kind of a turnip like.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that George Lawley was very, very ill and, of course, was at the point of giving up. How could you tell when a person had given up, that is, when a person had lost the will to live?

Rayburn: Well, they don't talk to you, and they've got a look in their eye that you can see if you haven't been around them. I'd been gone quite some time. Then they've got that yellowish complexion, clammy-looking complexion, and they're not long for this world.

Marcello: Is there any way that you can reinstill in them that will to live?

Rayburn: Psychologically, just psychologically. You've just got to talk them out of it. That's the only thing you can do. I made him mad. I intended to make him mad. And that brought

him out of his bunk, you know.

Marcello: How did you make him mad?

Rayburn: I talked to him pretty bad. I really talked to him. You know, "You've got to get out of that bunk. Get the hell out of it, man! Just come on! Let's go get some water and make some tea or something. You've got to get out of there!"

And he jumped out of the bunk, and he said, "Well, I've been saving you something." So he got to scrounging around in his ditty bag, and he had a little bit of tobacco, which was hard to come by. I had been using this Testament that the ol' major had given me in Camp Bowie. I started out reading a page of it and then using a page of it for smoking tobacco, but, I'll have to admit, I got to the point to where I was using it without reading it (chuckle). I don't know . . . it seemed like that just snapped George out of it. He dug down in there and come out with that tobacco. He'd already quit smoking, and once in a while he'd put a little piece of that ol' "wog" tobacco in his mouth and chew on it a little bit. That was just one of the times, but that's one of the times that I remember very well. That man wouldn't be in Odessa, Texas, today if "Red" and I hadn't jumped on him pretty hard and brought him around. It was just a different way of thinking.

Marcello: Did you participate in any burial details here at the 65 Kilo

or the 100 Kilo?

Rayburn: At the 100 Kilo.

Marcello: Describe what these burial details were like.

Rayburn: Well, pretty bad. In the first place . . . "Swede" Ecklund . . . that grave wasn't dug long enough, and the Japs wouldn't give us enough time to dig it. Of course, he was just wrapped in blankets and burlap bags. I remember a fellow by the name of "Snuffy" Jordan. We finally got "Swede" in the grave, and we was all standing there after the chaplain had said a few words for "Swede." And "Snuffy" Jordan was standing there, and he just spit to one side, some kind of ol' "wog" tobacco he had in his mouth. He said, "'Swede,' I'm sorry, ol' pardner, but this is the best we can do for you." He started shoveling dirt. Of course, we covered him up and went on back.

Now I didn't care for those burial details, and I was only on two or three of them. But that's one that I remember very well and always will remember it.

Marcello: Is it not true that they used the sick a lot of times to make markers for these graves . . . some sort of a wooden marker or something?

Rayburn: Oh, somebody always made some kind of a wooden marker. Of course, we went back and brought all those people.out. We found all those graves. Of course, we had made a pretty good map of the area when they were buried, not knowing how or

when we would be back. I know some of my friends were on those details that went back after bodies. The Schmid brothers were two of them, for example.

Marcello: Up until this time had you ever received any mail, or had you been able to send any mail?

Rayburn: Yes, we had mailed out some cards, little cards--nothing on them, really. You could say, "I'm working; I'm well; and the Japanese are treating me real good," or something similar to that. My folks actually received four of those cards. I still have them today.

I received something from my father--a little card very similar to that--I believe, maybe just about the time we was leaving the jungle, or it might have been later. I don't recall just when it was, but I did receive one.

Marcello: That must have been a real morale builder.

Rayburn: Oh, it was. His cards were . . . of course, his instructions were, you know, not to really say anything, which he didn't. In fact, I was the first one to be heard from from Lubbock. How my card got through, I don't know, but I think I wrote that card probably at the 26 Kilo Camp.

Marcello: How long did you remain at the 100 Kilo Camp altogether? That was one of the notorious camps.

Rayburn: Well, our worst camp was the 114 Kilo. The 80 Kilo Camp was notorious, and 100 Kilo Camp. But now we were at 105 Kilo; we weren't at the 100 Kilo Camp. We didn't go in there at

the 100 Kilo. Group 2 had been at the 100 Kilo Camp, but we went to 105 Kilo, and we weren't there too long. But the next camp we went to, we were quarantined there for approximately four months.

Marcello: Now which camp was this?

Rayburn: We done very little work. That's 115 Kilo Camp. We done very little work there. They had a few little details going. The railroad had been completed all the way down, and there just wasn't very much work for us to do. The camp was kind of split in two sections. There was one section up on a hill and one section down below the hill. That's where I spent Christmas of '43.

Marcello: Why were you quarantined?

Rayburn: A cholera outbreak near there. Well, I heard it was back at the 100 Kilo Camp, and that's after our bunch had moved out of there. And we heard it was at the 137 Kilo Camp; that was a British camp. There were just rumors, rumors.

But, nevertheless, that was the worst camp. We weren't working so much. It was dry. Had we had to stay at that camp . . . now I can't recall how many we buried there, but it was a bunch of them.

Marcello: What made it so bad?

Rayburn: Oh, the food wasn't any better; we weren't getting any exercise; and we had just about lived up all we could stand in the jungle. The jungle had taken hold of us. People

would just absolutely lay down and die, or they'd get up at four o'clock in the morning when they weren't supposed to have any water. They'd drink water, and they'd swell up like a balloon. They'd slip down to the cookhouse and get a couple of canteens of water--nobody to watch them. They'd drink it, and they were dead (snaps fingers). If we had stayed there another three or four months, I don't think 50 percent of us would have got out of there.

Marcello: What did you do during the time you were there?

Rayburn: We done just the usual--milling around, looking for something, going as far out of the camp we'd dare go and still keep the guards off. We had Eddie Fung going out at night. He would go out and rob the engineers' cookhouses and carry things back as far as he could. Then someone like "Big John" Owen or someone else would go out and help him carry it on in. He'd stash it out in the bush. He actually went into those Japanese engineers' camps, where they kept their food under their bunk. It was a wooden deck and off the ground two-and-a-half feet, and they'd put all their foodstuff under the ground. He would actually go crawl in there on his belly and pull that stuff out and bring it back to camp and distribute it around. I recall once, he gave me an egg, and I said, "Eddie, I appreciate this very much, but I can look around and see a lot of people that need this worse than I do." Well, a duck egg was quite a novelty

to have in that jungle over there. Eddie done that numerous times. He also got into a Chinese camp, and they tried to get him to stay with them.

Marcello: The fact that Eddie Fung was stealing all these things, I think, indicates how desperate people were getting because I'm sure the punishment would have been very, very severe had he or anybody else been caught.

Rayburn: It would have been worse than that, really, but that little Chinaman had no fear for things like that. He was doing what he thought he should do, and that was all the satisfaction he wanted. But I'm sure that the seaweed . . . he brought in one time a five-gallon can of seaweed. I don't know what it was, but I know it had food value to it. There were numerous other things that he brought into camp there.

They finally loaded us up at 115 Kilo and took us over to Kanchanaburi, Thailand. I can tell the world that I rode that railroad that I helped build. It was quite a sight from there on in. Now that was the end of the railroad that the British were working on, and from what I understand, they had much more casualties than we did. I'm sure that they did because most of the terrain that we worked on was rather level, and from there on in, why, there's some very deep, deep cuts and some very, very large bridges built across those rivers that come down through there--the Irrawaddy, Salween, and I don't know all of them. We did get into

Kanchanaburi, and what a sight it was! Thank the Lord!

Marcello: Let's back up a minute and ask a few more general questions while you were in the jungle, and then we'll talk some about Kanchanaburi. Under these conditions do men become more religious?

Rayburn: Why, I think, probably everyone as a whole did. I think they had plenty of time to think about what they'd done in the past and what they might ought to do in the future. But I'm going to say that the ones that really got lots of religion was only a handful. I don't think that that is a time and place to ask for the kind of help that I think some of those people asked for. I don't know . . . Christian or not, I believe in God, but I just didn't think it was my place to go into that as deep as some of our men did. I'm glad that they did. Two or three of them turned out to be ministers, and maybe that was a good thing, that that was a turning point in their life. It made them do the things that they were supposed to do.

But as far as church services, we got a break every ten days, and that was considered Sunday, and there wasn't much of it, not where I was. We had a few people in our organization that did have their little Bible studies, and a lot of people would join it. I've been there myself, you know. It was good. But I would have to say that not too many turned to religion under these circumstances.

Marcello: Earlier you had been talking about some of the air raids that you had experienced when you were farther back down the railroad. Where did you say those air raids occurred?

Rayburn: Most of them were at the railhead, which is Thanbyuzayat.

Marcello: Describe what those air raids were like.

Rayburn: Well, when we were at the 18 Kilo Camp, especially at the 18 Kilo Camp, we could only see from a distance. But the planes would swing around over us, and they were bombing the locomotives or anything else down there to bomb. Of course, they bombed it once, and we left two brothers there, the Wilson brothers from Plainview. They happened to be on a water detail out of the camp there, the hospital camp, and the well got a direct hit on it. We lost both of those brothers, the Wilson brothers, there in Burma. There were several casualties. One of the hospital huts was hit by our bombs, and that's when they moved it out to the 18 Kilo Camp and only left the railhead there.

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

Rayburn: Oh, beautiful! Beautiful, man! Beautiful sight! You just can't imagine! Just the reconnaissance planes flying over, which there were a lot of those, helped our morale. We had one hell of an argument with the British. They called them something else, and we called them P-38's. They were twin-fuselage reconnaissance planes, and they were flying so high that we really didn't know what they were. But when

those B-29's . . . and they used the Liberator a lot because it has a long range. When they'd come over, the British would say, "Lovely! Lovely! That's our bombers!" And we'd say, "Oh, you ignorant so-and-so! That is an American bomber! You haven't got a plane in Asia." Nevertheless, they were Allied planes, and they really looked good. But it didn't take the Japanese very long . . . you'd hear a plane, and he'd look at you, and he'd ask if it was an American plane. You'd tell him, "Yes." "What kind?" You tell him it was a B-29. He understood what it was because they packed a wallop, and it was time to head for tall timbers.

Marcello: I guess you couldn't show too much happy emotion at a time like that when you were around the Japanese guards.

Rayburn: No, no, that wasn't the time or the place to show very much emotion. But they were scared of them. And we felt like, you know, that our bombardiers could hit a three-inch diameter target, you know, at 20,000 feet, and we wanted to get under cover, naturally. But, no, we couldn't show a whole lot of emotion, but we got a lot of kick out of it.

There was a little ol' Japanese propaganda paper that would come out every once in a while, and the Japs would give it to us. We'd be sitting around on working parties with some of the engineers, the technicians, and he'd name off all the places, you know, where the Japanese bombers

had hit. We made a joke out of it, you know. Many a time, for example, we'd say, "New York?" They'd say, "Yes, yes, yes, New York! Boom, boom, boom!" "Chicago?" They'd say, "Yes, Chicago! Boom, boom, boom!" "Shithouse?" They'd say, "Yes, boom, boom, boom!" (laughter) I'm sorry I put that in there.

Marcello: I understand Decatur got bombed quite a few times, too.

Rayburn: I'm sure Decatur and Jacksboro got bombed many, many times because there was quite a few of the men from that area. We still had a sense of humor even in those bad, bad, bad days. That's one thing that helped us more than a lot of things helped us, I'm sure.

Marcello: There's something else I've always been curious about, too. You mentioned awhile ago that you used the pages from your Testament for cigarette paper. Some people evidently got pretty adept at actually splitting paper, did they not?

Rayburn: That's true. Yes, I've seen them split that paper. That takes a lot of patience. But I have seen them take a piece of paper such as that right there (pointing to table) . . .

Marcello: This tablet that I have.

Rayburn: Yes, and split that paper. Of course, the thinner the paper, the better it is for smoking. We had very little tobacco. We could pick up this native tobacco--"wog," we called it.

Marcello: It came in bricks, did it not?

Rayburn: Bricks. Yes, most of it came in bricks. A lot of times it was just rolled up in kind of a bundle, so to speak. We might take it and soak it in some hot water a little while, so it wouldn't be quite as strong, and we'd do a lot of things to it. We should have quit smoking, but then as long as we could get it most of us smoked. A lot of people quit at that time and never smoked again. But we used it when we could get it, which wasn't too often.

But there was always natives around. They've always got something, and they want to trade for clothes. They were running out of clothes; they didn't have any. And they would trade for clothes with this sugar that we got in the jungle. It was called shintagar. It was a dark sugar made in brick form.

They got just as wise as we got. My friend, "Red" Reichle, was on a woodcutting detail. He was out in the jungle quite a lot bringing in wood for the kitchen. He had his little traders out there that would slip in close enough, you know, when the guard wasn't looking, to where they could do a little bargaining. He brought in a couple of packages one night that they had neatly tied up in banana leaves, and it was nothing but dirt, mud, caked to form. You know, you'd tear back a leaf and look at it--same color. So we called him the "Burma Real Estate Man" for

a long, long time.

Marcello: What did you use to substitute for toothpaste and toothbrushes?

Rayburn: I carried the same toothbrush all the way through. We'd use a little charcoal, a little salt if we had it. It worked real well.

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

Rayburn: We had barbers. We had men that had razors and hand clippers. On rest days they would cut hair for twenty cents, twenty-five cents, whatever you could give them. As far as shaving, a person like myself, whose beard never gets real heavy, I might go two or three months, and I'd borrow a razor or . . . I carried one. I had one. The blade got pretty dull, but I'd get it off.

Marcello: How could you sharpen your blades?

Rayburn: Oh, there is a lot of ways you can sharpen a blade. If you could get hold of a jar, just twirl it around and around in a jar, and that will sharpen it, and it would cut my beard all right. Fellows who had the heavier beards, why, they'd get Pitts or M.L. Rea or some of those other men that were barbers, and they'd shave them. They'd use a straight razor.

Marcello: I'm surprised the Japanese didn't have certain grooming regulations, in other words, that you virtually had to

shave your heads and things like that.

Rayburn: No, we just shaved our heads or clipped our hair real short for our own convenience. They had no regulations. They wasn't furnishing us any clothes to amount to anything, so, therefore, they didn't have any regulations.

Marcello: It seems to me that you would have wanted as little hair as possible in order to discourage lice and things like that.

Rayburn: That's definitely true. I had no problem because I was the hairless one. A lot of people did have some problems. I kept my hair cut off all the time. They'd just take the hand clippers and go around it and cut it off, and it'd grow out a little more, and I'd have it cut again because you didn't have a comb to groom it. I just wanted enough hair on my head to keep that sun from pounding right on top of my head, and I kept it cut short all the time.

Marcello: I've heard some people complain about the rats. Did you, in any of the camps that you were in, have trouble or problems with rats?

Rayburn: There were rats, and plenty of them, there, and they wasn't afraid of nothing. It is a funny feeling to wake up . . . of course, you have been going barefooted, and your feet are calloused up quite a bit, and you wake up and one of those rats is chewing that off of your feet. Now that is a funny feeling. But it had happened to many, many a prisoner-of-war.

Marcello: Did it happen to you?

Rayburn: It happened to me, and it happened to lots and lots of other people. Of course, I found out how to keep that from happening anymore, you know. I kept my feet wrapped up in my blanket. But they would certainly come up there and eat clear down to where the skin was so thin, and the next day your feet would be bleeding when you'd go on out on working parties. We didn't have any shoes; we all had to go barefooted.

Marcello: You're lucky you didn't come down with bubonic plague or something like that.

Rayburn: Yes. If we had any shoes, we kept them for the future. In the dry weather you'd sometimes wear shoes. It depended on where you was working. Now if you was working over in that rock pile, why, you nearly needed shoes over there. And you needed long-legged britches, too, which I didn't have any at the time. But it depended on where you was working. If you was working in an area where it was not so many rocks, why, you'd go barefooted and save your shoes for another day.

Marcello: Was there anything in the jungle that you could utilize to supplement your food, whether it be plants or animals?

Rayburn: Oh, yes. We stole a few water buffalo and butchered them out. And there was some type of leaf that grown in the jungle over there that the Dutch were familiar with, and they

used to pick baskets after baskets of that. They had a detail that done nothing but that and bring it in and pour it in those pots. That's about all the green stuff that we were getting at that time. You have to have so much yellow and so much green food.

Marcello: When I think of the jungle, I think of lots of snakes. Did you run across very many snakes in the jungle?

Rayburn: Oh, yes. When we got on up around the 65 Kilo Camp, up in that area, along there about where the Three Pagodas are, there was quite a few rock cobras. We saw them, and the monkeys would sure let us know when they're around. But our group never encountered any experiences with snakes much, but the other group killed a python and ate it. We didn't in our group. I'm about ready to go to Saigon.

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

Rayburn: I'm going to be a prisoner-of-war at this stage about two years and two or three months.

Marcello: I guess I didn't phrase my question very well. How were you living at this time? Day-to-day? Week-to-week? Month-to-month? How far away is rescue?

Rayburn: I'm living from day-to-day, and I started out that way. And tomorrow is another day, and I had high hopes, naturally, of getting out of there. I knew it was a matter of time, and that's the reason the dates didn't mean much to me because it was just . . . how much time it was going to take,

I didn't know, but I knew that it was coming one day, and I was just living from day-to-day.

Marcello: Did Christmas of 1943 have any significance? You mentioned that you celebrated it there in the jungle. At least you were there in the jungle when it occurred.

Rayburn: Not much. We were at the 115 Kilo Camp. Of course, we left shortly after that. As I mentioned, Eddie Fung was going out and bringing in a little bit of food there--extra food. It was a pretty sad, sad Christmas. There was just very little talk about it. I'm sure we had . . . I don't recall just what, but we had something a little bit extra for that particular day. But there was just not much said about Christmas. I just recall that that's where we were that particular Christmas.

Marcello: Okay, so you ride the railroad out of the jungle and into Kanchanaburi. Did you have any qualms about riding across that railroad that you had just constructed?

Rayburn: Not a bit in the world! We wanted out of that jungle! I didn't feel very safe about it, but then as long as it'd go I was ready to ride. We rode that darn thing, and we rode it across some pretty deep cuts and some pretty large bridges that was built by hand, and we went right on into Kanchanaburi. They had turned it into a big hospital camp.

I was only there about ten days. The food was good, and I ran into some of my old buddies. I ran into Jack

Cellum that with the other group and a lot of other fellows that I knew that were in Group 2. It was quite, quite something to get back with those people that you hadn't seen for a couple of years.

Marcello: Did you swap a lot of stories?

Rayburn: A lot of stories were swapped there in that short time.

Marcello: What kind of food were you getting?

Rayburn: The cookhouse was getting lots of vegetables, quite a lot of vegetables, and some meat, and the food was very tasty. The rice was excellent--pretty white rice, flaky--and the stews that they were making were thick and heavy. It didn't take much of that to start putting some weight back on you.

Marcello: It doesn't take long to put weight back on, does it, if you have a sufficient diet.

Rayburn: It takes much longer to take it off than it does to put it on (chuckle). But that food there was good. The camp was clean. Of course, we left all of our men there that were in real bad shape. Quite a few of them didn't get out of that camp, but quite a few of them did and got back to the States.

But the only thing that I can remember that happened there . . . I got back with ... . well, when we came in, I was with "Buck" Lawley and Grover Reichle. We had a big camp just outside of our hut, and it was British. There was a fence there, I guess, a twelve-foot fence, dividing it,

and there was a moat around it. We'd been told that we could not fraternize and could not talk to those people over in this camp. But they'd been there for a long time, and they knew their way around, and they had money. Our friend, "Buck" Lawley, had one pretty nice denim coat left, and we thought, since they had this huge canteen there in this camp, that we had better dispose of it. We made a deal with this limey to dispose of it for us because he was going out on working parties. Well, in fact, he was ready to buy it. He's got the money. He shows us the money and is just fixing to throw it over to us, and we're going to throw him the coat.

A doggone guard came through and caught us. "Red" and I broke and run, but George had polio as a very small child, and his movements wasn't as graceful as ours, and they caught him. Now this was one time that I realized that things are not going so good for the Japanese because ordinarily, although they were Jap noncoms in this camp, when something like that happened, you didn't get out of it without a lot of trouble.

But they took George up to the guardhouse, and Grover and I decided that the best thing we could do was go up there and tell them it wasn't him, that it was us. We took off up to the guardhouse and explained to the sergeant that this man had nothing to do with it. It was he and I, and because he was crippled, that was the reason he was caught so easy.

The guard shook his head, and he said he understood and that the rules were rules and that we should not be breaking them and had better not break those rules anymore. And that was the end of it. Well, that wasn't usually the way the treatment was. There was something there that gave me a signal that things weren't going just too well for the Japanese at that time.

Of course, just in a few days, we were lined up out there, and they started picking people out. And, of course, I was one of them. "Big John" Owen was one. There were several people from Group 2 who were picked out, and what they were doing was picking out those they thought were the biggest, strongest, and the healthiest men. And we were off on another trip.

Marcello: And is this when you left for Saigon?

Rayburn: We went to the "Bridge Camp," where the big stone and iron bridge is.

Marcello: This was at Tamarkan.

Rayburn: Tamarkan.

Marcello: Which is very close to Kanchanaburi.

Rayburn: Right. I think it was maybe fifteen or twenty kilometers. We stayed in that camp about three weeks, and we had a few bombing raids while we were there.

Marcello: Describe what they were like.

Rayburn: Well, they weren't much different. The only target that we

could see there was this bridge. I guess we were 300 or 400 yards from the bridge, and they had plenty of slit trenches to get in around there. They made a pass over the bridge and missed it. They had hit it a few days before that, and we had out a few working details repairing it. But it wasn't any different, only the planes were just a little bit closer to us.

Marcello: The Japanese, unfortunately, had some anti-aircraft weapons inside that camp, though, didn't they?

Rayburn: They had them all around the camp. I remember over to that side there, just out of camp probably sixty or seventy yards, there was a big ack-ack battery. Then they had one across the river over there, and, of course, all their flak fell inside the camp. They were scattered all around.

Not being there any longer than we were there, I can't remember just a whole lot about it, other than going down to the river and taking a bath.and then being on a detail there where they made charcoal. We had made them some big oven-like structures--mud--over this wood, and they would start this fire with a little hole in the top of it. That's how they made their charcoal. I was on that detail for a few days around there. They'd cut these little saplings, you know, about one-and-a-half, two inches in diameter.

Then they hauled us out of there for a short train ride and put us on a barge, and, there again, we don't know where

we're going. We were on this barge for, oh, quite some time. Then I believe we came off of the barge . . . we came up the river evidently, right there in Saigon. We came off the barge and went right into a camp on the river there in Saigon, French Indochina. We were told later on that we were supposed to go to Japan, but they decided that that is as far as they could get us.

Marcello: I've heard a lot of the former POW's talk about having a fear of going to Japan. How did you feel about that?

Rayburn: Well, I didn't think we'd ever make it; I didn't see any way of making it. A few of them did. My friend, George "Buck" Lawley, ended up in Japan. After I left Kanchanaburi, he went on to Singapore, and from Singapore they just hopped from little ol' island to island along the coast. After three or four months, they finally got them to Japan. But many of my friends were sunk by American submarines--torpedoed. That second group was even bombed as they came into Moulmein, Burma. So the Allies were working pretty good on the Japanese at that time. They were running low on fuel, and, finally, in Saigon we ran completely out of fuel.

Marcello: So where are you quartered when you go to Saigon?

Rayburn: We're quartered in a river camp. The camp was old, but there was a lot of water in it, plenty of water, and the huts were dry.

Marcello: Was it right in Saigon?

Rayburn: On the river in Saigon. Yes, I don't guess we were a mile from the capitol. We marched by it many times going on working parties.

While there in Saigon, I got a job working out on the airport out there--the same airport that the Japanese used to bomb us, probably, in Java. Also, it's the same airport--it was a large one--that they used to sink the British fleet. This was a good job, as far as jobs go. We could trade with the natives a lot.

One of my old Korean guard friends, Konashiro, ended up there in camp with me, and, believe it or not, I could just go in and out of that camp if he was on guard duty--carry anything in, carry anything out--and he never took it away from me. Now I'm not saying he didn't take away a few things and bash and slap around a few guys in the working parties, but, nevertheless, he let me get by with a lot of things. We were pretty good friends. I know I promised him some money on his next rest day. If they'd get to go to town, they had to have a certain amount of money, or they wouldn't let them go.

Honest to goodness, I'd been bringing in some money. I'd been taking out quite a lot of things out there at the airport, where there was only two of us in this working party, a Mexican by the name of Santos Betancud and one Japanese sergeant and a Japanese private. We were rolling caliche,

or heavy rock, back under bamboo with a steam and a gasoline roller. They'd take and push these planes back under this bamboo and camouflage them in case of an air raid. We were around lots of native villages out there, and I was able to do a lot of trading, and I brought in quite a lot of money.

I had intended to give this Korean twenty dollars. I'd promised it to him, and I forgot it. Captain Fowler was our officer in charge there in Saigon, and I asked the captain to give him the money and told the Korean that the captain would give him the money, but he was afraid to take the money from the officer, and he wouldn't take it. He was a mad son-of-a-gun when I got in from work that night, but he never laid a hand on me.

Marcello: What did you have to trade? What were you using?

Rayburn: We had these working parties. They were working on the river there unloading and loading barges and handling supplies, and the greatest thieves in the world are working right there. They're bringing this stuff in. They're getting it in in false bottom canteens. They're getting it in unbelievable ways.

Marcello: I understand that a lot of these natives were still very, very eager to have cloth of any kind.

Rayburn: Oh, you bet! That was my greatest source of income. I go back to these four Scotchmen--greatest thieves I ever knew. They broke into the warehouse that was within our compound,

the storage house . . . and, of course, the Japanese told us later that this cloth was meant for us--to make us clothes--but that's a damn lie. It was black muslin-type material, white and black. They stole two bolts of it and come knocking on our bunk over there, "Hey, 'Snowy!' Hey, 'Snowy!' Look what we got! Wake up! Wake up!" We took it out and buried it in the sand, and I carried it out. Of course, they searched for it two or three days. They finally admitted it, and they took them off to jail, which is a good deal for them. They said they lived like kings down there because the real Imperial Japanese guards was in charge of them, and they treated them real good. Nevertheless, they got their money when they got back. I took this out on a fifty-fifty basis and sold it out there on this working party. I got a hold of beaucoups of money.

Marcello: How big a camp was this here in Saigon?

Rayburn: About 2,000.

Marcello: And mixed nationalities once again?

Rayburn: British, Dutch, Australians, and Americans.

Marcello: And I assume that you were not really worked too strenuously here.

Rayburn: Oh, yes, we had some hard working parties there. Anytime you got on a detail at the refinery, that was a lot of work. They were covering those tanks out there, those storage tanks, where they had all the fuel. They were covering them just

like a pyramid with chunks of sod. They'd come all the way up, cover the whole dadgummed thing to keep the bombers from hitting it.

Then when you got down in the rice warehouses, there, again, you're carrying 220-pound sacks of rice and loading it on barges or loading it off of barges. Yes, the work was plenty hard.

Now my work the couple of months I was out at the airport was real easy. That was good because we just had this Japanese engineer sergeant and this little Japanese that acted as a guard, and we'd just roam around all over that airport. Most of the time we had a little ol' truck that we rode around in. Now that duty was real good. We got lots of extra food out there, even got enough booze out there to get tight two or three times. But the work didn't slow down in Saigon.

Marcello: How was the food here in Saigon?

Rayburn: The food was good. We got hold of plenty of rice, and our stew there in camp was much better.

Marcello: Are you getting any meat?

Rayburn: We're getting a little meat, not a lot but a little. Of course, our food out on those working parties everyday consisted of a very light soup and a cup of rice. But then we had plenty of extras out there, such as a little sausage that the natives made, duck eggs, bananas, and peanuts, that

we could trade for--trade for it or buy it, you know. They accepted the Japanese scrip money. So we were getting extra food there.

Marcello: Have air raids become a common occurrence here in Saigon?

Rayburn: Yes, pretty often.

Marcello: This wasn't a good thing for the prisoners because you're working around priority targets, I'd say.

Rayburn: Our camp's right there on the river, and just across the road 200 yards over there is where all the ships are, the warehouses. Yes, there were those dadgummed things.

And what got me, the Navy had a plane that was very much like the B-24, only it was single-type fuselage. They called it the "Privateer." A modified B-24, I think, is what it was. Well, we got to see that plane quite often. When it'd come in, that dadgummed plane would fly right on the deck. It would come down the river, and right there at the docks, right over our camp, they'd bank and come right across our camp that we lived in. And that dadgummed thing caught me one day right out there in the middle of the camp at the water--a big, solid concrete trough of water. Well, of course, I ducked down, but he came right across the camp. They'd done shut off their machine guns, but this kid was standing up in that plane there, blond-headed with a blue jersey on, a sweater. It looked like, you know, he was about seventeen years old. Of course, he couldn't keep from seeing

us, and we saw him. They knew we was there.

Then, when the big raid came, the big one, we had already been up-country. We went up and dug some tunnels up at Da Lat for the Japanese. We had already been up there, and, of course, we saw lots of other planes. The bridges were all bombed out. We'd ride a train from one bombed-out bridge to another bombed-out bridge. Then we'd walk to the next train, and then we'd ride. We spent a couple of months up there, I guess, two-and-a-half months there on the coast and up in the hills where they were digging those caves back in those mountains. The temperature was very, very good. Our food was about the same. We got hold of a little extra up there. We even got hold of a little milk while we were up there.

Marcello: The Da Lat had been a French resort at one time, had it not?

Rayburn: Right, it had. And the natives, there was so much difference in them. Their cheeks were actually rosy from the healthy climate. That wasn't bad duty. We got cold. It got cold at night up there.

We found a whole bunch of corn, good corn, up there. A lot of those Yankees didn't know what the devil we was going to do with it. But we brought it in and took charcoals and tried to make a lye solution, you know, to make hominy out of it. It wasn't very much of a success, but even just that corn, on a hot fire in a pan, you know, you could get

it to where you could eat it.

But we'd worked up there in those tunnels, and that was pretty good duty. We'd dig as far as we could, and then they'd have to drill holes and blast. Well, we'd have to get out, and we sat around there with those Japs and shoot the breeze until all the dynamite fumes got out, and then we'd go back in. This only lasted about two months, two-and-a-half months.

Marcello: During all this time, after you get out of the jungle, do you ever get any Red Cross packages?

Rayburn: We got one Red Cross package in the jungle, and it only amounted to very, very little. The British raised the devil because they said that it was meant to be for the British--it was their Red Cross, and we were not entitled to any of it. But then it was distributed among all of us, and it amounted to very, very little. Now at Christmas in Saigon we got one-and-one-half Red Cross packages apiece.

Marcello: That was quite a bit of material, then, was it not?

Rayburn: Quite a bit.

Marcello: What all was in those Red Cross packages?

Rayburn: A carton of cigarettes, a little can of butter, a can of pressed ham, cheese, maybe a can of bully beef.

Marcello: Powdered milk?

Rayburn: Powdered milk and powdered eggs. We had one big, big fight on what we were going to do with those Red Cross packages.

There, again, the British were going to try and take it all because, although it had "U.S.A." all over it, it still belonged to them. After all, you know, they were the king's men. But it was divided. The British wanted to take charge of all of it and do all the cooking because they were superior cooks to our cooks. So we agreed that they could cook with these Red Cross parcels one day, and we would cook the next day.

So they went to an awful lot of trouble when they sewed up some bags and made what they call a pudding. Maybe there was another name for it. But they made this pudding, and it has a little sugar in it, but it was terrible! It was just raw dough with a little sugar in it, really. Of course, they'd boiled it in these bags, you know, and then split the bags. They'd serve you a piece probably about as big around as a half-dollar, and they'd serve you a piece about probably four or five inches long. That didn't go over too good.

So it was the Australians' and the Americans' turn to do the cooking with the Red Cross packages. So they made a gravy and put this bully beef in this gravy. We had powdered milk to make real gravy, and the flour, and they made this gravy with the bully beef in it, and then you get you a big mess kit full of rice, and they'd put a big ladle of that on it. Those Australians for weeks after that would walk around and say, "Hey, 'Yank,' when we going to have some

more of that gravy?" I think our cooks won that contest pretty well there.

I bought up all the cigarettes I could. Of course, they were molded, but they still tasted good.

Marcello: I'm surprised the Japanese hadn't looted these packages to take out what they wanted.

Rayburn: Well, they could have. They could have before they got to us. But then, as I say, there again, things are not going too well for them at that time. They were running out of gasoline. We was already walking to our working parties.

And along just about that time, "Bull" Halsey's fleet, just off the coast of Saigon there . . . we're out one morning for tenko. We're standing there, and I'm standing right next to Captain Fowler. He looked up, you know, because we were waiting for the Japanese guard to come up there so he can get a count, and he said, "Isn't this kind of early for the Japanese to be flying this morning?" It was just getting daylight. I don't know how come me to say it, but I said, "Captain, that's not Japanese planes." So the guard walked on up there, you know, and there were quite a lot of them milling around over the airport. It was a direction there that which we had a little view of, you know; there wasn't any buildings or anything in our way. The Korean guard walked up there for a head count, and the captain said, "Japanese planes?" This Korean turned around, and he listened for a

little bit, and he said that these were not Japanese planes.

So he run back to the guardhouse, and the big sergeant there that we called "Yank," who was in charge, a pretty nice Jap . . . he was a broad jumper, and he often entered our rest days in competition, you know, racing, broad jumping, what-have-you. He came out there. We'd already built these . . . out in a rice paddy behind this camp, we had already built with sod these slit trenches. Of course, they was in the rice paddy, but we'd built them out of this sod, real heavy, and it was still pretty wet. In other words, it would stop a lot of shrapnel.

We crawled in there about 6:30 that morning, or around six o'clock that morning, and we stayed there until nine o'clock that night. And we got an aerial display. We had a ringside seat. Of course, we couldn't see the airport, but we could see them when they made their strafing run.

Marcello: These were carrier planes mainly?

Rayburn: Carrier planes and two-motored bombers came in, and they'd come down that river and give them the devil over there at the docks. Of course, we had an ack-ack gun up there, now, not very far from camp, and they were shooting away at them. But there wasn't nothing dropped. Closest thing was dropped to us, they dropped a bomb trying to hit that ack-ack. I think they did hit it, but I don't remember. But they got part of a village over there. We had one bomb . . . of course,

it was buried so deep in this rice paddy that it was practically harmless, when it exploded.

But we watched them, and just plane after plane . . . we was always supposed to keep our heads down, but you couldn't keep from raising up. You wanted to see those guys in action. This one plane came over, and he had a bomb hanging on the left wing. Everybody was pointing, you know. Everybody--everybody--was pointing. He knew who we were, and he knew what we was pointing at because he could feel the weight. He just gave that plane a little flip like that(gesture) and swung that bomb clear over his plane back over there, and that's when it hit this little village over there a short distance from us. There were some casualties there. But this was the greatest aerial display I think anybody could have seen. It was a beautiful, beautiful sight.

Marcello: I assume the Americans were carrying out this raid with impunity. The Japanese really weren't putting up much resistance, were they?

Rayburn: They weren't there. Incidentally, they got the refinery; they got that tank of gasoline. They put us afoot; we started walking then. But that day that they came by to bomb this storage tank out there, they wouldn't let us go back out to the airport, so I was off that detail. And I got in on this detail out there covering up this tank. I wasn't there the day they got it. The day that I was out there, they came

over but they missed it. But they come back the next day, and they went across there, and, evidently, there was just one plane with the bombsight on it. But they went across, and it was a near miss. They circled right back around, and this second bomber dropped his load, and they got it. That was the end of the refinery storage tank. That's all the gasoline they had there.

Marcello: I guess we're at the point now we're ready to discuss the Japanese surrender and your actual liberation. Why don't you talk about the events leading up to the day when you received the news that the war is over?

Rayburn: Well, that's quite interesting. We had gone out that morning on a working party, and I was working with a Marine that I started bunking up with when we left Kanchanaburi, a fellow by the name of Hugh Faulk . . . he and another Marine by the name of Bob Charles. We bunked together all the time we were in Saigon. We were going on this working party that morning, and we had to walk from our camp on the river up to where we could catch a tram. We was going to go work over in Saigon. While we was walking to the tram line, a little French boy rode by on a bicycle and handed me a note, and I gave it to Hugh. He was on the inside. I gave it to Hugh, and when we got on the tram and everything got squared away--the guard, you know, was satisfied that everybody was on there and quit looking around--I said, "Well, what does it say?" He said,

"Dammit, I can't read French!" He said, "We'll pass it up to LaBove." So we passed the note up to LaBove, and then they passed the word on back through the tram that the Americans had dropped an automatic bomb on Hiroshima.

Marcello: It was called an automatic bomb?

Rayburn: Called an automatic bomb. Of course, we passed it on back, you know, by word-of-mouth. I'm sitting there beside of Hugh, and this is one time I really showed my ignorance. I'm sitting there thinking, you know, out loud, and I said, "Do you suppose that they have manufactured a bomb that would explode before it hit the ground and then scatter a whole lot of smaller bombs out to tear up things real good?" He said, "You damn fool, they split the atom before we left the States." He said, "That's an atomic bomb." Well, it was.

And it wasn't long after that. Now when we got out there at the working party that day, I had some sewing needles that somebody had brought me to sell. We got on a water detail for the Japanese officers' kitchen, and we didn't even have any guards. We had to go over there to a fire hydrant that had a spigot on it to carry that water back to the cookhouse. There I ran into this Chinese merchant and disposed of my sewing machine needles. Things like that was hard to come by. And it was easy to do. I got my price, but I don't even remember what it was, but I had money in my pocket.

I guess we made a half-dozen loads of water, and this

Japanese captain walked up to us and told us to sit down and gave us a cigarette. He said, "We'll have some tea shortly." He says, "I have good news for you and very bad news for me." He went on to explain that his home was where they had dropped the atomic bomb. His mother and father lived there, and his wife and children lived there. He said, "It's a very, very sad day for me, but it's a very, very good day for you." He said, "In a very, very short time you'll be free." Of course, the French, as we went back in that evening, well, they would ride close to us, and perhaps I can't pronounce this French word like it's supposed to be pronounced but they'd say, "La guerre fini!" "The war is over!"

And really, it was for us. Oh, we went back out to the airport there one day and fooled around a little bit. We was just out there long enough to see the damage, and there was quite a lot of it. They didn't want us to see it right away, and they'd cleaned it up pretty good. But there was still plenty of 20-millimeter shells laying around on the runway out there. Those planes that we worked so hard to bury back in the bamboo . . . we had those . . . it was a reddish-colored rock that we crushed and packed to keep that plane from sinking down into the sod. I'm sure that it showed up from the air, and they just went down the edge of those runways where all those planes were and got them all. They didn't leave anything out there.

Then, I was called out on a working party one day. They had these pillboxes built all the way around the camp with these slits pointing toward the camp. This Japanese commandant, I suppose he thought that it was best that they be destroyed, and there was a bunch of us out there on a working party digging those things out, you know, taking those slits out of them and kind of covering them up, destroying them.

There was a Korean guard out there with me, and he's sitting there on one, watching me work, you know. And he said, "You're crazy." I said, "What?" He said, "You're crazy." He said, "You don't have to work no more." He said, "This war is over." He said, "You're crazy." I said, "I don't mind." Of course, I didn't.

Now they moved us out of that river camp and moved us out to a French quarters, real nice. Again we get the tile floors, and we get the nice masonry buildings and paved parade ground and all this good bit. They moved us out there from the river camp. That river camp wasn't too nice, but it was all right. It was so much better than that jungle that it was just like heaven to us. So we're out there, and we're looking around pretty good. We hadn't been there but two days, and in comes the planes dropping supplies, dropping leaflets, giving us instructions, giving the Japanese instructions to keep all people in camp until the Allies arrive to take

command of us.

Marcello: Now you do know the war is officially over?

Rayburn: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We know it was over then.

Marcello: But nobody had really ever told you.

Rayburn: Well, we hadn't talked to any Allies, but we knew the war was over. When our planes could come in at a very low altitude and drop supplies for the prisoners-of-war, and we were out there at this big French barracks, you know, with much, much better living conditions, why, we knew it was over.

Marcello: But you still don't have any official word yet, is what I'm saying.

Rayburn: No, we only have instructions to stay within the camp until the Allies arrive--no date.

Marcello: In other words, this officer told you that the war will soon be over; the Korean guard told you that the war is over, but you can't take his word for it. So officially the war is not over.

Rayburn: All this took place in about two weeks.

Marcello: Have you been holding any celebrations or anything like that?

Rayburn: Oh, yes! Heck, yes! We've been celebrating every night. In fact, this little Korean guard that I had back at Thanbyuzayat on the wood detail . . . now Konashiro had gone because they called in all the officers, and he had to go back to Thailand with the officers and left us there without officers

in Saigon. But this student that I'd mentioned before, Kanakamoto, came down to the barracks one evening and visited with me for, oh, I guess, an hour, and he tried to give me his pocket watch for us to remember him by. I should have taken it possibly, but I didn't want to. I felt sorry for the little guy because all he ever talked about is when he got back and could get back to school, you know, to get his education. As far as I know, the Japs just left those people over there to scrounge for theirself. If they ever got back, I don't know if they did or not. But they just dropped those Koreans, right then and there.

After we moved out to this big French camp, why, you can bet your life that I put on the best uniform that I had and went through the fence and went to town and stayed down there four or five days. By this time the natives were taking over Saigon, and there was a lot of gunfire going on all night long. This French family with whom five of us were staying downtown at this place and living it up . . . the natives came out that morning to report for work--that worked for this family--and told her that they would have to quit because they had been warned that if they done any more work for the French, they would be subject to be executed. They were crying and didn't want to quit work, but they had to.

That's the time that I decided that somebody should go back to camp and find out what's going on. We're just sleeping

and eating there, having a good time, waiting for something to happen. I borrowed her bicycle, and she gave me some money in case I needed it for bribing or anything, and I took off for camp and ran into a blockade a short distance from the house. I was having a bad time with the natives because they were lunging at me with these spears that they'd made out of bamboo and talking in an unknown tongue and so forth and so on.

But an officer walked up that could speak English, and I told him to write me a pass where I was going and who I was. He said he would, and everything would be all right. He said, "They don't know any better." He said, "Everybody's their enemy now." And he wrote me out some kind of a pass, and from there on to camp, which was probably a couple of miles, I didn't have any more problems. I gathered up all the rum--that's all I could buy in a store there--between there and camp, and I carried it into camp for the guys that never left the camp.

I stayed there in camp until . . . oh, incidentally, I did see an American jeep with an American flag on it and two officers on there that I recognized. One of them was Lieutenant Schmid, and the other one was Captain Fitzsimmons. I tried to stop them, but they just waved and went on. They was going so dadgummed fast that they wasn't about to stop. Of course, they set up headquarters there in Saigon at the

largest hotel there in Saigon. My friend, Hugh Faulk, stayed down there with them until they decided that they could bring in some planes to get us out.

Now they had this one plane in there that brought in this jeep, but they flew it back out with instructions for another plane to come back in and see what happened. So another C-47 or C-46--I've forgotten which--came in, and they picked them up at the airport and brought them over to our camp. A bunch of guys took them down that night to Saigon. They had found a big nightclub down there that had a Filipino band, and they went down there and had a huge party. I'd been in town so long that I didn't want to go to town. I stayed in camp.

The main thing that I was angling for is to get on that first plane out of there because I didn't want to wait for five more planes to come in later. If I could get out on that first plane, I wanted out on it, and I got on that first plane. I didn't do it cagey-like or anything else, but I talked to Captain Fitzsimmons--he and I were good friends back in the jungle--and I told him that if there was any possible way for me to get on a plane, I wanted on it. He said, "Well, I've got to take out the worst of the bunch first, but I can take so many." He said, "I want you to get your gear and stand close by the back of the truck. I don't want you to have to answer to 'Smitty.'" "Smitty" was a

sailor. He was a petty officer that was in charge of the camp. He said, "If I motion for you, you come at the truck. Start moving and jump on the truck," which I did and got out of there on the first plane.

On this plane we went to Thailand, to Bangkok. We got off the plane at Bangkok, and he told us . . . they were warrant officers flying the plane. Incidentally, the day I got on that plane, too, my little sergeant and my little private were standing out there to see me off at the airport that I worked with out there. I asked this sergeant if he had any extra cigarettes, and so he threw me a carton of Lucky Strikes. I threw them over to these Japs. It kind of made him mad, and I explained to him and it was all right.

But it was two warrant officers flying this plane, and we stopped in Thailand. He told us, "Well, now this airport here is under the control of the British, and I don't know if we can get a Coca-Cola here or not, but we'll go to the officers' club and see what we can do." We got off the plane while they were fueling the plane and marched up to the officers' club, and we were told right quick that there'd be no enlisted men in their officers' club.

So we went back by the Red Cross stand and got some cookies and tea and crawled back on the plane and flew to Rangoon. When we got to Rangoon, we went to the officers' mess to eat, and our waiters were all officers. Now that's the

difference between the United States service and the British service. Of course, in Rangoon, we got a nurse there on the plane at Rangoon, and we're waiting for this plane to take off.

A British captain walked up with his batman and asks this lady, this nurse, if there's a chance of hitching a ride to Calcutta. She said, "Captain, the Lend-Lease is over. You will not ride this plane." He turned around and walked off.

We was flown into Calcutta, and my first meal in Calcutta was bacon and eggs and Coca-Cola about ten o'clock that night. I had a lot of souvenirs I brought out of there, and so did my friend Hugh. In fact, Hugh had got acquainted with a pretty little French girl there, and he had her picture and her address and everything. They destroyed everything we brought back. They wouldn't let us have anything.

Marcello: Now did you go to the 142nd General Hospital there in Calcutta?

Rayburn: It was just a hospital, and I couldn't tell you which one. I wasn't even interested in it to know, but it was a hospital. We stayed there until they started shipping us on out. Of course, we came back as VIP's all the way.

Marcello: How did they feed you there at Calcutta? Did they simply give you anything you wanted, or did they have a special diet for you?

Rayburn: Anything that you wanted that they had. You could eat anything.

You could go downtown and order you a twenty-pound steak if you wanted to. You could eat anything that they had to eat, and that's the same way in Rangoon. Of course, most of this food was canned chicken, canned ham, and things like that. But you ate anything that you wanted to. There was no diets for nobody that I know of. Now for some of the men, naturally, that were come in with dysentery real bad and other ailments, that were really, really sick, I'm sure that their diet was restricted.

Marcello: Did you have any trouble handling that kind of food?

Rayburn: I didn't because you've got to remember that I got quite a lot of that food in Saigon. Saigon saved my life.

Marcello: When you went into the service, how much did you weigh?

Rayburn: About 170 pounds.

Marcello: What would you estimate was the lowest you got down to while you were a POW?

Rayburn: Well, probably somewhere around 120-125 pounds. I kept my weight pretty well all the way through. I weighed 150 pounds when I got to Calcutta. I had got fat in Saigon.

Marcello: I guess you had never seen a Wac before until you got to Calcutta, had you?

Rayburn: No! And that was something else! We didn't know there were any women in this man's army. The lady that picked us up at the plane to carry us to the hospital was a Wac, and one of the sailors was going to ride up in the cab with her! And

she told him in so many words to get his butt in the back of that truck, and we took off for the hospital (chuckle). No, it was quite a sight. Of course, they threw parties for us. The nurses threw parties; the Wacs threw parties for us. I didn't attend any of them. I just wasn't in the mood.

Marcello: Did they ever give you any psychological tests or examinations or anything of that nature?

Rayburn: No. The VA definitely did. But we were interrogated there in Calcutta. We had a man taking a deposition on each one of us.

Marcello: This was in connection with possible evidence for war crimes trials?

Rayburn: That, and enough information on you to get you a discharge. See, we had no records. They took a deposition of each and every one of us as to what was your rank, when were you captured, where did you spend most of your time, etc., etc., etc. You know, "This soldier was discharged by a partial discharge, by partial papers, and he is on affidavit."

And I told them about the court-martial that we had back in Batavia, and that was quite amusing. The sergeant said, "Hey, lieutenant, come here. I want you to hear this." He said, "Well, what was your rank then, soldier?" I said, "I don't know. I think I was a PFC. I really don't know." He said, "Put it down 'corporal.'" (chuckle) I came out of the

service as a sergeant.

Marcello: When you get back to the United States, did you have to spend some time in hospitals here?

Rayburn: I spent nine months in hospitals off and on before I was discharged.

Marcello: What kind of problems did you have at this point? You seemed to be in pretty good health as late as Saigon.

Rayburn: Well, I hit New York City and went downtown to a couple of parties that just about done me in. I had a kidney stone, so they whipped me out of there over to Holleran General Hospital for an operation. Everybody else was leaving, and I didn't want to stay there. Of course, a kidney stone, you know, until it gets into a certain place, you don't hurt so much. You might get sick at your stomach. I've had four of them. You might get sick at your stomach, and I was really sick when they sent me over there, but I got to feeling better. I didn't want to stay there; I didn't want to stay in New York City. It looked like there was no way that I could get out of there.

But I spotted the surgeon general's office, and I made a beeline for it. I was stopped by a "light" colonel at the door. I said, "I want to talk to the surgeon general." He said, "Soldier, you cannot talk to anyone. Now get out of here!" But this one-star general heard me, and he said, "Bring that soldier in." He said, "What's your problem, son?" I

said, "Well, really, I haven't got any problem." I said, "I know I was brought over here because of a possible kidney stone, and I was pretty sick when I came over here, but my outfit is leaving for Texas today, and I want to be on that train!" He asked the colonel, "Is this a hospital train?" I believe that's what he said. The colonel told him it was. He said, "Get an ambulance here as quick as you can and get this soldier on that train."

I rode a hospital train from New York to Brooke Army Hospital in San Antonio, Texas, and that was about the 21st of September. Very shortly after that I got a leave, a seven-day leave, I believe,to go home.

Then I got orders to report to El Paso. I reported out there, and they said, "You're not supposed to be here, soldier. You're supposed to be at Brooke Army Hospital in San Antonio. What are you doing here?" And I said, "Here's my orders." "Well, I'll cut you some new orders and send you on down to San Antonio." I said, "Well, thank you very much, but I have a brother living here in El Paso, and I believe I'll stick around for a few days and visit." He said, "I'm giving you seven days. Is that enough time?" I said, "It certainly is."

So besides the kidney stone, I had worms. Man, it like to took two years to get rid of them . . . a year after I was discharged. And I had a lot of stomach trouble, and my nerves were bad. There were just several different things that you

can't hardly put your hand on that were bothering me. I was having some arthritis at that time. I was having a big problem sleeping. Just a few things like that will bother the devil out of you, but then you'd forget them all when you'd get a pass to go home for a while. Then you'd report back, and you'd go through these series of tests. I bet you I ate enough barium and had so many barium enemas that I could paint this whole building with it. And that's the kind of tests that we went through.

Marcello: Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life once you get out of the service?

Rayburn: I don't believe so. Not me. In fact, the first thing I done even before I was discharged . . . I wanted an automobile, and I had money. A friend of mine, he and I caught a train to Pontiac, Michigan, and bought some cars and got servicemen that were coming south to drive them back for us. I immediately got into the car business that way. We'd buy a car up there, and by the time we'd get to Texas with it, it was worth $700, $800, or $900 more than we paid for it. We'd sell it and just go back and get a couple more.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Rayburn, that exhausts my list of questions. I think we've covered all of the highlights of your experiences as a prisoner-of-war. I guess I need to close this interview with just one last question. As you look back upon your experiences, what do you see as being the key to your survival?

Why is it that you made it and others died over there?

Rayburn: Determination. The will to live. There just never was any doubt in my mind. I knew if I could stay fairly healthy that I was going to be home one of these days, that there just absolutely was no one that could kick this nation around. I knew there'd be a day, and there never was any doubt in my mind. But you had to have a lot of willpower and determination to make it, and those that didn't have it didn't make it.

Marcello: Well, I want to thank you very much for having participated in our project. You've given us a great deal of detail, and, of course, that's what we wanted, and that's one of the values of using the tape recorder rather than having a person write this down. Just for the record, we started this interview at nine o'clock a.m., and it's now 5:30 p.m., so I think we've picked your brain for quite a bit of detail.