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Interview with
WILLIAM J. STEWART
June 11, 1981

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved:

William J. Stewart
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

William J. Stewart

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing William J. Stewart for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on June 11, 1981, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Stewart in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. More specifically, Mr. Stewart was a crew member aboard the cruiser USS Houston, which was sunk in early 1942. He was subsequently captured on Java and spent the rest of the war in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.

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

Mr. Stewart: Well, I was born in Cherryvale, Kansas, in 1920, July 13th. I went through high school there, during which time I was trying to be a musician. I did not go on to college,

Then a couple of years later, I joined the Navy, and

that's when other things started happening. As it turned out, I'm glad that I didn't go to college and turn out to be a music professor.

Marcello: When did you join the Navy?

Stewart: It was in October, 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service in 1940?

Stewart: I was always fascinated by stories of the Navy. There were one or two men out of my hometown that had been in the Navy quite awhile. My twin brother went into the Navy before I did and...I just wanted to go Navy.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Stewart: My boot camp training was in Great Lakes, Illinois.

Marcello: Why don't you describe the process by which you eventually got aboard the cruiser USS Houston?

Stewart: Well, that gets to be quite a story. I went through boot camp in Great Lakes, as I said. After boot camp I was assigned to Class A radio school, where I was taught a little bit of Navy communication procedure, a little bit of electronics, and also the Morse code. This school lasted for three months. That put me from October, going into the Navy, up until about the middle of March, before I was transferred from the training station.

From there I went to San Diego, and after a week or so, I was assigned on the transport ship and taken to Pearl Harbor, where I went aboard the USS Detroit. The

Detroit was an old "four-piper"--four-stack cruiser-- with the 6-inch guns. I was on the Detroit in Pearl Harbor from about June until the last of November, when a notice came through asking for volunteers for Asiatic duty. I had a twin brother out on the Asiatic Station, and he was on an old oil tanker out there. I thought, "Well, if I go for Asiatic duty, perhaps I can get assigned to his ship and be with him." Well, I put in for Asiatic duty, and I got the transfer.

Unfortunately, about nine days after we were out of Pearl Harbor on the transport going west, the war started. After arrival in Australia and so forth, why, I was assigned to the USS Houston. Of course, with a wartime situation and things in little bit of a turmoil, the specific transfer requests were not welcomed, so I stayed on the Houston.

Marcello: And where did you pick up the Houston then?

Stewart: I picked up the Houston at Darwin, Australia.

Marcello: Let's back up a minute. You mentioned that you were at sea when the attack at Pearl Harbor occurred. Do you remember the circumstances around which you learned of the attack?

Stewart: Well, we were called to quarters, which is when everybody is on deck to be counted and so forth. Then our division officer said, "Wait just a minute! We have a message from the executive officer on the ship!" The ship was the

USS Chaumont, which was one of the naval transports there. He announced over the ship's announcing system about the war and that we would change our course and go to Australia instead of going to the Philippines.

Marcello: Describe what the Houston looked like from a physical standpoint when you went aboard it.

Stewart: Well, the Houston was a beautiful ship--a classic. There has never been any built to look like her since. It, of course, had several outstanding features. It had, of course, the big tripod mast in the front with the "doghouse" up on top, which, when the enemy saw that part sticking up over the horizon, they got ready to start shooting because they knew that it was us. Then it, of course, had the three big gun turrets and had two funnels and carried four airplanes. It was just a tremendous ship, and I could not see how a ship like that could ever be sunk.

Marcello: When you went aboard, did you seem to sense that the crew had a great deal of pride in being aboard a ship like that?

Stewart: Yes and no. Of course, whenever I first went aboard, we were in Darwin, and in the few weeks remaining, we made a ship convoy or two in there. The crew was kind of disgruntled or something: "Why aren't we going after the Japanese? We're staying down here in safe waters!" They didn't really like the situation.

However, a little later on, when we were up on another

convoy patrol, a bunch of airplanes came over us and started dropping bombs on us. The captain would take his glasses and look up, and when he saw the bombs start coming down, why, he would make a hard left or right turn and go the other direction. So forty-five planes missed us.

I'm really getting ahead of my story here. This event was after another run which we got into when they didn't all miss us. But I'll go ahead with it and then come back to it. This one had five or six ships in the convoy. When the airplanes dropped the bombs on us and all of this, they started heading for the convoy, and the captain looked up and said, "They're going over there to the convoy!" We'll have to protect them!" So he turned and went right down through them, and we kept cheering all the time. None of the convoy got hit.

Well, that was the big change. There were a lot of men on there that were familiar with airplanes and knew what bombs dropped on us was like. We all called, "Captain, don't go that way! That's where it's hazardous!" But we were proud of our ability to fight the enemy off and protect the convoy.

Marcello:

The Captain that you are referring to is, of course, Captain Rooks. Awhile ago you mentioned that the crew was anxious to do battle with the Japanese when you went

aboard the Houston down in Darwin. At that time, when you personally thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of a person did you conjure up in your own mind?

Stewart: Well, that gets to be...you know, we have the enemy propaganda, and then we have propaganda of our own. Then, of course, the thing that we had been led to believe was that the Japanese were small, they weren't very strong, and they couldn't see very well. Their airplanes were made out of bamboo and rags. In general, they were not too much to be feared, so to speak. Of course, in connection with that, I said, "That might be well and good," but I remembered a statement that our high school principal made. He said, "I would rather go to war with anybody other than Japan. The reason is that the Japanese soldier will do what he is told to do to the best of his ability. If there are enough of them, his ability gets to be pretty good." But we didn't have a very good opinion of the Japanese soldiers.

Marcello: How long did you think that this war was going to last?

Stewart: Well, to start out with, I realized that the way things were going in the Pacific, they were just holding or killing time more or less and were fighting until the war in Europe was finished up, and that became apparent.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about the first encounter that the Houston had with the Japanese planes. According to my

records, the first real encounter occurred on February 4, 1942. That was a rather significant encounter, and I'll let you pick up the story at that point.

Stewart: That was the encounter in, I believe, the Flores Sea. We had a task force assembled, and we were going to raid enemy shipping and stuff. I believe it was at Balikpapan. Anyway, on the way there, why, the bugler sounded air defense. We got our guns manned and got ready to start shooting. That was a hot one--their bombers were pretty good. They hit the old Marblehead twice, and they hit our ship once and had a near miss once. The near miss was up at midships and didn't do any damage, although it raised the ship up out of the water quite a way. And they hit back on turret three. Of course, it set turret three afire, and the crew in the turret area all perished. Plus the fact that directly under where the bomb hit was a damage control party, and they all perished.

Marcello: I gather that the bomb that did the damage to turret three was more or less a freak, so to speak.

Stewart: Well, no, not really. We estimated that it was something maybe like a 500-pound bomb. It just came down the mainmast and went off just above the deck. It wasn't a freak. From high altitude they miss a lot of times, but they can't

miss all of them.

Marcello: Describe what the damage looked like back there at turret three.

Stewart: To go back a little bit, turret three was trained out to one side. In other words, the guns were pointing off to one side, and there was a space in between the turret and the after deckhouse, which housed radio equipment. This bomb came down and struck one of the three legs of the mainmast and bounced off a little bit, which apparently armed the bomb, and exploded just above the deck in between the turret and the after deckhouse. It blew a hole in the deck here about ten feet in diameter, and the shrapnel from the bomb penetrated the sides of the gun turret. It set the powder afire inside of the turret. Of course, you know, at that time they used the powder that was in silk bags, and a hot spark or anything could set it afire, and you have problems. Also, this turret on the Houston had light armor plate on the front face of the turret but just the heavy sheet metal on the sides, and the shrapnel went right through it.

Marcello: I don't think that it's necessary that we go into every encounter that the Houston had with the Japanese, but I think for the record we ought to discuss how it got its nickname. Do you recall what its nickname was?

Stewart: Yes. Its nickname was, of course, the "Gallopig Ghost

of the Java Coast," The reason for that was that apparently everytime a Japanese bomber in formation would fly over and sight the Houston or drop bombs on it... whether they were in error or whether they were putting out propaganda, I don't know, but they would say, "We sank the Houston." The Houston was supposed to be sunk at least eight times according to the radio reports,

Meanwhile, we had escorted this one convoy that I had talked about earlier, and we had took another ship to another island. Then we went another place, and we went alongside the old USS Trinity for fuel, and that's the ship that my twin brother was on. I got to visit with him for about four hours while we were alongside. That was on the island of Alor. We were moving around and doing a lot of convoy work after we had been reported sunk several times,

Marcello: Who gave it the name of "Gallopig Ghost of the Java Coast?"

Stewart: That I can't tell you. I would say that it generated in the crew.

Marcello: I figured that it probably either generated in the crew, or else was some newspaperman's way of selling newspapers br something like that to the folks back home.

Stewart: No, it was on the ship before we were sunk. It wasn't someone back home. It was local--in other words, on the ship.

Marcello: Throughout February, you're under constant battle conditions almost the entire time. Describe what it was like physically and mentally to go through an entire month under those circumstances or under those conditions-- for you as a radioman.

Stewart: Well, of course, I was not a radioman on the Houston. I was still a seaman. On there, there were no openings for radio strikers or beginners, so I was in the deck force.

On this situation, for the entire month from then on, for the most part we were on what we called a Condition Two alert, which meant that half the battle stations were manned and the other half of the crew could rest or go on to their other business. Now that was up until the last week. That part wasn't quite so bad. We'd have to shoot at airplanes once in awhile, but the crew did have a chance to rest some.

I might add that in connection with this manning of the air defense, after we took that one bomb hit, all somebody had to do was mention airplanes, and the crew was at their air defense stations before you could snap your fingers. Some of the times, there were no airplanes that ever showed up, but they moved fast after that one encounter.

But to get back to the other story, the last week was when things began to get tough because we knew that invasion fleets were on their way to Java. We were in port

at Surabaya, and while we were in port there, we'd have to shoot at airplanes all day long. As soon as it got dark, we would get underway and go out on patrol looking for the Japanese ships. We were at battle stations, or Condition One, all night long, every night, for the week before we were sunk. At daylight we'd come back into port, and we'd be at air defense practically all day long there. Before the end of the week was over, the crew was tired.

Marcello: What kind of cooperation were you getting from the Dutch when you would pull into Surabaya or some other port along the coast?

Stewart: I think our cooperation there was real good. Of course, they didn't have much facilities, but we were able to get fuel when we needed it. And when the Marblehead was hit and had to have temporary repairs made, they were able to put it in dry dock in this one port of Tjilatjap. Their cooperation was real good. Of course, the entire area, including us, were under the command of a Dutch admiral. Whether there was any bickering upon the top level, I don't know.

Marcello: Incidentally, where was your battle station aboard the Houston?

Stewart: My battle station was on the shell deck on turret number two.

Marcello: So you were on one of the main batteries then.

Stewart: I was on one of the main batteries, right.

Marcello: This brings us up to more or less the end of February, 1942. I think that one of the significant actions in here that we need to talk about is the Battle of the Java Sea. Describe the background and the setup for the Battle of the Java Sea, as you remember it.

Stewart: That came at the end of this week where we were, as I said before, going out and patrolling at night, and we were coming back into Surabaya to guard the shipping there from air attack during the daytime. This particular Saturday morning, we did not return to port. There were other ships with us at the time--there was the HMAS Perth and the HMAS Exeter and the Dutch cruiser the Java and the Dutch cruiser DeRuyter--five of us. We did not return to port that morning but stayed down on patrol. Along about, oh, shortly after noon, we had the enemy shipping sighted, and we got ready to start firing.

Marcello: Up until this time, you really hadn't had any major ship-to-ship encounter, had you? Up until this time, you had mostly been battling airplanes.

Stewart: That's right--aircraft,

Marcello: Describe the encounter that ensued that afternoon.

Stewart: The encounter that afternoon goes on pretty well into the evening. When it started about 2:00, the only thing that

I know is from my station, of course, in a small enclosure there. We had to send up an awful lot of shells. Guns were firing every two or three minutes or more often. Of course, we had scattered reports of where our shells were going and possible hits which the turret officer would send down to the telephone talker. During that afternoon we kept putting the shells in the hoist,

Incidentally, these shells are about three-in-a-half feet high, and they weigh 265 pounds, and I weighed about 110 pounds. If the ship was turning and the deck was slanted a little bit, I had a rough time ever trying to get one of these things up to the hoist. That situation later got worse because the shells that had been stored there longer had grease on the bottom, and that polished steel deck had grease all over it,

But during that afternoon, up until, I would say, 5:00 or 6:00, we fired approximately a hundred shells from each gun. That meant that the supply in that turret went down to where we had thirty or forty rounds left, and that was about all.

Marcello: And there was no way of getting any replenishment either, was there?

Stewart: No, no replenishment.

Marcello: I guess the nearest place you could have gotten more ammunition would have been Honolulu,

Stewart: Honolulu. Of course, later on in this evening, say, around 5:00 or 6:00, if I can recall, things quieted down, and we kept steaming or doing something. Like I said, I couldn't see out. Later on in the evening, around 9:30 or 10:00, we got a report that the ship behind us had been torpedoed and exploded and sank. That was one of the Dutch cruisers. I think that it was the Java. About ten minutes later, we got another report that the ship ahead of us had been torpedoed, and that was the other Dutch cruiser, the DeRuyter, and it sank immediately. At that time the battle line broke up, and we headed for Batavia, getting there in the middle of the night.

Marcello: From everything that I have read, it wasn't too good of an idea to have to do battle with the Japanese at night. Apparently, the Japanese Navy had been trained for years for night warfare, so to speak.

Stewart: Of course, that part was not our disadvantage. Of course, the advantage that they had there was...I don't know whether the torpedoes were from submarines or whether they were from enemy destroyers that got within range or what the deal was. Of course, this was before the days of radar. Actually, radar had been invented, but we didn't have it. The Japanese didn't have it, either. We had some advantages in the fact that our 8-inch guns could

fire twelve or fifteen miles with accuracy, where a lot of the cruisers with the smaller guns couldn't shoot that far. We could stay out of their range and still give them a rough time. As far as the surface ship firing, night was not a disadvantage for us. In fact, we did pretty well.

Marcello: This brings us to the point where we can talk about the end of the Houston. I am, of course, referring to the dash through the Sunda Strait in its attempt to get to Australia. Once more I'll let you pick up the story at this point.

Stewart: We got underway that evening. I might add that just prior to our getting underway, we had air defense sound again. This time it did not turn out to be an enemy airplane, which usually was the case. Somebody said, "Airplanes!" and we didn't ask questions. We just got ready to start shooting because they weren't ours. We didn't have to check them.

The seaplanes up on the catapults, which were in proximity to our 5-inch antiaircraft guns...when the 5-inch guns are firing, the concussion blows all of the fabric off the airplanes. We had one airplane out of the four left.

But he came in and landed in the harbor in Batavia, and we secured from the air defense. Apparently, this particular airplane pilot was given his orders, and we did

not take him back aboard that evening.

A few minutes later or a half hour later, about dusk, we got on our way and started for Sunda Strait. Of course, the Sunda Strait is between Java and Sumatra. We again were in general quarters or Condition One during the trip.

Just prior to getting underway, I heard one remark from a communications officer, who reported to the captain that all the confidential material was ready to go over the side. Well, being halfway familiar with radio procedures, I knew what he was saying. I figured we were in for trouble that night.

Along about 10:30 or 11:00, we started firing.

Marcello: I guess, evidently, what was happening was that the Houston and the ship accompanying the Houston ran right into the Japanese invasion convoy,

Stewart: That's the main thing that happened. According to some of the stories I had, our intelligence had reported the Sunda Strait clear and that we would be able to get through. Obviously, that report wasn't accurate. The only two of us that were still going were the Houston and the HMAS Perth, which was still capable of steaming. The Exeter the previous day had been hit and went into Surabaya to make emergency repairs. What finally happened to the Exeter, I don't know, but she didn't get away.

Back to the other, we were steaming in the company with the Perth, and there was one Dutch destroyer that wanted to go through with us, and he was trailing along on behind. Apparently, we plowed right into the middle of them, and in the ensuing battle then, the Perth took a hit--I don't know if it was torpedoes or shells--and she sank within fifteen minutes. The Dutch destroyer, I don't know what happened to him, but in our case we just started the guns going around, and everytime something showed up in the sights, we'd fire and keep on going. We fired for about a half-hour,

Marcello: Evidently, what ensued was almost like a brawl--targets everywhere.

Stewart: Well, there were targets everywhere, that's right. Of course, I wouldn't really call one ship being surrounded by fifty others a brawl, but it was a melee or something. They couldn't close in on us as long as we were still firing because they'd get hurt when they did. Of course, apparently they got through to us with torpedoes and stuff, and then a shell hit on turret two. Shortly after that, why, turret one was flooded, and our antiaircraft guns were all out of shells. We didn't have very many left, and we couldn't fire them, anyway. Then they moved in on us with the torpedoes and struck at close range, and the ship didn't last long.

Marcello: I guess at one stage they were so close that they even raked the deck with machine fire, did they not?

Stewart: Right, there was machine gun fire hitting us, too.

Marcello: You mentioned that turret two got hurt during this encounter with the Japanese, and I think that this was something that affected you personally, so why don't you describe what happened in turret two.

Stewart: On turret two we were the,,of course, the way the turrets were numbered was that forward was number one and then you have number two, and then back on the center was number three. Of course, number two apparently took a shell hit. In connection with this hit, we had taken a hit or two the day before, and the shells either went through the ship or didn't explode, and one of them stayed in an oil tank. Apparently, the one that hit turret two did not explode because the sensation that I got when it hit...I felt the turret jar just a little bit.

Now my station on the shell deck is part of the turret system. Of course, you know, you think normally that the turret is the gun and the gun box up on top, but that's part of it. Down farther the shell hoists go down to the shell deck, and this stuff all rotates with the guns. Like I say, I felt a slight jar from it, and a second later I saw a spark come through from where the overhead part rotates inside the barbette. The outside

shell of the turret is called the barbette. A spark came through there, and at that time we knew the turret was on fire and that if we were to survive, why, we had better start getting out,

So all seven of us hit the door at the same time, and we got it open. By the time we got the door open, the shell deck area was just full of fire. When we opened the door, why, the fire had tremendous pressure, and it was blowing out this door. This was a normal-sized door about four feet high and two-and-a-half feet wide. It was just like coming out of a blow torch and was bouncing off of the bulkhead about eight feet in front of us. This was the fire that we were in as we were getting out. I hung up under the door, which apparently I was on the side where it was hinged, and got my dungarees caught on the door a little bit, and it took me awhile to get free, and I thought that I wasn't going to make it. But I did get out and got clear. We went out of the turret, and all seven of us got out.

As soon as we got into a passageway, somebody there-- I don't know whether he was a medical attendant or something--said, "Come this way and we'll fix you up!" He took us into one of those little offices where they had mattresses laid down. He had us all lay down there, and they gave us each a shot of morphine. I might add that

out of the seven of us there, some of us were burned a lot worse than others because some of us had on more clothes than the others did. The one man that had on a shirt with a collar...none of us had on hats. The man that had a shirt and a collar, he got his arms burned and his face burned and ears, but there was no problem on his back or anything. But one of those men like that died in the life raft from his burns. There was others that had on their cotton undershirt, and it kept a lot of fire off of them. Then there was two of us that was like me that didn't have anything on them from the waist up, and we took a beating.

Marcello: Describe the extent of your injuries here.

Stewart: Well, I ended up burned black clear to my waist. I had about a third of each ear burned off. Of course, on my hair...I don't remember how much hair I had, but it being hot and sweaty and everything, it didn't catch fire, but it just burned down to a charcoal mat and apparently protected the top of my head. Of course, my face was burned and became layered to being so that I couldn't even hardly open my mouth to eat because my lips and everything were all burned. My left arm apparently got burned a little bit worse than the other, but on the palms of both hands, I had huge blisters. I had blisters on the backs of both hands. My left arm apparently got injured.

The tissue was damaged in the process of going over the side, and it became more of a problem than my right hand.

Marcello: The reason I was asking you this was because awhile ago, when you described the fire in the barbette or turret and then you're walking to the aid station, you said it in a matter of fact way. I was pretty sure that you weren't exactly in the best of condition when you went from the barbette to the aid station. I assume that you were in a good deal of pain.

Stewart: Well, yes and no. Like you say, all of us were able to walk to the aid station, but in my experience I was numb. I hurt, yes, but it wasn't an excruciating pain like it is if you were taking a knife and cutting a finger or something. In other words, it covered a wide area, and apparently your body, your nerves, turn the pain off so that you can stand it.

Marcello: Okay, so you get some morphine to relieve the pain. Were the medics able to do anything else for your wounds?

Stewart: No, about the time we got a shot of morphine the bugle sounded abandon ship. The medic at that time said, "You go right down this passageway to the quarter-deck, and you go over the side from there," and he left. So the rest of us got up and went out on the quarter-deck.

When I got out there, I was concerned about a life

jacket. Of course, my life jacket was down below decks where I normally slept. Someone said that in the port hangar there was some life jackets in there, and so I headed for the port hangar. As I went in there, all of a sudden somebody opened the door on the storage area, and a whole bunch of them fell down, and I grabbed one and put it on.

Marcello: Describe the abandoning of the ship and your getting into the water. In the meantime, what's happening outside while your scrounging for a life jacket?

Stewart: That's one of the things...while I was scrounging for a life jacket and getting it tied on and so forth, why, there's possibly a hundred people, I presume, on the quarter-deck. Of course, the quarter-deck is that area amidships where there's a catapult on a tower on each side, and it's in between the forward cabins and the after deckhouse and so forth, and the hangars. While we're waiting around there, I could see that the ship was still moving through the water and that it was headed toward land, so I didn't get in a hurry to go over the side. About that time we started getting searchlights trained on us, and the deck was getting illuminated pretty well.

The ship already had just this rope net, cargo net, and they had it on the rail so that the men could climb

down. So me and a bunch of others started climbing down on this net and got just above the water. I was pretty close to the bottom, but since the ship was still going toward land, I hung on.

A few minutes later, the ship took another hit from something, and it was a pretty heavy explosion and shook the ship a lot. At that time everybody on that net turned loose and went in the water. Of course, as soon as I got in the water, it seemed like a hundred people landed on top of me. That might be when my left arm tissue got damaged more. When I got back to the surface, why, I started swimming away from the ship. A few minutes later I was by myself out in the water.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that, when you came out on deck, the Japanese had turned the searchlights on the Houston. That must have been rather disconcerting.

Stewart: Well, when they turn the searchlights on, that tells you one thing--they're not afraid of you shooting back at them, and they're coming in where they can see, and things are going to start happening fast. In other words, we were out of action then. Otherwise, if we'd still been firing, they wouldn't turn the searchlights on us. We were in trouble.

Marcello: What does the water feel like when you got into it, after you finally let go of the cargo net, in terms of the

temperature and things like that?

Stewart: I didn't notice any particular feeling in the water. Of course, it didn't hurt my burns, and it wasn't cold. The only thing that bothered me most at the time was that my life jacket was...of course, as it floats and pulls up, it cut a big hole in the tissue of my left arm, and the collar was up and around and rubbing on my face, which was, I said before, burned. It was very uncomfortable. I tried to get the collar untied so that it wouldn't bother me so much, but the way my fingers were, I couldn't untie it.

I might add that at this point, I had considerable doubts in my mind whether it was worth trying to go on or whether to just forget about the deal and give up and drown or whatever because I was aware that with the burns that I had. Even though I managed to get ashore safely, why, probably within the next day or two, I would give out from what was called at the time recurring shock. The poison from the burned tissue lowers your blood pressure. But I decided that I would keep on going because if I stayed there, there wouldn't be any doubt about what happened. So I kept on and started swimming.

Marcello: What clothing do you have on?

Stewart: I had on my dungarees, which I proceeded to take off so that I could swim better, leaving just my shorts on. I

couldn't use my left hand to swim with because it hurt too much, but I could kind of paddle with one hand and kick my feet. I was rather fortunate in one respect that, while I was at Pearl Harbor, I did quite a bit of swimming in the surf on Waikiki Beach. The swimming in the saltwater didn't bother me. You know, a person swimming in saltwater for the first time, you swallow more of that water than you realize if you've been swimming in freshwater, and if you swallow enough of that saltwater, it makes you sick, and you learn to not swallow it. But anyway, I was used to swimming in the saltwater and the surf, and apparently there were big swells coming up behind me and heading toward the land that I could see. As one of them would come up, why, I'd kick and paddle to the best of my ability and keep on going that way.

Marcello: Now in the meantime, the Japanese were still firing at the Houston, were they not?

Stewart: They were still firing at the Houston.

Marcello: I've heard other men that I've interviewed talk about the terrific concussion that they would feel when they were in the water when the Houston would get hit or when one of these shells would explode in the water. Did you ever experience that sort of thing?

Stewart: I experienced some, but apparently I got quite a ways away

from the ship before it took any underwater hits. There would be just a slight pressure hit you. You could feel it, but it didn't amount to much from where I was. I would say that I was, oh, a good quarter-mile or so away from the ship at the time. I could see it in the spotlights and see it listing over to one side and the bow low, but I never did see it actually go under because I was going the other direction, and I didn't look back much.

I might add that while I was swimming in the water, I came across the one life raft. These were the old balsa life rafts of that time. It must have had thirty or forty people in it, on it, and around it and so forth. In the shape that I was in, I wanted on that life raft, thinking maybe that I could get on it and it would help me. But with all the people kicking around and my burns, I didn't want anybody to touch me. So I said, "I'll go on my own," so I started paddling toward the land again.

Marcello: You don't have any shoes on, either, I gather.

Steward: No shoes. I got rid of those, too. I might add that on the swimming into the land, the distance, according to the quartermaster, was about four miles. Of course, it was moonlight, about a half-moon. I take credit for swimming, although I won't say that I could swim four miles in that shape. But I took advantage of the swells,

and apparently I had a lot of current helping me, too. There was a couple of times while I was swimming...of course, you know, I had had a shot of morphine, and I got sleepy and I just flat-out went to sleep in the water. I don't know how long or later it was before I woke up and started paddling again. That happened twice. I woke back up, and, of course, my life jacket held my face up out of the water. I didn't get any water in my lungs and kept on swimming. Finally, I kept feeling rocks and stuff under me, and the water was shallow. I tried to get up to walk, and I couldn't stand up. My balance...I don't know what the problem was, but I had to crawl clear up to the beach. When I got up out of the water, I just laid down and went to sleep.

Marcello: While you were in the water, what encounters did you have with the Japanese?

Stewart: None. I didn't see any. In fact, this one life raft that I swam by was the only group or only person that I saw until I got ashore, and I didn't see anybody there until after daylight the next morning.

Marcello: Now all this time that you were in the water, I assume that you could distinguish the outline of land, and your goal was to reach that land.

Stewart: Right. There was a mountain or a hill or something that

stuck up quite a ways, and you could see it well in the moonlight.

Marcello: Do you remember the lighthouse or something like that that was ashore?

Stewart: I don't remember any lighthouse. There was no flashing lights, nothing to guide me to where I was going. I just looked at that mountain, and I kept swimming toward that direction.

Marcello: Okay, so we are into the next morning, and this would be perhaps March 1st?

Stewart: March 1st. Well, the next morning, a little after daylight... I might add that during the night, just shortly after I got on the shore, why, the moon went down, and it got real black, real dark, and I went to sleep and slept till about daylight. Just after daylight, I woke up and started looking around me, and I saw a rock about fifty feet out in the water, and one of our men was sleeping on top of that rock. He must have been within a hundred yards or so of me practically all the way in, but I didn't know it. When he came to this rock, he crawled up on it and went to sleep. That man's name was Mabry. He was one of the engine room personnel. He woke up shortly after I did, and he came on ashore, and we decided that we had best see if we could get to Batavia and get a ship or an airplane back to Australia. A big

joke (chuckle)!

So we started walking down a little road. I would guess the time at around 8:00 or 8:30 in the morning. We were out in the middle of a big, open space, a rice field or whatever it was. We were walking down this road, and around the corner and up ahead of us comes a platoon of Japanese soldiers, about twenty or twenty-four of them. We knew that there was no point in trying to run. I couldn't run, anyway; I did well to stay on my feet. We went on toward them, and that's when we were captured.

Marcello: Describe what these Japanese soldiers looked like from a physical standpoint.

Stewart: They were small men, and, of course, their uniforms were old khaki uniforms. They had wrap-around leggings, and they wore hightop shoes that were made out of pigskin, mostly. Their khaki caps looked kind of like...oh, not like a baseball cap, but the visor was small and kind of curved down. They had flaps on the back of it to keep the mosquitos off their neck. Most of them wore big shell-rimmed glasses. They were not very impressive to look at.

Marcello: Describe this first encounter. What happened now that you were captured? What did the Japanese soldiers do?

Stewart: The Japanese soldiers stopped us there, and one of the

officers came forward and pulled out his little pistol. I don't know what kind it was. He questioned us about the Houston. He didn't ask me any questions because I was in pretty bad shape. They directed most of the questions at the other fellow that I was with--Mabry.

Marcello: This Japanese officer could speak English?

Stewart: He could speak English, yes. Of course, the big thing that they gave him a rough time on was when they would ask him what kind of ship the Houston was. When he said it was a heavy cruiser, why, they would slap him because they said only Japan had heavy cruisers. They asked him other questions about what else was around the area, any other shipping, and we didn't know and said none that we knew of. They didn't interrogate us very much. Then we started marching on down the road.

Marcello: So basically you have nothing on but a pair of skivvies.

Steward: That's all.

Marcello: They did not rough you up personally at this time?

Stewart: No. During the time that I was with this bunch, they apparently were sympathetic to the fact that I was burned badly. Some of them, of course, didn't pay any attention. At times when we'd stop, I'd try to get in the shade, and they'd run me back out with this other fellow. Where you're burned at, why, that tropical sun actually made it hurt worse than the burn did originally. Of course, they

didn't give me any water. I was thirsty before I was ever burned. My mouth was dry, and I couldn't hardly talk because my mouth was so dry.

Then we started moving on, and in the middle of the morning, we joined up with another party of Japanese, and they had captured more of the Houston crew. There was about twenty or twenty-four of them in that party. That is where this Lieutenant Payne was in that group. Then toward the evening, the platoon that had taken Mabry and I left and went somewhere else. I might add that one of the men out of there came over to me to shake hands with me, and he said, "I'm sorry." Apparently, he didn't speak English, but he knew that I was hurt.

Marcello: Up until this time, you had had nothing to eat or drink.

Stewart: Nothing to eat or drink. So when we joined up with this other group, then somewhere in the procedure, why, Lieutenant Payne was our senior aviator at the time, and he had managed to get a bottle of beer. Knowing that I was thirsty, he brought me about a half a cup of that bottle of beer. It was hot and strong and I detest the taste of beer, but that sure tasted good because it was wet. That helped quite a bit,

So from there the Japanese took us into...it was just a mile or so or two miles--I don't recall the distance--

and we walked on into a little town called Serang.

Marcello: In the meantime, did you come across any native Javanese from the time you hit shore until you got to Serang?

Stewart: I never saw a native anywhere. I don't know whether they were staying out of sight or hiding away from the Japanese or what the deal was, but I never saw any natives until we got into Serang.

Marcello: I know that in the case of a lot of the Houston survivors, when they did go ashore and were captured, they were having to push and pull large heavy carts inland toward Serang. I assume that your group escaped that particular procedure.

Stewart: I presume our group did. They didn't do any of that while I was with them. Now at one place, when we went on by where the Japanese boats were landing, Japanese soldiers were pulling the carts ashore. Why they didn't draft some of our men to do that, I don't know, but I understand that a lot of the men did have to help pull their carts ashore.

I might add that in connection with this, the invasion of Java was rather ironic by our standards because they invaded it with hand carts and bicycles. They didn't bring any trucks or stuff on shore for quite a while. Their men were on foot. It hurt our pride.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you get to Serang. Where do they put you when you get to Serang?

Stewart: When we got to Serang, they put us in the Serang Theater, a movie house.

Marcello: Describe what conditions were like inside that theater.

Stewart: Well, it was crowded. There were men sitting, lying, or whatever all over the building, and it was, I would say, a fairly large theater, although I really couldn't tell from my status because I don't remember. Anyway, I was lying off on one side where there was a little raised platform. I would say that there were about four or five hundred men in there. They were mostly Americans-- a lot of Americans, some off the Perth, and I don't know who all else.

Marcello: Now were you fed at all when you got into this theater?

Stewart: In this theater we were fed twice a day. The food was a small loaf of bread about five inches long, and we got that morning and evening. Of course, I had problems with eating there, but one of the fellows next to me, Jim Ballinger, would take the bread and break off little pieces and mash it real flat so that I could barely get it between my lips and eat.

Of course, I had other problems then. Apparently, one of the effects of the burns was that I quit producing any saliva. Before we got to Serang, I don't know whether

it was Lieutenant Payne or somebody else who gave me a little piece off a chocolate bar. I tried to eat it, and it just gummed up in my mouth. I never could swallow it. It stayed in there for a day or two. But after we got into Serang, that situation started to improve a little bit, and by struggling I could eat a little bit.

I might add that I was very fortunate there in one respect. I never did get to the point where I couldn't get up and walk to go outside to the privy or whatever would help. One thing that bolstered my courage was the fact that up in one end of the building, there were several men off the Perth, five or six of them, that had legs and arms badly mangled, and they couldn't get up and walk. They couldn't move and had to be carried. How they got there or how the Japs managed to get them there, I don't know, but they were there. But looking at them, I was glad I wasn't in their shape, and I appreciated my abilities that I had.

Marcello: What provisions did the Japanese make in terms of drinking water and things like that?

Stewart: Well, I got no water until I got to Serang. After we got there, this Ballinger had obtained a bottle or something. Somewhere there he would get it filled with water and bring some back to me, and he gave me drinking water. I owe a

lot to that man because he looked after me when I needed help.

Marcello: What was the conduct of the Japanese toward the prisoners during this stage, that is, while you were here at Serang?

Stewart: The Japanese didn't bother us any there, that I know of. I'm sure that some of the men would get up and wander out outside the building, and the Japs would take their rifles and bump them inside, but I didn't see any of that. Inside where I was, they didn't bother us. They just kept us there.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that the latrines were outside. What sort of latrine facility was there here at Serang?

Stewart: The latrine facility was a hole dug in the ground. I would say that it was about six or eight feet long and about three feet wide, and it had boards going across it. During our stay there, one of the fellows off of the Perth who wasn't too well...he was not injured, but I don't know what his problem was, but he was out there, and he fell in. I thought, "Boy, if I was him, I just wouldn't come back up." But, apparently, they got him out and took him to the river and washed him off, and he survived.

Marcello: I guess that it was perhaps a little bit of comfort, was it not, that you were now with other people off of the Houston and so on, as compared to being out in the water

and alone and that sort of thing?

Stewart: That part really didn't make much difference, but the comfort was that it was three or four days after I had been burned, and I was still alive and still able to get up and walk.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned this man Ballinger, who helped you very much during this very trying period. I assume that throughout your tenure as a prisoner-of-war, you would see examples of the very best and the very worst of men coming out.

Stewart: Yes, that happened and it happened right there in that theater. Of course, one of the things was that apparently a lot went on there that I wasn't aware of because I was...I wasn't lying down. I really wasn't able to lie down because of my back. My front and back were both burned, so I had to sit up, and I could rest my finger tips on the concrete or tile or whatever. I think it was tile of some kind.

Apparently, of course, most of the men had money and clothing on when they got ashore, and they were able at times to buy native food from somebody around there. I will say that Ballinger got some that way, and he bought it and was holding it to feed me some of it, and it got stolen. We both know who did it. Of course, that man didn't come back from the war, so I won't mention any names.

But it did go on. Fortunately, I don't think it was very much.

Marcello: So basically, then, you did nothing while you were here in Serang except stay put.

Stewart: Right. While I was here, one of the ship's doctors was in Serang with us. He came down and looked at me and told me that he didn't have any facilities--he couldn't do anything for me--and he told me just to hang on. As it turned out later, I found out that...this was about the second day that I was there, and it turned out later, as I found out, that he figured I wouldn't last another two days in the first place. But three weeks later, why, he was to be kind of surprised because I was still around.

I might add that while I was there, the Japanese put some bandages on my back, which was the worst. A couple of days later, when they wanted to change them, when they would start taking them off where it was stuck, why, they would just yank on it about three times, and I will say that that hurt. They did that twice.

After the fourth day then, there was an Australian doctor, apparently off of the Perth, that was there, and they made bandages and medical supplies available to him. He started treating me from then on. He soaked the bandages and got them off gently.

Then, of course, the big thing that was in question was on my left arm. At the time, I was getting pretty worried about it because in the tropics there, you always have infection, and I had infection and so forth. I was afraid that the Japanese would want to cut the arm off rather than try to get it well. I wasn't sure that that would be a winning procedure because you still get the infection where they cut it off. So I was worried.

But anyway, this Australian doctor, when he got over and looked at it, why, on the inside of my left arm, down at the wrist particularly, you could see the leaders. They were all exposed when I moved my hand back and forth. He asked me, "Can you move all of your fingers?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Can you move your hand back and forth?" I said, "Yes." He looked at it again and said, "Good, I'll have you well in a week." Well, it took longer than a week, but in ten days' time this scar tissue or skin had formed over there, and it was healing up.

Marcello: What medication did he have other than bandages?

Stewart: He used cod-liver oil ointment. Apparently, it did a beautiful job.

Marcello: Is that what he used on your back and so on, also?

Stewart: He put it on my back, bandaged my ears with cod-liver oil ointment. Of course, the ears don't heal up as quickly as

other parts of the body. If you get infection inside the ear canals, they just take longer.

Marcello: I thought that it was kind of surprising when you mentioned that the Japanese actually started the process of trying to do something for your burns. I normally had the impression that they had a general disdain for prisoners, at least in that early stage of the war.

Stewart: Most of them did, but there were some of them that were sympathetic toward the injured personnel. Like I say, before I got to Serang, there was this one man that would help me to see that I got into the shade. Then again, if he wasn't around, why, they'd come around and run me out with the rest of the group. But they did treat me there some, twice.

Marcello: How long did you remain at Serang altogether?

Stewart: We stayed in the Serang Theater, I think, about two weeks. That figure is kind of hazy, but I think that it was about two weeks that we were there.

Marcello: And during this period, you had nothing but bread and water.

Stewart: Nothing but bread and water.

Marcello: No rice?

Stewart: No rice. All they ever fed us in the Serang Theater was bread.

Marcello: What did you talk about when you were sitting around there in the theater?

Stewart: Food.

Marcello: Already the topic of conversation was food.

Stewart: Already the topic was food, yes.

Marcello: How long were you going to be a prisoner-of-war at this stage?

Stewart: We didn't talk much about how long we'd be prisoners-of-war. Like I said, we all knew that the action wasn't taking place out in the Pacific, and until it did, why, we were going to be prisoners-of-war.

Marcello: What were some of the other details of your stay in Serang that you would like to get as part of the record?

Stewart: Well, of course, after about two weeks in the Serang Theater, why, they transferred me to the Serang Prison. That place there had more facilities, and, of course, shortly after I got there, Dr. Burroughs came by and looked at me and said, "Are you the same one that I looked at in the Serang Theater?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, you're sure healing up well." By that time I didn't have bandages on my arms or on my back. I still had my ears bandaged.

Marcello: That probably made you feel pretty good, didn't it?

Stewart: That made me feel pretty good. Of course, I wasn't really aware at the time that he hadn't expected me to be alive at the time.

Marcello: Why were you singled out to go from Serang Theater to the

Serang Prison? Was this a random selection, or how did they come about?

Stewart: There were several of us, but I can't say how many. Right now I don't recall whether they hauled us in a truck or whether...I think they did. I think that there were ten or twelve of them. Whether they took a bunch of the Americans...because there were mostly Americans in the Serang Prison. They took us there, but that detail is kind of hazy,

Marcello: Describe what Serang Prison looked like, more specifically, the area where you were housed.

Stewart: Of course, we were not locked in cells; we could get out into the courtyard. The Serang Prison had an open space in the middle, and the cell blocks and buildings were all around that. Inside the cells there were...each one of the cells would hold, I would say, about sixty people. They had an aisle down the middle and a raised all-concrete sleeping area on each side. The concrete wasn't very comfortable sleeping on. That was the cell block.

Of course, while we were in Serang, they did feed us rice twice a day there. I might mention, in connection with this, that rice was served in little aluminum bowls. The bowls and stuff were washed by natives of Java. I might add that, in connection with that, in Java they didn't use toilet paper as we do. They have a bottle of

water, and just what procedure they used, I don't know. I never did go along with it. I do know that the natives...in this prison there was little...inside this prison there was little drainage ditches and so forth down each side. In the tropics it rains a lot, and this drainage ditch had water in it. Well, the natives that handled our dishes and stuff would just use this drainage ditch, and when they got through, they'd take their hand and splash the water up on them to get washed off and then go right back to washing our dishes again. But if you're hungry enough, it don't bother you.

Marcello: Of what quality was the rice here at Serang Prison?

Stewart: At Serang Prison the rice was fair. It was relatively clean and they did a good job of cooking the rice. It was all right. We hadn't really gotten used to living on rice at the time, and a lot of the men didn't eat it. But it got to the point that if you didn't eat rice, you didn't live, and so you ate rice.

Marcello: Did you have anything to supplement the rice?

Stewart: No, no supplements.

Marcello: I should have asked you this earlier, but, nevertheless, I'll ask you now. I know that there was a rumor among many of the men that the Japanese didn't take prisoners, that they were going to kill all of you. Was that thought in the back of your mind even at this stage here

at Serang?

Stewart: Not in this stage at Serang, We had heard that but not officially. It was just a rumor, I think, that somebody scattered through the crew, saying that they don't take any prisoners, but it never came from officers on board.

Marcello: What did you do with your time here at Serang in the prison?

Stewart: In the prison there again I still...I was able to lay down down a little bit. My backed healed well enough that I could lay down a little. I just slept and rested and tried to get my strength back.

Marcello: Did you have bunks and this sort of thing in these cells?

Stewart: No bunks. This raised concrete platform went the whole length of the prison cell, and there was one on each side, and we just slept on it--no bunks, no padding, all concrete.

Marcello: I assume that you went on no work details or anything, considering your condition.

Stewart: No work details. Out of the Serang Prison, they didn't take any of the men out of there on work details as far as I know. They may have taken a few on occasion, but I didn't know of any.

Marcello: What was the attitude of the Japanese guards there?

Stewart: We didn't see very many Japanese guards, or at least

none of them bothered me while we were there. I don't think one even came and looked at me or anything.

Marcello: Again, are you still talking about the same thing-- mainly food?

Stewart: Still talking about food, right. The quantity of the rice they gave you was not sufficient, and, like I said, it wasn't very appetizing. A good steak sounded a lot better (chuckle).

Marcello: Under these circumstances, that is, when you have time to sit around and talk about things, what do you talk about other than food?

Stewart: Well, we didn't talk about much else. Of course, we didn't really talk a whole lot. We did talk a little bit about wondering how the men were faring at Corregidor, what the situation was, and how long we'd possibly be prisoners-of-war, but not very much else.

Marcello: And how long did you remain here at the jail altogether?

Stewart: I stayed there at the jail, I think, three weeks. I was there three weeks.

Marcello: And up until this time now, you'd seen very little physical punishment being given out by the Japanese.

Stewart: Very little at the time.

Marcello: Do you think this was mainly because you were still basically dealing with front line soldiers, or do you think it was because they had too many other things to

keep them busy? Why do you think this was?

Stewart: I think that it was mostly because they were, as you said, front line soldiers, and they had other things to do. They had just taken over the territory, so to speak, and I don't know how many details are involved in there, but it's a big operation, and they were busy.

Marcello: I assume that from what you mentioned awhile ago, there were nationalities other than Americans here at Serang.

Stewart: Yes, there were...at Serang Prison, I don't know about there. I do know that there were others in the Serang Theater. As I recall, in the cell block that I was in at the Serang Prison, we were all Americans in there. Whether there were other nationalities in the others, I don't know. I presume there were, but I don't really know.

Marcello: Where do you go from Serang Prison?

Stewart: From Serang Prison they send us to what we called the Bicycle Camp in Batavia.

Marcello: How far was Serang from the Bicycle Camp? You'd probably have to estimate this, of course.

Stewart: I would guess it was about fifty miles. It may have been longer, or it may have been closer. I was in a truck loaded with other men--about thirty men, I would presume. I do recall that we crossed a couple of rivers here in Java, and we had to drive across makeshift bridges where

the original bridge had been destroyed, and it took two or three hours to get there. So I would say it was about fifty miles.

Marcello: Let us describe what Bicycle Camp looked like from the physical standpoint. In other words, if we were to take an imaginary tour through Bicycle Camp, starting at the front gate, what would Bicycle Camp look like? Try to recall back to its physical appearance.

Stewart: Well, Bicycle Camp, as you go into the main gate--I don't know if that was the only gate--you have the main street that goes down through there. Just inside the gate, on the right hand side as you come in, was the guardhouse or administration building, all combined. It was not a huge building but not just a little square blockhouse either. Then there was a little open space, and then you started coming up against the barracks buildings which were set on each side of the main street. I think there were two in line on this side and two in line on that side, and there must have been eight or nine rows back. The barracks buildings were good permanent structures which were mostly made of concrete with tile floors. They had tile roofs, and the timber was all teakwood. Inside the barracks there were little cubicles about ten feet square lining all the walls. Each building was sort of "T"-shaped. In other words,

you had the long wing this way, and then you had the little...well, they were "J"-shaped rather than "T" shaped.

Marcello: Were they one-story or two-story?

Stewart: They were one-story. The ceiling timbers were all open, and we could see these little lizards that were in the place, and they would crawl up the walls and up under the timber and all over the place. They were little lizards about six inches long.

Marcello: Describe in more detail what this little cubicle was like.

Stewart: Well, the cubicle was about,..oh, I don't know...about twelve feet square. The inside part of it was all open to the inside passage. There was just a wall on each side, and usually there was a window at each cubicle. The walls were just a little over head high and then they cut off so you couldn't see over to the other cubicle.

Marcello: And how many people were put in each one of these cubicles?

Stewart: They put around six or eight people in them. Now the place where I was wasn't really in a cubicle; it was just inside where the door came in on one of the ends of the building. There was a little space off here that was not walled in other than...it wasn't a cubicle. It was just a space there. There was, I think, five of us there.

Marcello: So it was evidently a little crowded in those cubicles.

Stewart: No, there was plenty of room. It wasn't crowded. Of course, when you talk about crowded, we were used to living aboard ship, and crowded to us is one thing, and crowded to somebody else is something else. But to us it just wasn't crowded.

Marcello: Where were you sleeping?

Stewart: Some of the men had gotten bamboo and had made sort of a little bunk. I was able to get a piece of burlap and some wire and sort of make a hammock that I tied on to one of the window frames and one of the roof supports inside the building, and I slept in it. I remember that on each end I put two wires because I was afraid that one might give way, and I wanted another one there to catch it if it did (chuckle).

Marcello: Now I assume that by the time you get to Bicycle Camp, just about all of the Houston survivors are together now.

Stewart: I think so. Most of the Houston survivors were there. Of course, we have to bear in mind that all the senior officers apparently--and that included Lieutenant Payne--anybody from lieutenant on up--were taken from Java and taken to Japan shortly after we were captured. In other words, none of our senior officers were there. Our highest ranking officer that was there was a lieutenant j.g.

- Marcello: Are you beginning to organize once you get into Bicycle Camp?
- Stewart: Yes, once we got there, this one barracks held all the Houston survivors. There were, like I said, about 340 or 350, not counting the officers, that were there. Our senior officer had the crew organized. When we would have muster or roll call, why, he would count everyone and then would report when the Japanese officers came by.
- Marcello: I assume that even under these circumstances, you realized that a certain amount of military discipline is going to be necessary to get through this thing.
- Stewart: Right.
- Marcello: I would assume that perhaps there might have been some people that thought, "Well, we're prisoners-of-war, so we don't have to listen to any officers anymore. We don't have to follow any orders and so on and so forth." But a certain amount of discipline and the following of orders and so on are going to be necessary for survival.
- Stewart: That fortunately didn't pose a problem. Of course, there were two reasons, I think. We were all in this thing together, and our officers didn't bother us. Other than complying with Japanese orders, why, we didn't associate with them very much. Of course, enlisted men don't associate with officers, and I'm still uncomfortable when

I go to visit one officer who is particularly a good friend of mine, and we've both been out for years. But I don't think that we had any discipline problems whatsoever. In other words, nobody was ever put on report for anything.

The closest we came to something like that was when one of the Houston men didn't have any money with him, and he was working as mess boy for the Army officers. There was Army and Houston, both; we were all there. Our senior officer says, "That's against naval regulations, and you can't do it anymore," and he stopped him from it despite the fact that it was for the man's benefit and everything else. But that was the only thing that occurred, that I know of. We really didn't have a discipline problem.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that when all of you initially got together there at Bicycle Camp, one of the things that you talked about almost right away was, "What happened to you, and what happened to somebody else," and you began to recount your experiences?

Stewart: Right. We did a lot of talking about, "How did you get here? How did you make out?" Some of those stories can get kind of interesting, too, because some of them were on a life raft, and they paddled for two or three days and then finally got picked up and taken aboard a

Japanese ship and then hauled ashore. Others had tried to swim and never did get to shore. I don't know whether they were swimming in the wrong direction or whether the current was against them. I wouldn't have made it to shore if the current hadn't have been favorable to me,

Marcello: What was the general condition of the Houston survivors by the time they got to Bicycle Camp?

Stewart: Most of them were pretty good. To begin with there were only two men there that had sustained serious injuries. Of course, I was one of them, and the other man was one of our radiomen who had a big shrapnel wound in his leg, and it bothered him a lot. I guess that it still bothers him; he still has problems with it. But the rest of the men...like I say, the weakest and those that couldn't swim or anybody that couldn't manage on their own never got there.

Marcello: In terms of clothing and things like that, I guess all of you were very, very short, were you not?

Stewart: We were very short. Most of the men left their clothes on, still had their clothes on when they got ashore. But there was some of them that disposed of all the excess baggage that they could so that they could get to land, which I was one of them,

Marcello: Okay, on May 14, 1942, the 131st Field Artillery comes

into Bicycle Camp. Describe their arrival.

Stewart: Well, I can't describe their arrival because I think that they were there before I got there. I'm sure that they were there before I got there because I don't remember their arrival; and I would have if I had been there because a lot of them were housed in the barracks right adjacent to ours,

Marcello: I think, however, that some of the Houston survivors actually were in Bicycle Camp, though, before the 131st came in.

Stewart: I think so.

Marcello: I'm pretty sure of that. The question that I wanted to ask was whether or not you received any of the extra clothing and so on that those guys had?

Stewart: Yes, I received some--a shirt, a pair of trousers-- and somewhere along the line someone gave me a pair of Dutch trousers which I wore. The shirt I had was a Dutch shirt as well, but I did get trousers from the 131st group. They were very helpful. Of course, they had all their baggage intact, and they shared with us. They did a real good job.

Marcello: I understand that this sharing was done spontaneously. Nobody had to order them to do that.

Stewart: No, no one had to order them to do it. As near as I can tell, why, apparently, like, when we arrived there, why,

the first one of the Army men that was over by there just said, "There's a couple of guys over there that haven't got any clothes, and can we help them out?" And they took it from there. There were no orders, no official directive or anything.

Marcello: One of the things that impressed the Army personnel was how the Houston sailers had been able to improvise once they got to Bicycle Camp. For example, when you got there, you obviously didn't have any eating utensils.

Stewart: No.

Marcello: How did you improvise? What did you do?

Stewart: Well, that's kind of hazy. I don't remember how I ate the rice when I was in Serang Prison--whether I just ate it with my fingers or how.

Marcello: Didn't you say when...but you did have the aluminum bowls or whatever in Serang Prison.

Stewart: Right. Somewhere along the line in Bicycle Camp, I managed a spoon. It was English...it was either from the Australians or English or somebody. I don't remember who gave it to me or how I managed to come by it.

Marcello: What were you using for a plate or a dish?

Stewart: We had a little tin can. Mostly tin cans is what we were able to salvage. Oh, some of the men would buy canned stuff from the natives at the gate, and, of course, the 131st outfit had a pretty good supply of canned food

and stuff when they were captured, and the Japs let them keep it. As they would open them up, the other cans would be made available. We ate mostly out of tin cans.

Marcello: Do you recall that automobile that had been abandoned there in Bicycle Camp?

Stewart: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what happened to that automobile.

Stewart: Well, the automobile was an English car. It was kind of painted brown, and it was almost intact when we got there. A month later, about all that was left of it was an engine and a frame. How all of these parts got off of it without monkey wrenches and stuff, I don't know; but fenders, windows, doors, headlights were all gone. The men had taken them and made dishes out of them, they made tables out of them out of some of the stuff. What some of the stuff was used for, I don't know, but somebody used it for something.

Marcello: I guess the Houston people were in a better position to improvise than the Army personnel had been because aboard ship you have to have so many skilled people and so on.

Stewart: Of course, we had our shipfitters and the engine room personnel that were used to working with tools and machinery and so forth, and they had skills available.

Marcello: I remember one of the Houston survivors telling me about

that car, and he mentioned that one morning he went out, and where the door panel normally was somebody had cut out a perfect frying pan. Just the shape of a frying pan had been cut out of one of those door panels.

Stewart: I don't remember that particular door panel, but I do remember the car, and in a period of a month, it got awfully little (chuckle).

Marcello: The Japanese had no objections to this?

Stewart: No, apparently the car was disabled for some reason, and they didn't bother to try to get it fixed. I don't know what the original problem was, whether somebody had thrown a rod through the crankcase or what the deal was, but, like I said, within a month's time there was nothing left of it but the hard iron--no springs, no tin on it anywhere.

Marcello: Let's talk about the food here at Bicycle Camp and also the process by which you got fed. Describe what the food was like here at Bicycle Camp.

Stewart: Well, the food here was horrible; however, if you ate it, you'd stay alive.

Marcello: What made it so horrible?

Stewart: It was dirty. It was rice, and it was rice like the natives normally ate there. It was stored where there was rats and mice around. Besides plain, ordinary dirt

and being moldy and so forth, the rice was full of mouse droppings and worms. There's a white worm about a inch or so long. Of course, when it was given to our crew to cook...mostly both Houston and 131st men worked in the kitchen down there, and it was prepared pretty well, and we got a descent serving of it twice a day. Of course, the thing to do was to go inside the building where it was dark, and you couldn't see, and then you could eat it.

Marcello: I guess that they would try to skim off most of those worms that would come to the surface, but you couldn't get them all.

Stewart: You couldn't get them all, no. Well, of course, we had a big joke of it. They said, "Oh, it's got plenty of fresh meat in the rice."

Marcello: Would you get anything else to give the rice a little bit more of a flavor?

Stewart: I can't remember what it was, but occasionally, yes. In fact, I don't know whether the Japanese furnished it or whether some of it was from 131st supplies, but I remember that occasionally, like once a week or something like that, we would have fried eggs--a fried egg for each man. Occasionally, they'd have other supplements of canned stuff.

Marcello: Would you get some sort of watery stew sometimes to put

over the rice?

Stewart: I think so, but there again my memory is pretty hazy.

Marcello: When would you normally be fed?

Stewart: About, oh, in the morning and evening. I would say it was about 7:00 in the morning and around 5:00 in the evening. In connection with this I might bring out one item. The 131st outfit had a supply of food there, and they were wondering how best to make use of it. One of the men came up with the idea...he says, "Well, several men off the Houston are pretty thin, and they need some extra nourishment, or they might not make it." Of course, I was one of them. By that time I was down to about ninety pounds. So they got the idea of using this one fellow's suggestion. I can name him. It was Rasbury. You've heard of him?

Marcello: Yes, I've interviewed him.

Stewart: Anyway, he's the one that brought that matter up, and they put him in charge of it. There was about twelve or fourteen of us that they fed us from their food supply in addition to the others. It got me back on my feet. By the time that gave out, I was in good shape to manage on the regular fare. Before I left there, I was fat, just round.

Marcello: The 131st Field Artillery also came in with money, and they were able to buy supplies on the outside, were they not?

Stewart: Right. I think so. There was some arrangement there that they could purchase things from outside. Of course, some of them had Dutch money, and some of them, I guess, could spend American money, too, but they were able to purchase some.

Marcello: Is it not true that the food purchased with the company's money was simply put in a common pot, so to speak, and everybody shared in that.

Stewart: I think so but I don't know any of the details on that. Like I said, they shared with us a lot.

Marcello: How much rice did you get when you went through the line here at Bicycle Camp?

Stewart: Oh, before it was cooked, I would say about half a cupful. After it was cooked, it makes a number two can about half full.

Marcello: How long would it take to finish a meal?

Stewart: Oh, five minutes. It didn't take long.

Marcello: What opportunities were there for seconds?

Stewart: There were seconds until the food that was prepared ran out. Oh, I would say possibly 5 or 10 percent of the men would get seconds once in a while.

Marcello: What sanitary precautions were taken in the handling and the eating of food and so on?

Stewart: I don't really know, except the fact that the food was prepared by Americans, and I presume that they took all

the precaution they could. At any rate it was a whole lot better than if the natives had been preparing it. I can't tell you what they were, but I'd say that they took all the precautions that they could.

Marcello: It is not true that when the prisoners went through the chow line, one of the first things that they had to do was to dip their mess gear, whatever it was, to get it clean. It seems to me that I've heard that there was always a big barrel of boiling water, and the mess gear had to be dipped in the water before you went through the chow line.

Stewart: That's kind of hazy, but I don't remember that. It could have been, but there again I would say...of course, water was not a problem in Bicycle Camp. You could get water to wash your dishes or whatever. But I would say that dipping in a common barrel of hot water without a fire under it couldn't keep it boiling, and without it boiling you would spread more...I don't recall.

Marcello: I bet that more fights broke out over food than perhaps any other thing in camp, is that right?

Stewart: Well, we didn't have very many fights, or at least not among the Houston men. Now what happened in the other barracks, I don't know, but we got along pretty well. I guess that there was a couple of times that somebody would argue a little bit, but very few.

Marcello: Were you well enough to participate in work details here at Bicycle Camp?

Stewart: I was able to go out on one or maybe two work details there toward the last. Of course, I was never assigned to a work detail, but I was able to volunteer for one. Of course, I wanted to get outside and move around. I knew that this one detail--what it would be doing--would be rolling barrels of gasoline from one place to another, and I figured that if I could go out on one of them, it would put me in better shape. Like I said, I had gotten back on my feet to where I was relatively healthy at the time. I did volunteer for two of them and got out of camp some.

Marcello: And, of course, by going on a work detail, there were opportunities from time to time to steal something that you might be able to eat.

Stewart: Well, I never ran across anything like that. On some of the work details, if you're handling food, why, you could possibly dump some rice in your pocket. But gasoline barrels didn't help you much.

Marcello: I would assume that the work really wasn't too hard here for the most part at Bicycle Camp.

Stewart: No. To begin with there wasn't a whole lot of work. There was plenty of manpower to do it. There would be maybe twenty men doing a job that five or six men could have

done. I might add that out on these parties, if you had a little bit of money on you, you could buy food from the natives here.

Marcello: Did you have any money, however, to buy anything?

Stewart: No, no money, nothing. A lot of the men did have money, and they shared quite a bit. Of course, one of the native foods that they were able to buy was a little round patty about the size of a donut. It didn't have a hole in it, and it was made out of rice flour. It was real heavy, and it was deep-fried in coconut oil. It tasted real good.

On one of these working parties that I went out on, I managed to see how they get their rice flour to make those with. In this instance, one of the native women there had a big, round wooden bowl about twenty inches in diameter and a big, heavy wooden post-like thing to pound the rice with. This is out in the native section of Batavia, where, as I say again, sanitation facilities aren't very good. They were all barefooted, and this lady was standing there working this thing up and down. Eventually, all the flour and rice and stuff in the bottom of the bowl gets worked out around the edges. To get it back down in the middle, first you can work on it with this pestle, I guess is what I should call it. Why, she just picked up one of her feet that's grimy and black

and everything else and stirs it back down to the middle and starts in again.

Marcello: I gather that in a lot of cases, before a prisoner would volunteer for a work detail, they would try to figure out which guards was going to be in charge of that work detail,

Stewart: That, I don't know. Of course, a lot of the men wanted to go out on the work details because it broke the monotony of staying in camp, and it gave them a chance to buy or steal or appropriate or whatever. Apparently, the guards didn't bother them very much here. One other advantage of going out was that on occasion in the camp there, some of the guards would come through there, and they would just come through there for the purpose of harassing the men. Somebody would be smoking or something, and if they wasn't doing something that harried us, why, they would make up an excuse and start beating on him with their rifle butts.

Marcello: Let's go into a little bit more detail on the conduct of the guards here at Bicycle Camp. First, what were you expected to do when you encountered a Japanese soldier?

Stewart: When you encountered a Japanese soldier, you were expected to hollar "attention" for the rest of the people around you and salute the Japanese soldier,

Marcello: Now didn't bowing come in here someplace, too?

Stewart: No, I don't think so. As I recall, you had to salute them. The bowing is a Japanese practice and all, but, as I recall, we didn't have to bow.

Marcello: How would you describe the conduct of the guards here at Bicycle Camp?

Stewart: They were pretty mean. Anytime one came through into the camp area where the men were, you could figure he wasn't coming through there to help you out. As soon as one would get around in the area anywhere, why, if somebody spotted him, why, they'd whisper and man next to us would say, "Air raid!" The word got around, and you tried to be as inconspicuous and hope that whoever he picks on would be somebody else. But they were strictly no good in that respect there.

We had help in one aspect. There was a little dog that hung around the Houston barracks all the time, and everytime the Japs got within a block or two of that area, she'd start barking. When that dog started barking, we started looking around because it meant that the Japs are around.

Marcello: Did they seem to take delight in frequently coming through the barracks?

Stewart: They didn't go through the barracks very many times. Usually, they'd pick up enough to keep them busy outside and in the spaces in between.

Marcello: What were some of their favorite forms of physical punishment?

Stewart: There were mostly two different types. One was either slap you around or else beat on you with a rifle butt. They did a lot of both.

Marcello: What nicknames did you have for the guards?

Stewart: We didn't have any nicknames for the guards that I know. We never got that well-acquainted with them because they were all alike there. When we saw one of them, other than the guards out on the working parties...now as far as I know, on the working parties they didn't bother the men at all, but anytime one of them come into the camp area why, they were all mean.

Marcello: Did you find it best just to stay as far away from those guards as you could?

Stewart: When you find out where one was, go someplace else. That saved a lot of problems. Of course, there again, the men that were bigger, particularly the tall ones, got the worst end of the deal because they were the ones that the guards would pick on the most--just because they were bigger.

Marcello: I've heard it said that on one occasion one of these guards was trying to slap one of these taller men and couldn't reach him, and he actually made the man stand at attention and then got a box and stood on the box so

that he could reach this guy to slap him.

Stewart: Well, that could very well be, but usually they would just make him kneel down on his knees, and then he's well within range.

Marcello: Did you ever see any unusual or especially cruel forms of punishment here at Bicycle Camp?

Stewart: No, I didn't other than normal harassment. That was all that I ever saw.

Marcello: What kind of sports and entertainment were available here at Bicycle Camp?

Stewart: Well, under sports it was volleyball. Apparently, the Japs didn't object to you playing volleyball all day long or whatever. Our volleyball team there had some rugged games, and I would put them up against any of the volleyball teams around the country today because they were one of these that did not just bat the ball back and forth. He'd hit the ball over here, and he puts it over to somebody else; and he's a big tall guy, and he jumps up and goes that way. If you've played volleyball, you know what I mean. But they were good.

On the entertainment, there wasn't much entertainment, although we did have a bunch of the band members off of the Houston, and I think they were supplemented by men from the 131st outfit. What instruments they had, I don't know, but we did have a little band, and they

would play every once in a while.

Marcello: Weren't there stage shows on occasion, also?

Stewart: Not that I remember. If there was, I didn't go, or I didn't get on it for some reason. I don't remember.

Marcello: On July 4, 1942, the Japanese tried to get all the prisoners to sign a non-escape pledge. Do you recall that incident?

Stewart: Vaguely. I don't really recall when it was, but I know that at sometime we did have to sign a paper saying that we wouldn't escape. Of course, out there, really, escape wasn't a problem. There was no place to go.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever warn you as to what happen if somebody did escape and were caught?

Stewart: Well, they did warn us in that respect. As I recall, their wording there was that "anyone who tries to escape will be punished." They didn't elaborate on that.

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

Stewart: Bicycle Camp was built for the Dutch Army, and there were Dutch bathing facilities. There was a bath house for about every four barracks, something like that. It was a big, long affair, and down the middle of it was a big trough full of fresh water or relatively clean water, anyway. I don't know the source on it and all, but you'd take a can or a bucket or whatever you could come up with,

and you'd pour water over you and soap down if you had soap, which I didn't have. Then you would rinse down. There were bathing facilities available.

Marcello: What were the latrine facilities like there at Bicycle Camp?

Stewart: There again, they were for the Dutch Army, and they had...not flushing water, but there was water that ran through the trench in the building that we could use. They were good.

Marcello: I assume that everybody was in pretty good shape here at Bicycle Camp.

Stewart: Most of the men were, yes. We got enough food to be helped to get our strength back, and they were in pretty good shape.

Marcello: Awhile ago you were saying that you were actually plump by the time that you left, and do you attribute this to these extra rations that you were able to get?

Stewart: That got me started to where I could take over on my own. Of course, I would have probably made it without the extra rations, but they were a big help.

Marcello: So by the time you left Bicycle Camp, then, you were in pretty good shape.

Stewart: I was in pretty good shape, yes.

Marcello: Would I be safe in assuming that Bicycle Camp, like all these prisoner-of-war camps, was one big rumor mill?

Stewart: We didn't have many rumors circulate, as far as I was aware of. Now whether some of the other barracks had rumors, I don't know. We were in the position there where we didn't have rumors. We had facts. In other words, one of the 131st men, Jess Stanbrough, had one of these little General Electric battery portable radios. They had just come on the market before he left for overseas, and he brought it with him. It had the little storage battery that recharged by plugging it in the power. When he was captured and told to turn in all the cameras and radios and stuff, he didn't turn that radio in. He was an amateur radioman himself, and he rewound the coil and modified the coil in the front end of that radio, so it would get short waves instead of broadcasts. We were able to listen in on short wave broadcasts from Australia, so we knew what was going on. So we didn't have much rumors.

Marcello: Had you actually seen this radio?

Stewart: I saw it once, I think, but it was kept hidden.

Marcello: How would the news be distributed?

Stewart: It was distributed not to everybody but just by word-of-mouth. In other words, I'd tell one man that I knew to be dependable, and as far as I know, we didn't have any snitches in the place. So we were able to let

practically everyone, as far as I know, know what the news was. But they said to keep quiet because if the Japs ever got word of it, why, somebody would get shot or something.

Marcello: Was that a pretty good morale factor, that is, having that knowledge of the outside world?

Stewart: Well, not really. All the news down there indicated that we were always losing. It was kind of like the Indians in some of the movies. It didn't really help us out. Of course, one man that listened to it, one of the chief radiomen in there, he said, "Well, the way the news is going, you might just as well pick you out a Japanese wife and get married and have a family and worry about the complications later because it will be a long time."

Marcello: Is there anything else relative to Bicycle Camp that we need to talk about and that we haven't already touched upon?

Stewart: No, not too much else there that I can recall. Of course, I didn't get in on everything that went on there. The only thing that hasn't been covered is like this one little incident just before we were getting ready to leave.

Marcello: Just one other thing came to mind while you were speaking. I know that Rasbury had quite a candy business going

while he was there in Bicycle Camp. Do you recall that?

Stewart: No, I don't. For some reason or other, the Houston barracks didn't really associate a whole lot with the 131st people. Of course, there were some of them that made friends with the others and would go over there and visit, and once in awhile one of them would come over to our place, but there really wasn't a whole lot of mixing. Of course, I got acquainted with Rasbury when he was running the diet kitchen. But he was really about the only one of them that I was acquainted with. Of course, that is while I was there. But I didn't know about his candy business.

Marcello: Discuss the process by which you left Bicycle Camp.

Stewart: Well, when it got time to leave, the Japanese sent out a notice to our senior officer, and he called out so many men's names and said, "These men, pack up all your gear and assemble up front of the guardhouse at 2:00," or whatever it was.

Marcello: So this notice just came out of the clear.

Stewart: Yes, and I was on the first notice that came out. When we got that notice, we figured we'd be leaving before long.

Marcello: What gear had you accumulated by this time?

Stewart: I didn't have very much at that time. I had acquired

a sun helmet (English), a shirt, trousers, a pair of shorts, and the stuff that I made my hammock out of. I don't know where I got it, but that was the crop.

Marcello: Did you know where you were going?

Stewart: No, we didn't know where we were going.

Marcello: Was it kind of disconcerting to have to pull up and leave?

Stewart: In a way, yes, because to begin with, Bicycle Camp by then was a known fact here, and we were used to managing there, you know, like staying away from the guards as much as we could and the different things. We were pretty healthy, and we knew that someplace else could be a lot worse.

Marcello: And, of course, like you say, had you been able to spend the rest of the war there at Bicycle Camp, life as a prisoner-of-war might not have been too bad.

Stewart: It wouldn't have been...

Marcello: I mean, being a prisoner-of-war under any circumstance isn't great, but, comparably speaking, it wasn't too bad there at Bicycle Camp.

Stewart: No, we got along pretty well there.

Marcello: So let's discuss your exit from Bicycle Camp.

Stewart: Well, they said, "Bring all of your belongings and gather up in front of the guardhouse." This was in the middle of the afternoon. I don't know what day it was, but I

think that it was in October sometime.

Marcello: One group did leave in October. They left around October 7, 1942. That was the Fitzsimmons group.

Stewart: The Captain Zeigler group was the one that I left with. Whether it was the second one or the first one, I'm not sure.

Marcello: It probably was the second one.

Stewart: Anyway, we took all of our stuff up there and lined up, and the Japanese officer came out of the guardhouse, and he says, "Any of you men that has any radios, knives, cameras, guns or anything, just throw them out here in a pile." Nobody threw anything out. If he had, they would have probably gotten shot. So he told us that we would be leaving the next morning, and we were to pick up our gear and go back to the barracks. They got us up there about 8:00 the next morning and took us down to the docks to load aboard ship.

Marcello: Do you recall the name of the ship?

Stewart: I don't recall the name of that one. No, that was the one that we rode from Batavia to Singapore. I never did learn the name of it while I was on board. Of course, we were stuck down in a hold, and none of my records indicate what that ship was. Whether Otto Schwartz has a name for it..well, Otto wasn't along. Whether some of the other men had a name for it, I don't

know.

Marcello: Describe what conditions were like down in the hold of that ship.

Stewart: Well, the ship was a plain, old cargo ship, coal burning, that traveled about five or six knots. Down in the holds they had timbers put out and up and bunks all around the edges and some out in the middle and everything. We were pretty crowded there.

Marcello: How crowded?

Stewart: Well, I would say that each level of the hold probably had 200 men in it. That's getting pretty close together.

Marcello: Could you stand up?

Stewart: You could lay down.

Marcello: But you could not stand up.

Stewart: You could stand up, yes. There was room that way, but there was enough room for everybody so that they could lay down.

Marcello: What was the temperature like down in there?

Stewart: It was hot. However, like I said, it was an old cargo ship, and it did have ventilators that they could train into the wind and put air down in the cargo holds. Those helped quite a bit. We were used to the hot temperatures there.

Marcello: Incidentally, there's another one of the things that I should have asked you earlier. Had the Japanese ever

processed you in any way since you had become a prisoner-of-war?

Stewart: You mean like...

Marcello: In other words, did they take vital information? Had they assigned you some sort of number or identification?

Stewart: Yes, they did that when I first got to Batavia. I don't think that I had a number, but I did get a little patch that said that I was an American and a private. They had my name and address and outfit, and that was about it.

Marcello: Okay, we were talking about the conditions down in this hold. Did you have a canteen or water bottle or anything like that?

Stewart: I had a water bottle, and I had it full of water to start out with.

Marcello: I guess that that would be pretty important down in the hold of that ship.

Stewart: Right. When it's hot down that way, and you don't know if there will be drinking water available on the ship, you take a bottle of water with you. I had the bottle of water with me.

Marcello: Describe that voyage from Java to Singapore.

Stewart: It was rather uneventful, as I might say. I remember that it took nearly three days. I don't know how far

it is, but we were in sight of land a good part of the way. Of course, I guess most of it was Sumatra over on the west. I was up on deck a couple of times, a half-hour or so, but I didn't stay up there because if a Japanese crew came back there for any reason, whether it was sweeping down or whatever, and you happened to be in their road, why, they'll just take their broom or whatever and whack your ankles. You couldn't speak to them or understand what they wanted, so I just stayed down below, stayed out of sight.

Marcello: When could you come up above decks?

Stewart: You could come up on deck anytime you wanted to, and, of course, the latrine facilities were little outhouses built on the edge of the ship, and you could come up. They didn't restrict you in that respect.

Marcello: What was the food like?

Stewart: The food again was...I don't remember. I guess it was rice. It had to be.

Marcello: Do you recall if you ate down in the hold or up on deck?

Stewart: I ate down in the hold. I don't recall whether I had to go up on deck to get it or what the deal was. That particular ship is kind of blank for me.

Marcello: I would assume that under those close conditions, and given those circumstances, tempers could get a little

short down there in the hold.

Stewart: We didn't have any problems that way. Of course, we weren't there very long. Like I said, it was only about three days to Singapore.

Marcello: What happens now when you get to Singapore?

Stewart: Well, at Singapore we were loaded into trucks and taken to Changi, which, I think, was a prison camp. We were taken up there, and I don't know how long we stayed there--six or seven days, maybe ten days--before we were shipped on to Japan.

Marcello: Now you might want to describe this procedure because here is where you split with a lot of people. A lot of people stayed at Changi for a little while, and then, of course, went up country to work on the railroad. But in your particular case, you mentioned that you went to Changi first. Let's describe Changi from a physical standpoint. We did it with Bicycle Camp, so let's do the same thing with Changi.

Stewart: Well, I can't describe Changi like I did Bicycle Camp because I was in a truck with a tarp on it when we went in, and I never got out away from the barracks while I was there. It was English, but, there again, the barracks were quite similar to what the others were in Bicycle Camp. Instead of having cubicles, as I recall, it was just open, and you picked you out a space and

lay what I had for a blanket down there, and that was it.

Marcello: I've heard other people remark that bedbugs were a problem here. Do you recall that?

Stewart: I don't recall any bedbugs. Now some of them might have had them. I really didn't have enough bedding to have bedbugs in it. That was a luxury, you know (chuckle).

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

Stewart: Nothing. We just were waiting to be shipped on farther.

Marcello: This was a huge camp, wasn't it?

Stewart: I understand that it was. Like I said, I didn't see much of it.

Marcello: Did you have very much contact with the British here?

Stewart: No, none. It was all Americans in this one barrack. I didn't talk to any British at all.

Marcello: Was the food here the usual type?

Stewart: It was better than in Batavia, in Bicycle Camp. It was better rice. We were still fed two times a day.

Marcello: Okay, I guess that once more I'll have to ask you the process or the procedure by which you were singled out, with other people, of course, to go to Japan rather than to continue on up into Burma to work on the railroad.

Stewart: Well, I think that singling out, so to speak, had taken place back in Bicycle Camp. On this one interview, one

of the questions they asked you was, "What did you do before you came in the Navy?" Of course, I told them that I was a movie projectionist, you know. The criteria there was that if you were a technician or worked at a trade before you came in the Navy, you went to Japan. If you were a student, you went to Burma, and they'd teach you a trade--how to build railroads. In that respect, that is why the second group, as we left Bicycle Camp, was destined for Japan.

Marcello: So again, continue with the procedure by which you left Changi.

Stewart: There again, we were loaded in a truck and taken down to the docks and loaded aboard ship and started out. This ship again was quite crowded, and it had a lot of Dutch, and we had some English and some Australians and others aboard. The voyage was made in...well, we made one stop enroute and that was at Taiwan. That trip took three weeks to get from Singapore to Taiwan. Meanwhile, during this cruise, why, several of the men had contracted dysentery, and two or three of them died before we got there, and there were ten or twelve of them that were left in Taiwan because they were critically ill. There was none of our American group in that bunch, as I recall,

Marcello: I assume that conditions aboard this ship were just as

crowded as they had been aboard the previous one.

Stewart: They were more crowded. We were packed in there like sardines. I might add that on this ship, there again it was a coal burner, and if you were healthy and able and wanted to, you could volunteer to shovel coal into the fire rooms, and the only bonus was that you could get a shower after your six hours or eight hours or whatever. Some of the men did this.

Marcello: What was the food like aboard this ship?

Stewart: There again it was rice. It was cooked in hoppers with steam up on deck. We'd go up on deck and get your ration of rice and go back down in the hold to eat. There wasn't room up on deck.

Marcello: I know that on a lot of these ships, especially on these cargo vessels, the Japanese had simply built tiers or decks, whatever you want to call them, within the holds of those cargo ships. Is that what they did in the cases of the ones that you were on?

Stewart: Yes. I think that in the holds that I was in, which was...I was in the second deck down. First, there was the cargo hatch, and then you go down one deck, and then you go down another one, and then there's a third one or so down below there. I was in the second one down, and, of course, there was just one platform built around there. There was a walkway clear from the big

cargo hatch that went down, and then the rest from then on back had men stacked as close as they could. On that ship we did have hot tea available to drink--all you wanted.

Marcello: Could you go up aboard deck here, too?

Stewart: Yes, of course, there again, the latrine facilities, the outhouses, were built out over the rail.

Marcello: But could you go out on deck just to be out on deck?

Stewart: You could go out on deck a little bit, but, there again, if you were in someplace and one of the crew or one of the guards wanted to go by there, you got beat on, so it was better to stay down below.

Marcello: What was your reaction to being sent to Japan?

Stewart: I didn't have any particular reaction. Of course, I didn't realize at the time why I was selected to go to Japan. We didn't know where the other people were going or anything. I didn't know, so I had no reaction.

Marcello: Were you a single ship, or were you part of a convoy?

Stewart: We were a single ship. There was no other ship there with us. I might add one bit on when we stopped at Taiwan. We were in there, I think, two days. We had to take on coal. There they asked for the men on working parties to help bring the coal aboard--take it aboard in sacks. Also aboard there in Taiwan, they brought aboard a bunch of watermelons. It was the first time I

had ever encountered yellow watermelons, and they were really delicious.

Marcello: You did manage to get some?

Stewart: Yes, I did manage to get a piece of one of them.

Of course, I don't know if it was delicious especially because of what I had been eating, but I guess that they're pretty good in their own right, even yet today.

Marcello: How did you get this watermelon? Did you have to steal it, or did the Japanese give it to you?

Stewart: No, the Japanese got a whole cargo net full of them and cut them and said for everybody to come by and get a piece. It was awfully good.

Marcello: You probably ate not only the fleshy part but the rind and everything else (chuckle).

Stewart: There was a little bit of it that I threw away, but not very much.

Marcello: Well, how long did it take you altogether to get from Singapore to Japan?

Stewart: Well, it took three weeks from Singapore to Taiwan, and it was three more weeks before we got to Japan. Of course, meanwhile, the dysentery that had started before we got to Taiwan became an epidemic. During that three weeks, we had 102 men die. Fortunately for us, anyway, they were all Javanese. I attribute that dysentery mostly to their sanitary procedures. But,

of course, why they didn't get it in Java, I don't know. But on there they did. If you get dysentery, you don't live but two or three days at the most, and that's it.

Marcello: Dysentery evidently is a rather nasty thing.

Stewart: It's a nasty disease, yes. It's painful, and it gives your stomach cramps and fever. It's apparently miserable.

Marcello: With all those people down in that hold, and with all those people having dysentery, that place must have stunk to high heavens.

Stewart: Well, it did, I presume. Of course, if you're in it long enough, you don't notice it. Now we had one American that died on that after we left Taiwan. He didn't have dysentery, however. He had intestinal problems, and I see it in my book that it's listed as colitis, but what it was, I don't know. He was ill about three days or two days, and on the third day he died. He was our chief radioman.

Marcello: What would happen to the people that had died?

Stewart: They were wrapped up in burlap and slid down a plank over the stern--buried at sea.

Marcello: Was there any sort of a ceremony conducted by the prisoners, or was this just a case of the Japanese or somebody throwing them over the side?

Stewart: For the Dutch I can't really say because I never got on top when they were doing the ceremonies for one of them. When Chief Alderman died, I did get up on deck for his, and we had a brief funeral ceremony for him--Captain Zeigler did. But for the Dutch, I don't know what all they did. I'm sure they had something. Whether it was a voodoo religion or whatever, I don't know, but they had something because they were a superstitious people more or less.

Marcello: By this time you're beginning to see one of the really bad parts of being a prisoner-of-war. What thoughts are going through your mind as you are making this trip back to Japan? Do you know?

Stewart: Yes, the main thing that I thought about all the time was, I said, "Good! Today I don't have dysentery!" In fact, on this deal I kept saying that every day. I hear people today that go to the doctor and say, "I'm constipated. I have not had a bowel movement for three days," and I keep thinking, "I didn't have one for three weeks, and I was proud of it." I couldn't have been happier because that meant I didn't have dysentery. I don't think I went up there once during the whole trip.

Marcello: In terms of body functions, it seems to me I've also heard prisoners say that on the kind of diet that you

had, there is a tendency to have to urinate quite a bit.

Stewart: Well, no, not under those conditions. You stop and figure that the rice diet is about 98 percent water and is absorbed into your blood, and then it's hot and you perspire, and you don't have much of a problem with kidney fuctions. That was my experience, anyway.

Marcello: By this time, are you beginning to experience an anxiety as to when or if this whole thing is going to be over?

Stewart: No, not really. Of course, we were up on what was happening when we left Bicycle Camp, and we knew that there was not going to be any drastic change in the situation in the immediate future. We were just hoping that eventually it would be over sometime, and we would still be around when it was. But no real anxiety. You'd just exist from one day to the next and just try to survive through the morrow.

Marcello: When you get to Japan, where do you land?

Stewart: We landed at...I believe it was Moji, which is a port for Nagasaki. Apparently, Moji is a little island or something there, and we went...I think we rode a train through a tunnel to Nagasaki. But we landed at Moji, and this was late in November. The name of that ship that we were on was the Tofuka Maru.

Marcello: This was the one from Singapore to...

Stewart: From Singapore to Japan.

Marcello: What was the climate like when you landed at Moji?

Stewart: This was the end of November, and the climate was pretty cool. As I recall, it was a bit cloudy, and just fresh out of the tropics, why, it was kind of chilly a little bit. It was kind of cold at Moji.

Marcello: Did they give you any extra clothing or anything at this time?

Stewart: No extra clothing at that time.

Marcello: So all you had was what you had carried out of Bicycle Camp and Changi.

Stewart: That's right. Before leaving Bicycle Camp, though, one of the troops there had said, "You are going to cool country." He gave us a topcoat. This was an English topcoat.

Marcello: Oh, you knew at Bicycle Camp that you would eventually be going to Japan? Oh, I didn't realize that.

Stewart: Yes, we knew we were destined for Japan, and I did have a topcoat that I could put on, or as the English call it, a greatcoat.

Marcello: What was your physical condition like at that point, that is, when you got off the ship there in Moji?

Stewart: Well, when we got off the ship in Moji, I was in pretty good shape physically. However, that didn't last long

because, of course, when we landed at Moji...I don't know just how we got through the tunnel over to Nagasaki and so forth, whether it was by subway or how. I'm sure it wasn't on the surface...surface craft. We loaded on the train that was to go north. About the time I got on the train, then I developed a fever, chills, and so forth.

Marcello: What sort of reception did you get from the Japanese civilians when you landed there at Moji?

Stewart: Well, there weren't very many Japanese civilians around, as I noticed; however, there were a few, and they were apparently a party notified ahead of time that we would be coming through. There were a lot of ladies, and they had their little teapots, and they would fill up our water bottles with tea. They were relatively friendly; they weren't hostile.

Marcello: Of course, I guess that at this stage, Japan was still kind of winning the war yet.

Stewart: Yes, Japan was moving ahead right at the time.

Marcello: They could afford to be generous (chuckle).

Stewart: They could afford to be generous, right.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned that you proceed to Nagasaki, and you get aboard this train. What kind of a train was it?

Stewart: Well, their trains are very similar to ours. Of course,

at that time, like ours, they were not air-conditioned, but very highly developed and efficient. It was just like riding a passenger train here.

Marcello: So it was a passenger train that you were on?

Stewart: It was a passenger train, yes, with coaches.

Marcello: Describe the train trip from Nagasaki to wherever you were going.

Stewart: That same train took us all the way from Nagasaki to Kamaishi--on past Tokyo and past Morioka and on up to Kamaishi--without any transfers or anything. I don't recall very much about the trip because, like I say, shortly after I got on the train, I came down with a fever, and I was quite ill for all the rest of the trip and a week or so afterwards. But I do recall that when the train would stop at one of the stations, why, there would be ladies with the teapots, and they'd fill up your water bottles and so forth.

Marcello: Were you fed while you were on the train?

Stewart: For feeding on the train, they would bring these little box lunches aboard, which they called binto.

Marcello: And what would be in the box lunch?

Stewart: A little bit of rice, some seaweed, maybe a "smidgen" of some kind of fish.

Marcello: Just out of curiosity, I know that later on in the war, whenever prisoners went aboard one of these trains, the

Japanese forbade them to look out the windows. In other words, the blinds were pulled, and the curtains were drawn and so on. How about on your particular trip?

Stewart: On our train, the curtains were drawn in the nighttime, but they were open in the day,

Marcello: Again, they were winning (chuckle).

Stewart: Again, they were winning, right. Why they were drawn in the nighttime, I don't know, other than the fact that, I presume, most of the country was blacked out in the nighttime. I don't think they were afraid of any air attacks at the time, but they were at war, and it was procedure.

Marcello: How long did this trip take?

Stewart: As I recall, it took about three days. The train didn't go very fast, and it was a lot of miles, and we had a lot of stops.

Marcello: You were going to the northern part of Japan?

Stewart: The northern part of Honshu. Actually, our destination was Ō-Hasi, which was about twenty miles up in the mountains, inland from Kamaishi. At Kamaishi we have to transfer to another train, which was a narrow gauge, to take us on up to Ō-Hasi, where we were going.

Marcello: I assume that Ō-Hasi was the name of a town.

Stewart: The name of a town, yes.

Marcello: Was it a very large town?

Stewart: No, it was a small town...I say small, I would say there was about a thousand people living there, but they were mostly mine workers. That was why the town was there, because of the iron mine and the iron ore concentrating mill.

Marcello: And I assume this was the kind of work that you were going to be doing?

Stewart: That's what we were destined for.

Marcello: Where was the actual POW camp itself located?

Stewart: Well, the first place where we were taken initially was a barracks just up on the north end of the town, or practically right up where the mountains started going up a lot more. It was, oh, a couple of hundred yards from the mill where the iron ore was processed. We, of course, were there up until about the middle of the summer, when we were transferred to a permanent camp which had more ground area and larger barracks and their own kitchen and everything, which was about three miles from south of \bar{O} -Hasi. You go downhill from \bar{O} -Hasi.

Marcello: What would you estimate to be the number of prisoners who were in this camp?

Stewart: Well, originally, there were about two hundred. There was about, I presume, seventy-five altogether of Americans,

and then there were a few English and a few Australians and the rest were all Javanese, Dutch.

Marcello: Describe what these camps were like from a physical standpoint. I'm again referring to your barracks and things of that nature.

Stewart: Let me go into one other time about when we first got there. Of course, this barracks that we moved into at first was not designed as a prisoner-of-war camp. It had latrine facilities, but there were not cooking facilities. From there we were fed out of the community kitchen down in \bar{O} -Hasi. But we got there this one evening just before dark, and the next morning, real early, the guards come in and say, "Everybody out! And bring all your equipment with you!"

When we picked up all our stuff and went out and had to fall in on an open space about half a block from the barracks, well, that posed a problem for this Stanbrough that I mentioned earlier. He had this radio with him, and he conferred with one of the officers, hurriedly, and they came up with the idea that it was likely that we were going out to have our equipment searched and then come right back where we were. So on that theory, they pulled up one of the straw mats and chunked the radio down in the blank space beneath it and left it in the barracks and went on down to the

search.

Sure enough, we were searched and brought right back there. Once that search was over, our equipment was all clean. There wasn't a radio suspected or nothing. One of the fellows that was in on the deal was Biggs. Have you heard of Biggs?

Marcello:

No.

Stewart:

He was one of the 131st men--a great, big, tall fellow with big, big hands. He didn't get in on the conference on this radio bit, and he had the little storage battery for it in with his gear, and he took it with him. Of course, that little battery is about four inches high and maybe three inches square. When they got down there and started searching his stuff, well, he reached back behind him and picked this battery back up out of it--great, big hands, you know. The guards would come along looking in front, and he'd dangle his hand alongside of him this way, and he kept that battery hid under it. Then the guards would come back behind him, searching his stuff back there, and he'd move it around in front of him. He held that battery in his hands the whole time they were searching and never got caught with it!

Anyway, when the searching was over, why, we went back to the barracks, and we assembled the radio, and it

was never suspected throughout the rest of the time we were there,

Marcello: Normally, when this radio was not in use, I gather that the parts were dispersed?

Stewart: Not after that. The whole radio was hid down in under...well, I don't know where they hid it. I know that at the other location most of the time they had a couple of boards loose in the ceiling, and they would put it up in there.

Marcello: And when would they usually listen to the radio for broadcasts?

Stewart: In the middle of the night, when there were no Japs around, and also when the Javanese on the other end of the barracks couldn't see, because we couldn't trust them.

Marcello: And these were Javanese as opposed to Dutch, isn't that correct?

Stewart: Yes, they were Javanese as opposed to Dutch. For a bowl of rice, they'd tell them everything they knew.

Marcello: Awhile ago, you mentioned that you were being fed in a community kitchen.

Stewart: Yes.

Marcello: Can you elaborate on that a little bit more?

Stewart: What the community kitchen was like or the food that came from it?

Marcello: Yes, both,

Stewart: The kitchen, well, I never got to see it, but I presume that it was very similar to what we had later. They cook their rice in a huge pot, about like our big iron pots. They have a rim around them, and they're set on a stone platform, and you build a fire under them. They didn't cook on stoves as we know them today.

The rice that we got from them was very good rice. It was beautiful white rice, and well-cooked. Of course, they're experts on cooking rice. Usually, we got some kind of soup usually made with fish. At the time I couldn't stand to eat fish soup, but it got to where it tasted pretty good. We usually had some fish or seaweed or once in a while soup with soybeans in it to go along with the rice. It was a little bit more balance than what we had had the other times. The rice itself was real good.

Marcello: How much rice would you get?

Stewart: Just a small portion. About six bites worth, if I didn't take too big a bite.

Marcello: In looking back, would you say that the civilians were definitely eating better than you were?

Stewart: Most of the civilians were eating the same food. Of course, to them, well, that was what they had been

raised on. They probably had a little more quantity, but not a whole lot because food was all rationed by the mining authorities who had the mine and was the boss over the community.

Now I might mention one thing that we got there one time. One evening, instead of some kind of soup, they brought up fried oysters, and they were delicious. I like fried oysters today. But the food there, from the community kitchen, was essentially the same as the native population got to eat.

Marcello: What seemed to be the attitude of the local population toward the prisoners? In other words, was it an attitude of hostility? Friendliness? Indifference?

Stewart: Well, I would say mostly indifference. Of course, when we were working at various places, originally they would have army guards who would take us to the work. Of course, when we first got there, in the original barracks that we were to be in for four or five months, the army guards would take the working parties out, and they would stay with them on the different jobs. If you didn't behave right, or didn't do just what they said, well, they would beat on you with their rifle. But at that time I had a little bit of a problem with them because, it being cold weather, I had on this coat,

and this arm, which was in pretty bad shape at the time...they couldn't see that it didn't work right. There were a few times when I got beat on for that account.

Marcello: Could you elaborate on the beatings that you received as a result of not being able to use your arm properly?

Stewart: They would come over here, and if you weren't able to lift the object, they'd take their rifle butt and just kind of tell you to "get after it."

Marcello: Awhile ago you were talking about the Javanese, and more specifically you were mentioning that they would sell their own brother for a bowl of rice. I assume, therefore, that the relationship between the American POW's and the Javanese was a rather cool one or a reserved one at best.

Stewart: Well, I would say mostly reserved. There were a few of them in there...you couldn't really tell who could be trusted and who couldn't. We did know that there were five or six of them that were known informants, and we kept away from them. There was no antagonism with them or anything, and once in awhile we'd actually associate with them some, like, on a music program. If we'd have one, why...we had two or three, and they would be in on it. But we were a bit cool toward them

because we didn't dare let them get wind of the fact that we were getting news from the outside.

Marcello: Once more, I want to come back to this idea of the colder climate in which you now found yourselves. What provisions did the Japanese make in order for you to be more comfortable, if I may use those words, in this colder climate?

Stewart: Well, when we got there, they gave us an old Japanese army uniform, and then they gave us a pair of coveralls, sort of, made out of burlap. That wasn't much against the cold, but the Japanese army uniform was heavy khaki material, and it was fairly warm.

Marcello: I know that in a lot of cases they issued thin, cotton blankets, also. Did you or any of your group receive any of those?

Stewart: There again, you're asking me one that I just flat-out don't remember. I think I did have a blanket, probably. I know that they furnished us pillows because I would recall those. They were about six inches in diameter and maybe fourteen inches long and filled with rice hulls. I think we had blankets, too, but like I say, I don't remember.

Marcello: Let me come at that question from a different angle, and maybe this will help you a little bit. I also know that these blankets were so thin...and, again, keep in

mind that we may be talking about some other camp, and not particularly yours. I do know that these blankets were so thin that in many cases as many as four guys would share the blankets. In other words, they'd make a layer of four blankets, and they'd all sleep under it.

Stewart: Yes, I know what you mean. I'm recalling a little bit more of it now. As I recall, vaguely, on our bedding, I don't think we had blankets. We had sort of a cotton comforter, which was fairly heavy. It was designed for colder weather. You had one to sleep and one to cover up with. I believe that that was what the situation was. Then I had this little blanket or piece of material that I'd had my hammock made out of, and that helped.

Marcello; How warm were these barracks?

Stewart: Well, they were pretty good. They were made out of flimsy materials, but they were sealed pretty well, and the sliding windows fit pretty well. Of course, the outside boards were just paper thin, but inside they had this sort of bamboo stuff covered with plaster, kind of like stucco buildings here. The plaster wasn't really plaster. It was mud just dried hard, but it sealed up pretty well. Of course, in O-Hasi there, the temperature was cold about ten months

out of the year. In July and August it got hot, but the rest of the time it was cold, and we had real light coverings of snow practically six months out of the year. But the temperature never got extremely cold. The coldest I ever saw was minus ten degrees centigrade. I believe that was fourteen degrees Fahrenheit. And these big, long barracks had three stoves in it, very small, about eighteen inches in diameter at the largest part, to burn the wood in. You could build a fire in those when the temperature got down to twenty-five degrees. Well, close to twenty-five degrees can soak in after awhile, and it gets cold. I think we got more heat from the two hundred men in the barracks than we did from all the stoves put together. The barracks were closed up pretty well.

Marcello:

Now you mentioned that you did transfer from one barracks to another. Were both the barracks basically the same in layout on the inside and so on?

Stewart:

Yes, they were almost identical. Well, there was a little difference in them. The one that we were in originally had separate rooms in it. Each would sleep about eight people. I don't know whether it was eight or ten, but there were either four or five mats on either side and a little place down the middle. The other barracks, which were built primarily for us,

was two tiers, two layers, with mats just right adjacent to one another for the whole length of the building. As I recall, there wasn't even a partition in the middle. It was all alike all the way down--no rooms, all one big room.

Marcello: Did the second barracks have the stoves and so on like the first barracks?

Stewart: Yes, it's the one that had the stoves. The other one didn't have stoves up there.

Marcello: How long were you in the first barracks?

Stewart: We were in there all winter and up until, I guess, about the middle of summer.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that when you moved to the second barracks, you were now cooking your own food again.

Stewart: Right.

Marcello: What changes were there in your diet and so on and so forth when you began cooking your own food once again?

Stewart: Well, down there, we didn't get the quality of rice that we did from the community kitchen. The rations were possibly a little bit smaller. Of course, with the men going out to work, we got breakfast every morning, and we got something to carry with us for lunch, and we had supper that evening when we came back. We had three meals a day, instead of the two

like we used to get in Java. The rice was not near the quality rice, and then the diet changed periodically, sometimes. The soup was usually some kind of seaweed soup, but once a week we would get either fish soup, or about once a month maybe even a little bit of pork soup.

But that was all, and then there came a period when we didn't get rice at all. We got a grain, kind of like kaffir corn, but it was red. I don't know just what it was, but it was tasteless, and the little red grains had little grains of sand in it that looked just like the grains themselves, and they were awfully hard on the teeth. You couldn't see them; the sand looked just like the rest of it. The only thing you could do there was to chew firmly. If you crushed the grain of sand, it didn't hurt your teeth; if you didn't, why, it was rough. But this grain was particularly healthy. The men stayed in good health. It had vitamins and stuff in it that you needed.

Marcello: Are you having to boil all your water, or is the water pure enough there that you can drink it unboiled?

Stewart: We had real good water there, and plenty of it. That was one of the big factors in the men staying relatively healthy. The water in that area was piped from a

mountain stream uphill a little ways, and they put a dam across the stream and run a pipe down. There were no valves to turn it off with. You just had to catch what you wanted in a bucket and do what you want with it. It ran all the time-- good water.

Marcello: Do you have any special bathing facilities here?

Stewart: Yes, we had Japanese bathhouses, and you've probably had that describe before (chuckle).

Marcello: Why don't you describe it for me, and tell me your reaction to it the first time you experience it. One of the things we have to keep in mind is that the Japanese are clean people.

Stewart: Yes, they're clean, and in connection with that, you can say they're a polite people. But it depends on how you look at it--by their standards or ours. But, anyway, back to the bathhouse bit, we had hot baths, I think...I don't know whether it was once a week or twice a week. I don't recall, but it wasn't an everyday thing. Of course, one of the reasons was that it took quite a bit of wood and fire to get the water hot. But the bathhouse itself was, oh, I would say...the main bathroom was thirty feet square, and at one end of it you had the bathtubs, which was a big wooden box with an iron bottom, and it was designed

so you could build a fire underneath it. They'd fire it up in the middle of the afternoon and by 5:00 or 6:00, when the men got back, well, the water was good and warm--sometimes too warm, but usually not.

And the idea was that we had these little wooden tubs about ten inches in diameter and eight inches high, and we'd dip water out of this bathtub and pour it over you and get yourself wet, and if you had soap, why, you'd use soap. Then you get another tubful of water and rinse off, and then you'd get in the tub and soak awhile.

Well, for the first hundred people it worked real good, but for the second hundred people, the water got kind of scarce, and you kind of didn't do much good. But that was the situation.

Marcello: Did it feel pretty good, though, to use that tub if you were one of the first one hundred?

Stewart: Well, it was warm for one thing, and after being cold for a week, it helped you thaw out.

Marcello: Now was this bathhouse built specifically for the prisoners, or was it a community affair?

Stewart: No, it was built for the prisoners. That whole arrangement was built for us after we arrived there.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that your rations weren't

quite as good as what they had been when you were being fed in town. How was your weight and health holding out here?

Stewart: It held out real good. We had a few people that developed nutritional problems, but for the most part, they stayed healthy. Of course, you know, Sergeant Kelley had a misfortune there. He had a little injury on his hand, and it got infected, and they had to take off most of...I thought it was his thumb and part of his first finger. That was because of the nutritional problems, and it didn't heal properly. Fortunately, we didn't have very much of that to happen.

Marcello: You mentioned that he had to have part of his hand or fingers amputated. What were the medical facilities like here?

Stewart: They had a medical facility provided, and we had a Japanese medical sergeant there. He was with us, I guess, from the time we got there to Ō-Hasi and maybe even before, and he was with us until the war was over and a little while after that. But he did all he could for us. There in this second camp, we had a medical building where they could isolate people who were ill--not very many, but four or five.

Marcello: How would the sick call routine work?

Stewart: Well, it didn't work very good. If you were able to get over there for sick call, the guy that ran the working party said that you could get on uptown and work. But if they had to carry you over, why, they'd put you in there and look after you. We did have, later on, an American doctor that was captured on Guam, and a first class pharmacist's mate transferred there. He was captured on Kiska. They had a little bit of medicine available to them from the Japanese. They had medical attention there of a sort.

Marcello: In other words, they could take care of minor problems.

Stewart: Right. Later on, they even performed the operations there. But it was no rubber gloves; you just washed your hands and started cutting. But they got by.

Marcello: Let's talk about the work that was being done here. Describe what a typical workday was like from the time you got up until you got in in the evening.

Stewart: Well, the only work that was going on there depended a lot on what your job was. Now those of you there who were technicians of some kind were assigned jobs with some of the shops in the area. We had a carpenter's shop and a machine shop and an electrical shop, and then a mechanic's shop, which maintained

their little gasoline engines that pulled the ore cars around and stuff.

Marcello: And this whole operation revolved around the mining of the iron ore?

Stewart: The mining of the iron ore.

Marcello: Where were you specifically working?

Stewart: Well, I was in the electrical shop. Of course, to get in there, you had to be a knowledgeable electrician. While I had a little touch of electrical theory when I was in the Navy's radio school, I was not a knowledgeable electrician by a long ways. But I did know Ohm's law...basic Ohm's law, I'll put it that way.

Marcello: Describe how you managed to get into the electrical shop then.

Stewart: Well, to get into the electrical shop...they had one of their men in the shop up there who was called...his nickname was "The Genius."

Marcello: "The Genius?"

Stewart: "The Genius," right. He had a lot of brilliant ideas, most of which weren't practical and sometimes weren't even right. But, anyway, he was in charge of the technician department. He would give you a little test. He wanted to know, "Can you use a Wheatstone bridge?" And he'd say, "Here, measure this resistor

for me." You'd work it out. Then he had a small set of transformers, and he'd say, "Can you hook the transformers up delta connection?" And you'd do that, and then he'd say, "Can you hook them up open 'Y' connection?" All these things are very simple to any electrician.

So this one fellow, Bunyard, he was the first class electrician aboard ship. He came back after taking this test, and he told me all they asked him and how to do the various things. So I went up the next day, and those parts I got by on real good. He asked me, "Do you know what is a Wheatstone bridge and how to use it?" "Yes." And I was able to use it. But he asked me one question--I forget what it was--that they didn't ask the other man, and I missed that one. He said, "You'll do, anyway." So I was in the electric shop.

Marcello: Could he speak English?

Stewart: Some. He could speak English to tell you what he wanted to do. Of course, a lot of the electrical equipment and terms and so forth had the English names. They pronounced them kind of funny, but you learned to recognize them.

Marcello: And why did you want to get into the electrical shop?

Stewart: Well, one big reason was because I knew more electricity

than anything else, and I was always fascinated by electrical stuff. Another reason was that my hands didn't fit them shovels that they dug iron out of that mountain with (laughter), and that shovelful of iron ore was heavy. I didn't want to dig iron out of that mountain.

Marcello: Okay, so describe the typical workday for you in the electrical shop.

Stewart: Well, it varied from time to time. First, we'd leave the camp about 7:00 and be on the job about 8:00. Then for the first six months or so, I was on just the general outside working party. We'd go out to different places. The main part of the work I did was digging holes so they could set up new poles. On one occasion or two, we'd go and wire a building that was put up. A lot of the other work would involve just going up in the iron concentrating mill and carrying the motor back down out of there and getting it over to the shop, carrying transformers around--just general flunky or coolie labor for about the first year.

Marcello: I assume that "The Genius" was a civilian.

Stewart: He was a civilian, right,

Marcello: What kind of a fellow was he to work for?

Stewart: Well, we didn't work for him, actually, back in the

shop, except for when he had a project that he wanted us to work on for him. He handled mostly telephones and radios, and a couple of other men worked in that shop, mostly, directly under him.

Talking about his projects, why, he came up with the idea that he needed to know about how long the various light bulbs would burn before they burned out. He developed this theory that if you take $10^2 \times 2$ minus the money you pocket, that if the voltage was twice as high, that formula would be how long the bulb would burn before it burnt out; and you could transfer it back to 600 hours or 1,000 hours or whatever. He got a bunch of sockets and stuck in one each of the number of different-sized bulbs in it--the 200 and the 500 and a couple of 60's and so forth--and he was going to run them on 200 volts instead of the 100 they were designed for. So he got this place all wired up onto the switch, and he told one of the men, "Now call me anytime one of those light bulbs burns out." So when he pushed the handle on the switch, there was a great big "pop," and a whole bunch of glass fell on the floor, and there wasn't but one light bulb still burning, and it didn't burn but about ten minutes. He shook his head, and he said in Japanese, "That's

strange." About that time this fellow came up and said, "Hey, most of them have already burned out!" (laughter) It was a scream. That was "The Genius," though.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how were these civilians to work around?

Stewart: They were pretty good to work around. They weren't slave drivers. They didn't work very hard themselves, and they didn't bother you very much. We had one there that later on got to be pretty much of a problem, but fortunately I didn't work on his crew during that time. But this one man that was in charge of the electrical shop, not "The Genius," but this other fellow, he was there for about two years before they drafted him in the army. He was a good electrician, and he knew his business. He was easy to work for. He was real savvy. I was glad to see the army take him, because we didn't need him there. He was too good.

Marcello: In terms of punishment and so on, would the civilians ever get physical with you?

Stewart: No, we never had any problems out of them. Once in awhile, though, one of the Japanese guards would come up there, and they would get rough with one of the men. But for the most part, the mining

company said, "I want these men to be able to work, and they ain't working while you're beating on them!" They drew a lot of water,

Marcello: And when would your day be completed?

Stewart: It would be completed at 5:00. Then it would take about an hour or get back to camp. Of course, in the wintertime, why, we would leave just before daylight, and it would be after dark by the time we got back.

Marcello: I gather from what you said that you weren't really working that hard on this job.

Stewart: We put in a lot of time. Now while in Japan--and this was a general saying throughout the civilians and all--you want to be doing something when the boss comes around, but other than that, why, if we get the job done, we're all right.

Marcello: What would you do to occupy your time, other than working on specific projects that had been assigned to you?

Stewart: Well, we didn't have any time left after that. If you had a little bit of time during the noon hour, why, mostly you'd just rest and be ready to to pick back up on the job after that.

Marcello: Where would you take your noon meal? Would you have a noon meal?

Stewart: Yes, we had a noon meal. We'd carry it with us when we went out on the outside details because we didn't know whether we would be down in the village south of \bar{O} -Hasi or whether we would be in the mountains or back in the mine or whatever. Of course, one of the projects that I worked on there before I was given the storage battery department...we wired in a 200-horsepower hoist motor back inside the mine to pull cars up and down the track from one level of the mine to another. That motor operated on 3,000-volt power. In a mine tunnel, it's getting pretty close to you, but we did the wiring in there.

One thing happened in there one time. Incidentally, that was a good project to work on because it had electric heaters in there to dry the motor out. Back in the blind end of this tunnel, it was nice and warm, even though the wind was blowing and it was cold outside. That was a good project to work on. But one time we were in there, and their 3,000-volt power came in on an armored cable, and it came in and was flared out over on one wall in the tunnel there, and they had this board up there with the insulators to tie the wire on and then connect onto the transformers. There were no guards or fencing

or any hazardous signs or anything posted around it.

We used to sit there and watch some of the Japanese that were working in the mine. They liked to come up in there, too, because it was warm. They had a little carbide light they always carried. They'd bring it in there and come up into that room where we were wiring that motor and that hoist equipment. These carbide lights all had these hooks on them that you could hang them up with. They'd look around there for someplace to hook their light rather than set it down on these rocks where it might fall over. They would spot these wires going down to the transformers, and they'd walk over there and drape that hook on that light around one of these 3,000-volt wires. They stay there a half-hour or an hour or whatever, and when they got ready to leave, why, they'd go pick up their light, turn the wadding back on, and get them fired up so they have light again and walk on off.

One time, this man that was in charge of the electrical shop came up there to see how the work was going. He came in there, and he saw one of those lights hanging on the wire. The air turned

blue for about five minutes. Then he got a long, dry board and reached out very carefully and got that light off of there, handed it to the man it belonged to, and made him leave.

Well, the point I'm getting at is that they'd come in there and get by with it. If one of us tried that, it'd have killed us. A 3,000-volt line, almost no insulation on that wire! It wouldn't have been safe even to have 110 volts on it. But that was one of the projects.

Then one other project we worked on up there was house-wiring, which we did in a little village... I think it was called Do-Zen or something like that. To get there, there were no roads. You had to go in the mine at the upper level. This mine had actually four levels on it. It had the bottom level which was 350 meters, and the next level up was 500 meters, and then 550 meters, and from there you could climb up an incline to the 800-meter level. There a tunnel went out to the other side of the mountain, and there was a little settlement there. When you got out there, the civilians would just come flocking around because you're strangers, and they don't even really know there's a war going on. They're just isolated. They don't

ever go to town; there isn't any town around. They don't get any radio reception up there; they don't get any newspapers. All their food is shipped up and hauled up through that tunnel. They were real friendly,

Marcello: What kind of a workweek would you put in?

Stewart: A workweek was...we'd work eight days and then have one day off.

Marcello: What would you do in your free time in the evening or on your day off?

Stewart: Well, on any free time that I had, one of the officers there, Captain Zeigler had managed to have the boss of the electric shop buy him a radio engineer's handbook. I read it during most of my spare time--the whole time I was there. It was written in English, but most of it I didn't understand. The formulas and some of the statements in it went way over my head, but I read them, anyway.

Marcello: So this was one of the things that you did in your spare time.

Stewart: Right. Now on our day off, why, we'd get clothes washed up and stuff, and also the prisoners there had been forced to have wood to cook with and to heat with a little bit. We had to buy our own

wood. Incidentally, I still own some of that wood over there; we didn't burn all of it. On our day off, why, about a third of the crew would go out and cut wood and carry it back in--enough to run until our next day off--and then they'd go cut more and bring more back in.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you had to buy the wood, I think you need to elaborate on that. Where would you get the money with which to buy the wood?

Stewart: Well, we got paid for what we did. I got ten cents a day. The sergeants all got fifteen cents. I think Captain Ziegler got twenty-five cents. Over a period of time, it accumulated. I don't know what we had to pay for the timber, as it was, but apparently we had plenty because I still brought some money home with me.

Marcello: What kind of money were they paying you in?

Stewart: It was Japanese yen.

Marcello: And how often would you be paid?

Stewart: We got paid once a month. Of course, the paying by our standards would make you laugh because they weren't very specific on the money and so forth. Lieutenant Humbler, which you've heard of, I presume, was the officer that was in camp most of the time

and sort of kept things going right in the camp. He could talk to the Japanese fairly well, and when it came time to pay us once a month, they would give him a box of money and a list and say, "Here, pay them. Go pay the men." He'd hand out money, whatever the list said, until he ran out of money and go back over and say, "Hey, I need a whole lot more money." They'd give him some more. I don't know whether they knew how much they gave him in the first place or whether it wasn't worth much more to them than it was to us or what the difference was.

Marcello: Their accounting system left something to be desired.

Stewart: It appeared to be slightly crude (laughter).

Marcello: What opportunities did you have to spend this money for things other than wood?

Stewart: Well, one time I got to go in a little store up on the mountain, up on 500-meter level. There was a little shop up there. Of course, you couldn't buy any food items. All food items were rationed. But I bought a pair of chopsticks, and I brought something else, I think. I'm not sure. I spent fifteen cents of it--almost two months' work. That's all I managed to buy, I couldn't buy much else. You couldn't buy much there...I say you couldn't buy

much. Now, of course, I didn't smoke. Now the men that did smoke, they could have the Japanese civilians buy tobacco or cigarettes for them, and they spent their money for that.

Marcello: What efforts did you make to learn Japanese, that is, the language?

Stewart: Well, I didn't make a whole lot of effort, although I was interested in their writing and still am. I don't see how they read it, themselves, but I did manage to learn to read their name plates on most of their electrical equipment they had around there, and the basics of writing, how it's written. I might add that it's rather interesting because each line or each stroke of the brush, so to speak, is numbered, and there's one of them you make first; and they're numbered and you make them right in order. In other words, if you write the number ten, which is merely sort of like a plus sign, you don't make the vertical line first. You make the horizontal line, then the vertical line. And if you write the word for earth, which is a little different, you make the little horizontal line and then a vertical line through it, and then you put the bottom, longer line on it. It was kind of fascinating.

I did learn quite a bit of it, but on the

spoken part of the language, of course, the general idea was to understand enough of the Japanese...or maybe I better put it this way: try not to understand enough of it to do what they tell you right, but understand enough of it to keep bumps off your head. If you could, why, misunderstand them and do something wrong and ruin a piece of equipment rather than do it right and fix it.

Marcello: Was physical punishment a daily commonplace occurrence? Again, when I talk about physical punishment, I'm talking about the same sort of things that you've mentioned, that is, slapping or shoving or punching with gun butts.

Stewart: It was not a daily occurrence there. In that particular camp, it varied. The army guards at the camp were changed once a month, and one month you'd get a set of guards in there that were either friendly or indifferent, didn't bother anyone; and then they would leave, and another bunch would come in there, and there'd be two or three of them in there that anytime you weren't out working, they'd be coming through there wanting to find somebody to beat on for some reason.

Marcello: I heard that a lot of times in the camps back in

Japan, they would use soldiers who had been shot up in some other campaign or something and bring them back as guards.

Stewart: Right. We had one guard there that was that way. He was missing a right arm. We called them "war heroes." It was a nickname we had for them. They varied. This one particular guard there was there for a long time. He was quite friendly with the men that he had charge of. Some of the times, they'd be marching along, and he'd bring his rifle over and say, "Here, you carry it for a while." Of course, he only had one arm, and carrying his rifle was more work for him. Of course, towards the end of the war, he started getting pretty hard to get along with.

Marcello: Do you find it best to stay away from the guards?

Stewart: It was better, yes. With only a few exceptions did we ever associate with any of the guards. There were a few times...of course, I didn't. I'll get into that part of the story. I mentioned earlier the washing of clothes if you had soap. We didn't have very much soap, if any. In this electrical shop, when we first went there, there were several jars of sodium hydroxide. It was in stick form, oh, about four inches long and about the size of

a pencil. From my meager year of chemistry in high school, I was aware of the fact that that was a basic ingredient of lye, and if you dissolve some of that in water and put your clothes in it, why, if it wouldn't dissolve the clothes, it would take the dirt out. And I tried it a little bit, and the clothes would get awful clean--just with a little sodium hydroxide. So I brought a couple of sticks of that back to camp with me and washed some clothes, and some of the other fellows would see what I was doing, and I'd say, "Here, you can have some." They would do the same thing.

The Japanese guards were great hands to go through the barracks and search through all your belongings while you're away at work. In one instance, I had a little tin can with a couple of sticks of this sodium hydroxide in it. When they came up against this, they picked it up, opened it, looked in there, and took hold of this stuff. If you're familiar with it, when it's damp, which that was, it starts getting warm on your fingers, among other things, and they asked Lieutenant Humble, "What is this?" They started to hand it to him, and he didn't want to take it because he knew it would probably take all the hide off of his hands.

He didn't stick his hand out, so he said,
"I don't know what it is." He didn't know
either, so they just put it back on the shelf
and never said anything about it.

That went on, and more of the men out
of the electric shop started bringing sodium
hydroxide back in the camp, and then one of them
in the deal told one of the guards, that happened
to be friendly at that time, about it. Then they
started bringing in sodium hydroxide for the
guards, too. Of course, they did that, and they'd
buy you tobacco and stuff. I never did say anything,
but that was one of the things.

Finally, the boss in the electric shop went
back in the store room and noticed that he didn't
have much sodium hydroxide left, and he took what
was left and locked it up so we couldn't get at it.
Of course, the sodium hydroxide...the reason it was
in the electric shop there was that on their speed
controls for their large motors, it's used as the
electrolyte in the liquid rheostat to control the
speed of the motor.

It was a big help. When you had sodium hydroxide,
you could have clean clothes.

Marcello:

While we're on the subject of cleanliness, what did

you use for a toothbrush or toothpaste?

Stewart: In that respect, the Japanese would buy toothbrushes for you and Japanese toothpowder. We were able to brush our teeth very well.

Marcello: Now when you said they would buy it for you, they issued it to you, or did they sell it to you out of your pay?

Stewart: They charged us, I think, twenty cents for a toothbrush and ten cents for toothpowder.

Marcello: So you could keep your teeth relatively clean?

Stewart: We could, yes.

Marcello: I guess you didn't have a whole lot of food to stick to your teeth, anyway.

Stewart: Not very much stuck to your teeth (laughter).

Marcello: How about shaving and haircuts? How did you cope with that?

Stewart: Well, on the shaving and haircuts, the shaving was a problem. Of course, most of us for a long time there managed by just growing a beard. In other words, we did not shave. The haircut situation was different. The Japanese insisted that everybody keep all their hair cut off. Apparently, the field artillery bunch had two or three pairs of clippers that they brought with them, and various ones of them would cut your hair for you, if you wanted them

to,

Along about that time, we had this one radioman, Jerry Bunch, that while he was working... he worked in the telephone part up there, and he took one of the pairs of clippers and used some scrap iron and copper wire and stuff, and he electrified those clippers. He built a vibrating-type motor and hooked on the blades, and he'd fire it up and in just a little bit, he'd swish through your hair two or three times, and you had a haircut (laughter). He made a pair of electric clippers.

Marcello: What kind of mail had you been able to send or to receive?

Stewart: On the mail bit, we were able to write a card home about once a month. I don't think out of the, oh, twenty or thirty or however many it was, that one was ever sent out of Japan. Most of them, I presume, were taken either to the officers at the head office at camp or to the main office of the group of camps somewhere. I don't know where they stopped, but they were read and thrown out.

Marcello: What kind of a card was it?

Stewart: Oh, it was just a little card, about like a postcard. You could write all you wanted on one side and put

the address on the other side.

Marcello: Had you received any Red Cross parcels?

Stewart: A couple of times, we received parts of one.

Now back to the mail bit, we did get incoming mail, I think, three times, but not very often.

But we did get mail two or three times.

Marcello: Had you personally received any mail?

Stewart: Yes, I think I got eight or ten letters, and one had a picture of my sister and her family in it.

Quite a bit of the different ones had been censored.

From my church I even got a hymn book which they sent to me. Even it...some of the titles were censored out of it. I still have it. There were five or six hymns that the titles had been cut out.

Marcello: What effect did receiving mail have upon your morale?

Stewart: Well, the mail always helped. Of course, I don't know...they were limited to just asking a few general questions because they couldn't say anything detrimental or anything about the war effort. One thing would be censored on this side and the other would be censored on that side. But it helped to get mail from home.

Marcello: Let's get back to the Red Cross parcels again. You mentioned that you received them on a few occasions.

What would usually be the contents of the Red Cross parcels?

Stewart: The Red Cross parcels were usually...they were in a box about fourteen inches square and maybe six inches deep. They would have a can of corned beef and a can of Spam and a little can of coffee and a little can of butter, which tasted almost like cheese, and maybe once in awhile even a little can of bacon, maybe a can of crackers, and several items like that. Apparently, there were never enough of them to come in. Apparently, the Japs diverted, I would say, 90 percent of all the Red Cross shipments to their own use. A couple of times, each man got the equivalent of half of one of the parcels.

Marcello: Now, you mentioned that the prisoners only received a portion of a Red Cross parcel. When you received your portion, what did you do with it?

Stewart: Well, first off, I went through it and picked out two or three cans and had a real good meal. After that I kept some of it up on the shelf and would eat a little bit of it once a day to string it out quite a while; but I didn't want to string it out very far because of the possibility that what was on the shelf in the morning when I went to work would

not be on the shelf when I came back that evening.

Marcello: Maybe you need to explain that further.

Stewart: Well, I didn't trust some of the people that stayed in the camp. There again, getting back to the Javanese, you have to stop and figure that these were mostly natives that suffered horrible on board ship because to get in and out of the hold, they had to use a ladder. Of course, if they had just stuck a tree down there that they had to climb up and down, they would have climbed up and down it without any problem. They'd go whichever way the wind blew.

Marcello: In other words, when you talked about theft, you weren't necessarily talking about theft in terms of Americans?

Stewart: No. Later on, the last year or so, when the camp was enlarged, we had mostly French-Canadians, and we couldn't trust them either. For civilized people, I don't see how they lived the way they did. I don't know if you're familiar with French-Canadians or not, but I have no desire to go into French Canada.

Marcello: Could you elaborate on what you're talking about with regard to the living habits of the French-

Canadians?

Stewart: Well, the main thing I'm talking about is that until they arrived, it was never a problem of keeping the latrines halfway sanitary and clean. But once they got there, everything was a mess the rest of the time. Well, a good comparison is to go in a restroom of a restaurant or a hotel or a sports place and see what kind of a mess the restrooms are in. You can figure that people aren't really like that at home, so why do they do it here? That's the main thing.

Marcello: A while ago, we were talking about those Red Cross parcels. How important were they in terms of welfare and survival?

Stewart: They were a big boost as far as morale went, and at least they gave you a taste of what the food that you had been raised on tasted like. You take the Army people and so forth that were stationed overseas and had to suffer with corned beef day after day, they didn't know what they were missing! Try suffering without it day after day. It was a big help, and the nutrition helped some, too.

Marcello: You were talking about the boost that the Red Cross parcels gave your morale. I would assume

that those parcels indicated to you that people knew that you were alive.

Stewart:

Yes and no. To me the Red Cross parcels were not a personal thing, so to speak. In other words, they were organized, and, I presume, backed by our government rather than somebody donating it to the Red Cross. I think that it was mostly government-financed and packed in boxes with "Red Cross" on it and handled through the organization. It didn't really get into anything with a personal touch, that is, on the food packages.

On one occasion, we got some packages of clothing, which was mostly Army turtle neck sweaters.

In one of those, why, a fellow went to put it on, and there was a piece of paper or something in the sleeves. He started fishing around and pulled it out, and it was a little piece of paper, and it had a little metal cross on it. Apparently, one of the production workers where that was made, or inspector or whoever, put one in there, and it came all the way through without being discovered. That added a personal touch,

It added so much of a personal touch that a

couple of weeks later, when I was in the electric shop up there, this Jerry Bunch that worked in the telephone department...of course, the crew in the telephone department had a pretty good deal because as long as they kept the radios and telephones repaired, they could work on personal projects without any harassment or questions or anything else. Even though they were right under the eye of the boss of the shop, he didn't care what they were doing, either, as long as they were doing something, as long as they were busy. Anyway, Jerry Bunch came into the part of the shop where I worked, and he had a little card that had two of these little silver crosses on it. He had taken a Dutch half-guilder piece, which is about the size of our quarter, and he cut out six of those from it. He had soldered a screw and a little nut on the back, and he said, "Here, you can have either one of these of your choice." So I took one, and he gave the other one to this Canadian sergeant who was working in the battery department with me. Of those six, I presume that he kept one; I presume that he gave Captain Ziegler one. The sixth one, I don't have any idea where it might have gone.

Since then, when I talk to Jerry Bunch, he doesn't remember making them in the first place. Later on, I went to visit this Canadian sergeant up in Vancouver, and he didn't say that he didn't remember getting it, but he says, "I don't have any idea...I don't remember that." Of course, I think he's blanked most of the experience out and doesn't talk about it.

Marcello: Do you still have your cross?

Stewart: I still have mine, yes. It's the one I wrote about when I wrote Jerry Bunch's daughter, telling her a lot of the things that went on there, as much as I could recall.

Marcello: What were some of the things that you made while working there in the electrical shop?

Stewart: Well, the main item that I made was a little pocketknife, which I should have brought those items with me, but I didn't. It was nothing elaborate or fancy. All I did was take a piece of sheet metal, hammer it over double over a hacksaw blade, and then I took the blade out and ground one edge of it down until it was sharp. I made a rivet out of a piece of wire and riveted the blade in this little handle. It turned out real well, and it worked real good.

I used it for the two years or so that I was there.

Marcello: The Japanese had no objections to you making something like that?

Stewart: No, none whatsoever. One item that I did make at first was a...I took a power hacksaw blade and a couple of pieces of bakelite and made a kitchen knife with a blade about so long (gesture), and I had it in the barracks down there for four or five months. Then I got to thinking, when the last group of guards came in there that were kind of mean to begin with, "Well, maybe it would be better if I didn't have that." So I took it down to the kitchen, and I gave it to a man down in the kitchen and said, "Here, you just acquired another knife."

Marcello: You mentioned that you made the blade "so long," to use your words. In other words, it was about six inches long?

Stewart: About six inches long, yes. Ordinarily, I don't think that the Japanese soldiers would have considered it as a weapon. I could have said, "Well, I need it to work in the shop with." But I didn't have it in the shop, so thought I'd better get rid of it. It's a little bit safer. Actually,

I wanted to keep it and bring it home, but
I didn't do it,

Marcello:

You mentioned these items that you and your
fellow POW's made, and in our off-the-record
conversations, you have talked about the various
activities and interests of you and your wife.
I'm curious as to what kind of a collection
of odds-and-ends you had collected by this
time. I'm trying to imagine you as being some
sort of a scavenger while you were a prisoner-
of-war.

Stewart:

No, not really. I only brought two or three
items back home with me. Of course, we were
not married while I was over there. I brought
this little pocketknife that I made and the cross
that Jerry Bunch made. He also made a Navy
anchor with a Navy chief's insignia. I kept it
and used it later on when I was a chief in the
Navy. I brought home a pair of chopsticks
and I bought up this little store way back up
in the mountains, and that I brought home a pair
of chopsticks that I made out of aluminum wire.
That's about the size of it.

Marcello:

I guess what I was referring to was the fact that
probably while you were a prisoner-of-war, you,

like all other prisoners, would gather or collect anything that you thought might be of some value to you sometime later in your tenure as prisoner-of-war. Maybe it was a piece of rope or a piece of wire or a glass bottle or something along those lines. Did you see a lot of collecting and scavenging of that nature?

Stewart: No, not very much. We did collect a few items which would be useful at the time. For instance, in this one camp, our permanent camp, when we moved down there, we had one arrangement there which was very helpful in that in the kitchen building. They had water pipes there, which had a couple of coils of pipe in under one of the kettles that they cooked in. When they would start cooking rice or whatever for breakfast, they would heat the water in this pipe. You could take your tin cup or whatever you had and go outside and get almost boiling hot water out of this pipe. If you had been able to purchase tea, you could make tea. If you hadn't been able to purchase tea, it would amaze you, when you were real cold, that you could drink a quart of hot water, and it would warm you up a whole lot

more than one of those little stoves would if you sat around it for an hour. That was a real luxury for the people there.

Of course, talking about making things, I had two or three items there that I made. One was where I had just taken a tin cup and made a handle and soldered on it, and then I took another piece of tin and made a lid just to clamp down over the top of it. I used that for a long time to drink tea in or to drink hot water or whatever. It held, of course, close to a quart.

Later on, I had been able to buy a can of asparagus from the Japanese there. It was in a can about, oh, eight inches high and three inches square. I took that can and put a pour spout on it and made a lid...soldered a lid on the top and was hinged in the middle so I could raise it up and then went ahead and put a handle on it and used it to make tea in rather than the other can most of the time. It would strain the leaves and stuff out when you poured it. We did accumulate things like that, but it was something that we felt a need for.

Marcello:

As time goes on during your tenure here, did the

Japanese furnish you with additional items such as clothing or things of that nature?

Stewart: They furnished us with...once in awhile...there were occasions when we could take a horrible, worn-out clothing item over to the Japanese supply department, and they would take it and replace it. They didn't do that very much. Just a few times did I notice that that was done.

Marcello: Under these circumstances under which you found yourselves for these many months, do men become more religious? Maybe I could say, what role does religion play in the life of a prisoner?

Stewart: In that respect, I wouldn't say that you became more religious as a prisoner-of-war. If anything, you might even go the other way. Now one thing that does change your religious views, and in a hurry, too, is when a bomb hits on the ship and kills a bunch of men but don't kill you. You go to church the next Sunday morning. That's a bit tragic that it takes that, but, like I say, religious services on the Houston were pretty thin until we got hit by that bomb once. The rest of the time, everybody that could make it was there. As a prisoner-of-war, we didn't have that so much.

Marcello: In 1944, the American forces were close enough that they are able to begin the bombing of the home islands.

Stewart: Right.

Marcello: Now how does the bombing of the home islands affect your life as a prisoner-of-war?

Stewart: Well, for the most part, when they started, I'm not sure,,.I don't know whether it was the island of Saipan or whether it was Truk, one of the two islands, which our forces had captured first.

Marcello: It was probably Saipan.

Stewart: Probably Saipan. In front of the electric shop here, there was a big sign board with a lot of Japanese writing on it, and I presume it was where the war news was basically posted that was current at that time. I don't know how often they changed it--a week or once a day or whatever. Anyway, they had the word "Saipan" spelled out in Japanese letters that I could read and knew what it was, and having gotten the word from our radio source that Saipan had been occupied...I couldn't read what it said besides Saipan, but I figured what it was, I know that I was standing there in front of that sign there, and one of the

kids that worked in the shop was standing behind me, and I looked at it and was reading it rather laboriously. It literally read that Saipan "died." This kid went back in the office right quick, and the next day that sign board was blank, and it didn't have anything put on it (chuckle). I couldn't really read all of it, but I do know that they had it posted on that sign board that Saipan had been occupied, in other words.

The Japanese didn't treat us really a whole lot different at that time. In fact, some of the men we worked with in the ship didn't change their attitudes toward us any throughout the whole deal. One or two of them were pretty good fellows, and the others were just indifferent. They were doing a job, and we were there because we couldn't help it.

Marcello: Do Americans bombers ever come over the area?

Stewart: Not on bombing raids. The only time any American bombers came over was after the war was finished, and they were coming over to drop food and medical supplies for us. Of course, there were two different types of planes. The first ones that came by were Navy planes, and they had sea bags

loaded with this stuff. Apparently, these were TBM's and the back gunner had the door open, and they'd come over at low altitude, and they'd drop these right in the parade ground in between the Japanese office and our barracks, which was about 100' x 200' space. Of course, one of them dropped it a little bit ahead of time, and it hit the Japanese office building, and it went through the roof and came out the window right alongside a Japanese that was standing there looking out the other window. I thought, "Doggone, he missed him! He should have moved it over a little bit and took that guy out with it!" That was the Navy.

Then a couple of B-29's came over a day or so later, and at this time--this was after the war was finished, really--I was in the hospital at the time because I had a kidney infection. Some of the supplies they dropped were medicine, particularly penicillin. If the the war hadn't ended when it did, I'd have probably died. Anyway, the B-29's would come over, and one of them came over, and he dropped his package right over the camp. Of course, they were mostly in forty-gallon barrels with parachutes, and about half of them

would break loose from the parachutes and would just fall on down. Two of them hit right in the camp area, and the fact that they didn't hit anybody was miraculous. I know that after that, why, when one would come over, the hospital attendant would say, "You get your coat on and get out on the road and do whatever you can to stay away from here." They'd would start coming this way, and I'd start running that way, and I never did get hit.

One of the B-29's came over, and he moved over closer to the edge of the mountains a couple blocks away and dropped his load of stuff there and didn't endanger anybody. He was smart. Of course, I always say that I'm one of the few people left in the United States that ever had to run for cover whenever a B-29 flew over. But I've done it, They weren't dropping bombs, but that was just as bad if you got under one.

Marcello: On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died. What news did you receive about Roosevelt's death, and how did it affect you and the Japanese?

Stewart: Well, the news that I received was roughly a very brief statement that Roosevelt died and that the new president's name was Truman. That was all

I got.

Marcello: Now where did you receive this information?

Stewart: It came from Jess Stanbrough. He or Captain Ziegler, one, had gotten it from the radio.

Marcello: What effect did it have upon you and your morale?

Stewart: None. It didn't make any significant change to me because things were still going on, and as far as the Japanese knowing, I never saw any sign that they knew.

Marcello: I think this brings us up to the period that we can talk about your liberation. Describe those events leading up to the liberation.

Stewart: Along about the time the war ended, I had developed this kidney infection and was in the hospital.

Marcello: The Japanese could see that you were hurting, and they did allow you to go to the hospital?

Stewart: That's right. Well, I was not in the hospital. It was in the camp's sickbay area. The local camp doctor was treating me, and he had meanwhile gotten this medicine out of the packages that the airplanes had dropped. Also, one morning there, the pharmacist's mate asked me if I'd like a good breakfast, and I said, "Yes," and he cooked up bacon and eggs.

Marcello: But you did not know the war was over then?

Stewart: Oh, yes, I knew it was over.

Marcello: Let's just back up a minute then. Describe the events by which you found out the war was over.

Stewart: Well, with our radio information we had available, I was aware when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, that it killed some 30,000 people and so forth, and just flattened a huge area.

A day or so after that, I heard one of the Japanese at the shop talking, and he was telling another one that all of the Japanese cabinet members had resigned. Then, of course, ten days or twelve days later, the second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and then a couple of days after that, our radioman there, Jerry Bunch, was notified that tomorrow he would have to go down to the local radio transmitter to keep it operating while the emperor made a speech. That was just a tremendous speech that he made.

Marcello: The Japanese camp authorities never actually made that announcement to you?

Stewart: No. They didn't make any announcement. In fact, shortly after it was over, they were confronted with the fact that the war was over and that

they'd best make themselves scarce or else be awful easy to get along with. Some of them tried to tell some of the men that the war wasn't over, but they didn't convince them.

We were concerned ahead of time that if Japan was invaded or something, they might try to machine-gun everybody there, and we had it planned where different ones of us were to spread out and rush whoever was at the machine guns. Whether we would have been successful or not, we didn't have to find out, but the idea was to not let them just shoot us down but to try to stop them. As far as we knew, there were no machine guns in the camp. I don't think there ever was when we were there.

Marcello: Had you ever actually witnessed one of the guards firing a rifle?

Stewart: No, I never did,

Marcello: Did you ever wonder if they ever had live ammunition for them?

Stewart: No, I didn't doubt that they had live ammunition for them. I'd seen them line men up and point their rifle at them and cock it and pull the trigger on it, but the rifle was always empty. But they had live ammunition for them.

Marcello: What was your reaction when you knew for sure that the war was over?

Stewart: At that time, I was running a pretty high temperature, and it wasn't helping me any to have to get out in the road and try to get out from under the stuff that was coming down. But I was glad it was over, and when they started giving me this medicine, I started getting better. I believed I'd be home before very long. I was ready to go.

Marcello: Were there any kind of celebrations in camp when the news was received that the war was over?

Stewart: Well, not a whole lot us knew for a couple of days. Of course, most of them began to suspect when on the second day they didn't take them out on work detail. Then most of them began to wonder, but, like I say, there were only ten or twelve of us that knew right at the first that the war was over with.

After about the second day that the war was over, they transferred me to a Japanese army hospital at Morioka. I was pretty well on the mend then, and I think that transfer was mostly to try to make like "we're the good guys," you know. They sent me to a hospital in Morioka,

and I was there two or three days before they put me on a train and sent me down to Sendai.

Marcello: Let's back up a minute. When I interrupted you a few minutes ago, you were talking about that experience at the sickbay after the war was over, that is, when the orderly asked you what you wanted for breakfast, and he was cooking it for you. I interrupted you, so why don't you continue what you were going to say there?

Stewart: I wasn't going to say very much, except that the bacon and eggs sure did taste real good. Of course, always before, I had never really liked bacon because it had a smokey taste, which was rather objectionable, but this canned bacon that he had been cooking tasted almost like ham, and I liked ham. The bacon and eggs helped get me well.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were transferred to a Japanese Army hospital. When did this occur?

Stewart: This occurred about two days after the war was over.

Marcello: How far was the hospital from where you were?

Stewart: It was in Morioka, which, by train was quite a

ways. I would say it was forty or fifty miles, maybe farther. If you could ride the cable deal up over the mountains and walk down the other side, it was about five or six miles. It was real close on the other side of the mountains.

Marcello: And what happened when you got over to Morioka?

Stewart: They put me in the hospital there, and they checked my temperature--hospital routine--for the first day or two.

That evening there was three or four others that were there with me, and we decided we wanted to go out and see what Morioka was like. The people in the hospital said, "Oh, you can't leave the hospital!" We put on our clothes and left anyway and got downtown a little ways and came to a theater and decided we'd take in a movie. They let us in without any tickets or anything, and we watched a Japanese movie and came back to the hospital. The next day, why, they loaded me up and shipped me on down to Sendai.

Marcello: Now a moment ago you were talking about the barrels of food and so forth that were dropped by the B-29's. What specifically were in those

barrels that were being dropped?

Stewart: Some of them had clothes, shoes...shoes, particularly. Shoes were hard to come by. The Japanese gave you some rubber things that they wore all year round, but they were not good. There was clothing and more bulk food supplies, and they dropped some medical supplies.

Marcello: Incidentally, as the war was coming to an end, how had your rations changed?

Stewart: They changed quite a bit. Apparently, as the shipping and so forth got tighter, this one grain that I was talking about earlier was no longer available. For the last three months, instead of rice or this other, we had soybeans. Soybeans are rich and all, but a diet of nothing but soybeans is hard on a lot of the body systems. Whether it was part of my getting that kidney infection, I don't know. I didn't help any, that's for sure.

Marcello: Now when you were on this train down to Sendai, was this train composed of a great many POW's, or was it just a handful of them?

Stewart: There was about ten or fifteen of us, and where the others came from, I don't know. There was only me and one other fellow--I think he was an

Englishman--that went from Ō-Hasi to the hospital at the Sendai.

Marcello: What happened when you got to Sendai?

Stewart: At Sendai we got off the train and were taken down to the docks and loaded aboard a LSN, and, of course, the LSN is one of the smallest seagoing landing craft. That was where we got my first good meal.

Marcello: Do you recall what that meal was?

Stewart: Fried chicken. It was good.

Marcello: Did you have any problems eating it or keeping it down?

Stewart: Well, no. The only problem was that without somebody restricting you and so forth, I had a tendency to over-eat and be uncomfortable, but it didn't make me sick or anything--no problems that way.

Marcello: What else did you have?

Stewart: I don't remember...ice cream. We never had ice cream the whole time we were in Japan.

Marcello: You probably never had anything cold, did you, like a cold drink or anything?

Stewart: No, not in the summertime. There were plenty of cold drinks--all you wanted--in the winter-time (laughter), as long as it was water. We

didn't have anything like pop or anything like that.

Marcello: How about milk?

Stewart: No milk.

Marcello: Was that one of the things you craved?

Stewart: Yes. I missed the milk quite a bit. The Red Cross packages usually had a can of powdered milk, but even that tasted real good.

Marcello: What sort of immediate medical assistance did you receive?

Stewart: None. Apparently, I was pretty well recovered, and, of course, on the LSN, I presume there was not a doctor aboard, and the pharmacist's mate came around asking, "Do you have any problems? Do you need any help?" I said, "No, I'm pretty well over what I have on my own." Of course, it takes quite a bit to even get aboard one of those things, especially from a boat, but we had to climb this ladder up to the deck and then down the ladder on the inside to get aboard. There was no immediate medical examination there at all.

Marcello: Where did they go over you physically?

Stewart: I don't recall them giving me a good physical examination, I was taken from the LSN out to just outside Sendai harbor, Apparently, Sendai

is rather shallow. They put me aboard the hospital ship there, the Rescue, and there again. I was assigned to a ward to stay in, and the nurse came around asking me if I had any problems: "Do you need help?" They didn't give any medical attention there, but it seems like one thing they did do for us was right after we went aboard. We went through a place and were sprinkled with DDT powder. That was all. As far as a medical examination, apparently the doctors had their hands full, and if you wasn't an immediate case, why, they didn't bother with you.

Marcello: Were you ever administered any psychological examination or tests?

Stewart: No, I don't think so. If I was, I didn't recognize it.

Marcello: In other words, am I safe in assuming that their major concern was to get you guys home?

Stewart: Get us started home, right.

Marcello: And they weren't worried too much about the transition they might have to make from being a prisoner-of-war to being a civilian once again, or a free man?

Stewart: No, I think what they figured at the time was that being liberated and having access to good

food and everything--unless we were ill at the time--we couldn't help but get better, and the quicker the better. I look at this deal with these men from Iran, where they took them to a hospital and examined them for a while. Well, there's probably more to that than to just let them rest up and prepare themselves to meet their relatives at home. Normally, I would have said, "Get them on home now! Don't even stop over in Germany!"

We didn't have any problems in being gotten right on home. As soon as the ship got into Oakland, they transferred me to the Oakland hospital there, and as soon as they got us ready again, they'd say, "If you want to go out on the town, why, go ahead and take off. Be back by 8:00 in the morning if you can." So we left.

Marcello: Now I know that you eventually made the Navy a career. When was this decision made?

Stewart: Well, as soon as my enlistment was up, I left the Navy and started to work for the railroad as a telegraph operator. The last place where I worked, I had a little difference with the agent there, and he requested the job that I was working

to be discontinued. I didn't like it, so instead of going on to another job with the railroad, I went back in the Navy. I said, "I already got six years behind me, and with fourteen more I can retire," and it was a very wise decision. If I'd stayed with the railroad, I wouldn't be retired yet.

Marcello: How much time had elapsed from the end of your first enlistment until you decided to make the Navy your career?

Stewart: About three years. Just about three years. Of course, when you go back in that way, you can figure that you'll probably stay twenty years.

Marcello: Mr. Stewart, that exhausts my list of questions. Is there anything else that you would like to add to the record?

There is one thing that I would like to ask. Back at the beginning of the interview, we had been talking about the wounds that you had suffered when the bomb had hit that turret, and, of course, you had been burned and so on and so forth, including the damage that had been done to your arm. At the time of your liberation, what was the condition of your arm?

Stewart: Well, most of the problem was with my left arm

and on the inside of the elbow of the left arm was a heavy keloid formation, which as you know, is a scar tissue which is maybe a quarter-of-an-inch thick, and it made moving my elbow a little bit of a problem. In other words, if you leave your elbow bent and go to straighten it out, until the skin had stretched and became flexible again, it was rather painful. That was the situation that I had when I was at home on leave. Of course, from the Oakland hospital, as soon as they had determined there I didn't have any problems, in about three days they transferred me to the hospital out in Norman, Oklahoma, which was the one closest to my home. From there, I went on my repatriation leave. But I had that problem with my arm at the time.

Marcello: Ultimately, they were able to reconstruct the arm, so to speak?

Stewart: Yes, they had sent me to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, where they had two surgeons there that specialized in skin grafting. They were able to excise the keloid formation and put a skin graft over the place, and they did my arm, well, just about close to normal. You don't win everything, but it helped

a lot. It did a lot of good.

Marcello: We are, of course, conducting this interview on June 11, 1981, as I mentioned at the beginning of the interview. What lasting physical or emotional effects had the prisoner-of-war experience had upon you?

Stewart: Well, there's several things in that respect. Maybe I can recall some of them. One of the things is that when I look back on it, this business of being forced to go out on working parties and do manual labor was really good for me. While at times it was rather painful, because I had a sore elbow on the arm that was burned as well, using the arm brought it back to normal, where if it hadn't been used, it would probably still be crippled. That's one of the things.

Of course, there's another thing there with respect to the war and stuff in general, and that's that here we have a free press, so to speak, and access to most world-wide information. However, that information is rather specialized or prejudiced to a certain extent in our favor. Well, a good example is on our Revolutionary War, and our history books say we took our independence or we won our independence by defeating the British Army.

The British history books say that England gave us our independence--two different things. Like in World War II, I don't know who was right or who was wrong. I'm not a politician, but there's two sides to every story. I can see some of the things why Japan got into the war when they did. One of them was because of the blockade on their shipping and their imports and exports and stuff, and Japan is not a self-supporting, country, They have to trade to live. Another thing is that they figured that Germany was going to win in Europe, and then they'd take over Asia. I learned a lot of the things which altered my way of thinking.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Stewart, I think that's probably a good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for having participated in our project because you've said a lot of very interesting and important things. I'm sure historians will find them very valuable when they read and study this material.

Stewart: Thank you. I hope that historians find it interesting as well as informative and that they appreciate the efforts on our behalf.