

ADMIRAL NIMITZ NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF THE PACIFIC WAR
Fredericksburg, Texas

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview with Mrs. Ethel "Sally" Blaine Millett
US Army Nurse and POW
Santo Tomas, Philippines 1942-1945

Place of Interview: San Antonio, Texas

Date: April 24, 2000

Interviewer: Floyd Cox

INTERVIEW
Of
Mrs. Ethel "Sally" Blaine Millett

Mr. Cox: Today is Monday April 24, year 2000. My name is Floyd Cox and I am a volunteer at the Admiral Nimitz Museum of the Pacific War. Today we are in San Antonio Texas interviewing Mrs. Sally Millett concerning her experiences she underwent during World War II. This interview is being conducted in conjunction with the ongoing Oral History Program of the Adm. Nimitz Museum.

Mrs. Millett we want to thank you for the opportunity to record your personal stories and to start out with, if you would, could you give us a little biographical information?

Mrs. Millett: You would like to know why I got to the Philippines?

Mr. Cox: Well, where you went to high school and...

Mrs. Millett: I went to High School in a little village called Bible Grove, Missouri. It's in the northeast corner of the state and I was graduated from that school in 1933. I went into nurses training because that was the only available way I knew to get away from home. I finished my nurses training in San Diego, California in 1939 and in about six months time, I guess it was more, I entered the Army at Letterman General Hospital in 1940. That was in November

There was a constant list always being put up asking for volunteers to go to the Philippines. Three times this list went up and it was right at the stairwell where we went up to our rooms at night time and every time I saw the list I put my name on the list. I remember specifically there was always a pencil hanging there to write your name but the last time I signed my name, I used an ink pen and my name stood out like John Hancock's signature. Was that it, John or Henry?

Mr. Cox: John Hancock. That's it.

Mrs. Millett: The chief nurse called me in and she said "You mean you want to go to the Philippines?" I said, "Yes I do." And she said, "Do you have any idea what's it's like over there?" I said "Well not really". But she said "Honey, you're going to have to work very hard if you go to the Philippines." "Well" I said. "Ms. Near, has anyone told you I'm lazy?" She said, "No honey, no one has ever said you're lazy but I just want to assure you it's not going to be easy if you go over there."

She had already been there, of course, but each time it was easy but she knew that it was not going to be easy for the rest of us because she was someone that knew they were building up the army in the Philippines. They were having ships going out twice a month, it seems to me. So I went out in June, really end of May, because it was 17 days on the ship to get to the Philippines. I was happy to go. Delighted!

I was told later when I got home in 1945 that I had announced when I was in the fifth grade that when I get big and out of school, I was going to the Philippines. I don't remember saying it, but I remember reading about the Philippines that after 1948 that they would no longer be under our flag. And I thought I'd like to go while we were in control. So I did go while we were in control but it ended up that we were only in control about six months after I got there.

Mr. Cox: After you got there?

Mrs. Millett

Yes, a little bit longer maybe. When I got to the Philippines, I was immediately sent to Statsenberg, and that was in June, 1941. And as you recall, the war broke out in December. At Statsenberg life was like a picnic. The duty was very light and we were all very happy to be there. It was the old regime still in full force. At six o'clock in the evening, all the women had to be in long dresses. Men had to be in white uniform, you know, the formal attire. Then after November, so many people began coming in. Rushing in. I noticed the men that came in November never bothered to get white uniforms.

Well, even I was smart enough to know there was something stirring up. But, nothing was ever told to us. We were never briefed about what we should do in case of war. Not one word was ever said to us about it. We talked about it only the last time when we were having an alert and I asked our chief nurse who was a woman 48 years old. I thought she was terribly old. I'm 82 now. She seemed so old to me. I asked her at the dinner table if she thought it would not be a good idea to get some heavy clothing organized and ready to wear in case we had to be sent to Manila and had to bivouac on the way down. She was from Canada with all this British pomp and ceremony. She said, "I shall do no such thing. If our orders from headquarters.....". The first orders we got from headquarters were from the Japanese headquarters and that was December 7th. I guess it was a different time. What was it over there?

Mr. Cox

Same day.

Mrs. Millett:

And that day we were bombed. But Pearl Harbor was bombed first and I had been gone on that weekend and I was in my bed asleep because it took us from midnight to six o'clock in the morning to ride home on a train from Manila up to Statsenberg. I went to bed. I was tired. I went to bed immediately and was asleep and by 8:30 one of the nurses came in. It was Willa Hook and she ranked me of course, by several years. And she woke me up to say, "Sally, get up. Pearl Harbor's been bombed." I thought about that for a minute and I thought Pearl Harbor. It took us twelve days to get from Pearl Harbor to the Philippines. I probably guess I could sleep another week. So, I went back to sleep and she came back a little bit later and almost jerked my mosquito net open and she said, "Get up out of that bed, Camp John Hay has been bombed!" That was only about 100 kilometers north. So that did make me get up. I got up and I dressed and we had dinner.

Everything was pretty quiet around there. Our troops had gone up. We were only a mile from the airbase and a lot of the flyers had gone up that morning to fly around and check out what was going on. They had been told, they knew that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor but I don't think they knew the Japanese had bombed Camp John Hay.

Anyway, I remember hearing our pilots land about 10:30 in the morning. It sounded pretty good to me the way they came in. And we had lunch in the nurses quarters. About 20 of us at that time lived in this one place. Then I went upstairs preparing to go on duty at one o'clock. And when I went upstairs I remember vividly that I put my foot up on an ottoman to retie my shoelace and then I heard it. All that bombing at Clark Field and when I looked, I walked to the head of the stairway and looked out the window and all I could see was a black cloud like a tornado would make. It was billowing smoke, real dark gray and black and it seemed to be a mile wide. It was a terrific amount of darkness that I saw.

Later on I saw a tornado in Topeka, Kansas that looked just about the same. But I knew what had happened. I knew this was the beginning of war for us. Our chief nurse who was waiting orders from headquarters was standing down at the foot of the stairs and I looked at her and I said, "This is it, isn't it?" She said, "I guess it is."

Then I went to duty, but before I went to duty I packed my cosmetic bag. That's always been my thing. I had to have my lipstick and my comb and my powder with me. So I packed my cosmetic bag and took it with me when I went to the hospital. We only had to walk about 50 yards to the hospital. And it was all quiet for approximately 15 maybe 20 minutes then the Japanese came back. They strafed Clark Field with their little fighter planes.

We were already at a duty station. I went to my station waiting to whatever was going to happen. And in a few minutes, maybe 15 minutes after the strafing stopped, we began to receive patients from the ambulance. I remember our chaplain came in with an ambulance. He made 5 or 6 trips in. He was the only person that I knew that was in this group bringing people in. And we had so many people coming in so fast that we had them put on litters and had them lying on the bare concrete floor, I suppose, outside the building before we could get room for them inside. We received perhaps over a hundred casualties that day which does not seem great but for our little hospital, we only had maybe that many beds. It really did stress us.

They emptied our wards of all the walking people. All the patients who could walk had to get up and leave. And we put our sick patients, our newly wounded in those beds. We didn't receive many more patients after the first day because the Japanese didn't come back and do any strafing but they bombed us every day. That was December the 8th when all that happened, then by December 24th we had to leave.

We left Christmas day, but I remember on the 24th Ann Williams was one of the nurses who came from the Stermmer Hospital in Manila to help out. We received help by them sending up extra nurses. We had about 5 that came up and I had been showing Ann around. When we were off duty some of the officers, they were flying officers I had known on the boat coming over, wanted to take me and Ann someplace to go swimming. The only swimming pool we knew about was the hole up in the mountains about 10 miles away. Now, this is the 24th of December, and Ann and I went swimming! Nothing happened. But, the next day we were ordered to go to Sternberg with all of the last of the patients that were being sent out and all the medical people. We went out about four o'clock and that was about the time that Ann and I were up swimming the day before. I thank my lucky stars that we were not up swimming the day they ordered us out because our chief nurse could not have appreciated that, could she? They were pretty rigid in those days.

I remember the last thing I saw at Statsenberg when I left. The last person was our cook. The Japanese were bombing on the post and we could hear the bombs dropping not too far away. I mean if it's 100 yards from you that's still too close. We all had to take cover. The spot for me was a culvert that had a drainage pipe about 12 inches in diameter. I know because I had on my riding boots and they got stuck. I got into the culvert and crawled in and as I started to get in that culvert, there was a big lizard. They called them iguanas. It came out of the culvert. He wasn't going to share his culvert with no human being. But I was happy to get inside. And I got in but I couldn't get out because I got my boots stuck! After awhile, I got myself dragged out of the culvert and stood up and there stood the Filipino cook and he was wringing his hands and saying "Oh, Missy Blaine, Missy Blaine, Missy Blaine." I couldn't help but laugh at him.

Then we got on our bus and we went down to Manila with no trouble at all. They took all of our patients on the train and the Statsenberg hospital was closed after that. There were no more people left there. I don't know what happened to it. But we left all of our belongings. I can remember that I had oh, so many pretty evening dresses that I had up in the closet. Never saw those again. We did, I think, manage a barracks bag of stuff and that was all that we could take with us. And my cosmetic kit. Then we got down to

Manila and we thought, at least I thought, that we would stay there a few days before we moved again but the Japanese had discovered Manila too and they were bombing every day around Manila at Koveetee. That was about 11 miles I think, I'm not positive how far away it was, but they were bombing these places every day.

The hospital was being emptied out at Sternberg, and in the meantime when after the Japanese began to bomb in the Philippines, the Sternberg people, the medical department set up 5 emergency annexes, little hospitals around the city. But they never got to use them because we moved so swiftly, the Japanese moved so swiftly moving down from Lingayen. We moved down to Baguio and they ran us out of Statsenberg that was all north of us, you see, and they got down so close to Sternberg we knew that Manila was going to be bombed and would not be a safe place for patients. They had to set up the hospitals on Bataan. So they did. And on Christmas day, I think, was the first day a group of nurses were sent over to Bataan and I think, but I'm not sure, but I think they went to Limay to set up their hospital. And that hospital functioned only until about the middle of January, I think.

And at the same time they were setting up that hospital they were trying to get beds into what was later called the jungle hospital. It was a place we called hospital number two and there was another hospital set up at hospital number one at a place called Little Baguio. That was an engineers headquarters of the Philippine army, I believe. It had a building, and they had beds inside the building and they had double deckers inside that hospital. But on hospital number two we put our beds on the ground and we had, certainly not a chair for anyone.

I honestly cannot remember how many of them had a bedside table. At least they would have had to share it if they had anything. We had nothing. Just patients and a bed for them. It was the most bleak affair I ever saw in my life. We had to draw water from a creek. To get the water, we carried it up in buckets and then poured it into a washbasin to bathe our patients. The nurses, of course and the officers too had to bathe in the stream. There was no hot water. Someone reported me as saying we heated the water for the patients. We did not. We heated water in those big drums of oil, those 55 gallon drums. They would cut a hole in the side of them, inside the drum, and make a big hole, clean it out, of course, from the oil, fill it with water and rice. And our rice was cooked in these drums. But water was heated for cooking rice not for anyone having a warm bath.

This affair went on for us for all through January until April the 8th. We were told we had to leave our patients. We had by that time 18 wards on my ward. Eighteen wards on hospital number two. They were strung out along this little river. The Reall river it was called. Every time you needed a new ward, the bulldozer would come up and cut up a pathway through the jungle. There were a lot of trees there. I think they made mahogany furniture out of them. The Philippine mahogany it was called. Beautiful trees and the bushes were growing underneath. There was so much underbrush or over brush, or whatever you call it. It completely obliterated our view of the airplanes flying over or their view of us. They couldn't see us. We were in shadow from this over brush, underbrush. I loved it. I felt completely protected because you couldn't see the airplanes flying over and I guess what you don't see doesn't hurt you.

But I felt secure under those trees, I truly did. But it was not a very pleasant place to be though, because food got less and less. In the beginning we had ham, tomatoes, and rice. The ham and tomatoes were something that irritated my stomach and I was upset when I had malaria. I couldn't eat it. It was horrible for me because it upset me so much. But, the ham didn't last long. And I remember by the time my birthday came along, February 19, I was sick with malaria in my bed where the nurses had our little encampment. I was so sick I couldn't eat anything. Some man came through there. He was a navy officer. I will never forget him. He looked at me. It was kosher and o.k. for these men to come

into our area during the day time and he was coming to visit someone. I don't know who it was. But, anyway, when he saw me he said, "My, you look like a sick cat. You look like you could use some food. Could you?" And I weakly said, "Yes, maybe I could." He came back the next day and brought me cheese crackers, and candy. I can't remember what else, and then I never saw this man again. This was my birthday, February 19th. I never saw him again until April the 29th when he got on that airplane that was to evacuate to take us down to Mindenau for a further trip to Australia.

Here this man was out of that airplane and helping me on the airplane. He looked at me and said, "Hi, kid. Fancy seeing you here." Of course he didn't know who was going out on that airplane but he was going out on it too. So that was a big deal for us. April the 9th was when we had to leave hospital number two, and that was one of the most stressful events of my life. We were upset to have to leave our patients and by that time we must have had 4,000 patients in that hospital which was set up to accommodate 2000.

So we went down to the motor pool to await transportation. I was ordered into a sedan and there were 5 nurses, I believe. I'd have to count them. One girl couldn't get a seat inside and she said, "Well, I'll stand on the running board". So she stood on the running board and the rest of us crowded in the back.

There were two fellows in the front seat driving this car. We didn't get very far until we ran out of gas so that car stopped and we started to walk. All of us nurses started walking. We walked only about 50 yards or so and another sedan stopped for us and said, "Hey, we've got room for some of you. Can't take you all maybe, but some of you could ride with us." So there they took 4 of us and one girl said she would go ride on the running board and Alice Hahn said, "I'll walk ahead." I think Alice had already decided that she'd walk ahead when our first car broke down because one of the officers that she knew who was engaged to one of our nurses came along. She said, "I'll walk along with Manson or Monson," I don't know which. She said "I'll walk along with Bud."

So she walked along with this guy and she got down to Mariveles pier and got a boat to Corregidor and got over there at 3:30 in the morning. But the rest of us were waiting for transportation to Mariveles pier which was about 6 miles away. It took us all night because when we got in the next car we 4 nurses got into, it had to stop because there was an ammunition dump being exploded. Our ammunition was exploding and the shells were flying over the road. They thought everyone was already passed because they knew that the nurses were ordered out of their place at 8:30 in the evening but the transportation was so slow, you just crept along at a snail's pace.

There we waited until after the ammunition dump was exploded. It was 3 hours about. I was told later we had an earthquake at that time but I thought it was just the vibrations from the shells. I didn't realize it was an earthquake.

Eventually, the air corps people had us in their sedan. One girl was riding on the outside and I must tell you what was wrong with her. We didn't know it until we got over to Corregidor. She had dengue fever, a high fever. She was the one who said she would ride outside. I don't know how she stood up all that while but she rode 6 miles on that fender.

I was inside with 2 or 3 other nurses. I can't really remember how many of us were left. But I remember that I lost my barracks bag and that was all the belongings I had. It fell off the fender of the car because a long time ago there was a fender over the wheel and there was a depression and then the engine. My barracks bag was placed there because there wasn't room inside for it. It fell off and went running down the grader ditch and I begged them to stop. "Please, please stop. That's my clothes. Let me get my clothes."

Well, chivalry was dead. The guy up front didn't offer to get me my clothes but he

guessed he was doing enough he thought. Every time he stopped at a little stream, he got out and got a bucket of water for the engine, for the radiator, because it leaked and we could only go maybe 5 miles or so, or less. He would have to fill it up. He filled it up 3 times on our way down to Mariveles but he didn't offer to pick up my clothes. But, I got my barracks bag and pushed it back in place and it stayed there until we got down to the pier.

It was morning when we got down. Seven o'clock and we left at 8 o'clock in the evening the night before. We loaded up around 8 o'clock and I was on 2 different sedans to ride down there. Then we got to the pier and there was no one there for us.

The older nurse in our group was McKay. She had been working on the ward with me. Hortense McKay said, "Sally. See that man over there with the red cross on his arm? Go ask him if he knows anything about a boat for the nurses." So I went yelling across the sand. I remember vividly this tall man with the red cross on his arm and I yelled at him. I said, "Hey you, do you know anything about a boat for the nurses to go to Corregidor?" He said, "Oh, yes. It came and went a long time ago."

Well, my heart sunk. I went back to report this to the nurse and this man came back and followed me. Hortense knew him. They'd come over on the same boat together in the Philippines the year before. It wouldn't have mattered of course, whoever it had been, he would have helped us. He said, "I have a boat out here that will take 5 of us, I guess we could get in it." So Hortense and I and Veely and another girl named Crook, that's not right. I have their names written down.

We were 5 of us to ride in the boat with him. He did take us on the boat to Corregidor and we got over there about 7:30. Not many miles across. A little boat can skip across there real fast. And I remember how it looked that morning. It was silvery gold, the sky, and the water, silvery gold, both. You couldn't tell where the sky ended and the water began. It was a beautiful looking morning, but I wondered if I'd ever see another morning. Honestly.

And the boat was so low in the water that the water as they rowed the boat or whatever, they may have had an outboard motor, the water kept flipping over into the boat. Not enough to sink us. And we saw a boat ahead of us. It was a group of nurses got off on one boat ahead of us. We've never been able to keep that story straight – how many people got over there and how many boats did it take to get them over there. But, I know that Alice went on one small boat with someone alone, Alice Hahn, and I think there was another group that got on a boat that got over to the Philippines just about 30 minutes before we did. And when we got over there it was about 7:30 or a quarter to 8:00 in the morning.

But the big group of nurses did not get there until about 12:30 or 1:00 because their chief nurse thought that she wasn't sure that she was doing what they told her to do. She couldn't believe that everything was so fouled up and she stopped to reaffirm her orders. I think that delayed her quite a bit. But eventually they did get on the boat and they loaded the nurses first on that big boat. The Japanese came along and they were strafing the water and the nurses had to get off the boat and go back to shelter. The next time, I guess, they put the bags on first then put the nurses on.

They did get over there and no one was injured but they were so tired looking. It was really something but they were staunch. They were marching in there just as firm as could be. They looked haggard a bit but they were chin up! They weren't giving in yet. We were run off Bataan but we weren't whipped yet. So we stayed in Corregidor until April 29th. Not every one got off as you all know. But a few did get away from Corregidor.

There were 20 of us that got off April 29th, I believe there were 20. We got on two different airplanes, PBY's and that was where I met this Col. Bridget again, the commander who gave me the food. There he was, helping me on the plane and we got off at midnight, approximately.

It was the emperor's birthday and Col. Wood was the American officer in charge of the group of women that was on this plane. We had 3 civilian women who were wives of officers. There were 3 on the plane I was on – 13 women, unlucky number. Col. Wood knew the ways of the minds of the Japanese and he had told them ahead of time that April 29 would be a good day to have us evacuated. Because it was the day they celebrated the emperor's birthday. I don't know if they celebrate it like the British do, every day. No matter when the queen's birthday, they celebrate a particular day hoping for sunshine over there.

But Col. Wood's said they won't be fighting all that day and at noontime the bombing stopped on Corregidor and all the fighting died down. Col. Wood and I have met several times since then and I know that we've talked about it and he knew that it was going to be that way. And of course, he was involved in going out on those planes, so naturally he was interested in knowing when the bombs stopped. I think we can say we knew what was going on.

We got on our planes and we went down to Mindanao and my plane safely landed and we got off. We were supposed to stay overnight. We got over there in the morning, a quarter of five in the morning when we got there. See, we left Corregidor at midnight. It's about 500 miles down there, so we got there about quarter of 5 in the morning and we were tired and were offered beds in a hotel to sleep in. So we rested a little bit but we were so exhausted we couldn't sleep. I was

We had an opportunity to go up to a local market and that was where I got acquainted with this commander, the pilot of the plane, Greasy Neil. He was in our group that went to the open market. It was, well, we don't have anything like that except in Los Angeles. They have a Farmer's market with a little bit of shelter over it, but not much. In the Philippines there was no shelter but we went up to this market and I remember it was the first time I had been able to be out in the daylight without being under gun fire. The Japanese were not doing anything much. They were the air superiority but what did they have to fight? We had nothing to oppose them with so they were not doing much strafing and they watched airfields. They knew if there was any activity it would be at the airfields. So the Japanese didn't bother us.

Then we got on that plane at night after dark and we were towed back by a boat into the lake. This was a fresh water lake. The other plane got off before we did and when we got towed out into the water, our boat hit some rocks and 3 big holes got into the bottom of the boat. One of the nurses, Rosemary Hogan, took her tennis jacket which was made of terry cloth, put it down in one of the big holes and tried to stop the water. She held it there until the water got up to her neck. Honestly, her shoulders were covered and she was just sticking up with her head out of water. And the water was so high in the plane, and the seats were high. They must have been, well, I don't know how high, 27 inches high, the kind of plane it was. We stood up in the plane ultimately and the water came up to our ankles, to give you an idea of how much water was in that plane.

Mr. Cox: So you're saying that the bottom of the plane hit the rocks?

Mrs. Millett: Yes. because we took on some gasoline and I guess it overloaded the plane. Just think of it. Maybe a few inches only and we would have been saved. We didn't get saved. We had to get off the plane and then we ran from one place to another from that morning

which would have been May the 1st by the time we saw daylight again. We ran back and forth from one place to another seeking safety from the Japanese. Finding a place that could put up 13 women and find someplace to feed us.

We stayed at an airstrip, Lindsey air strip for about 3 days hoping a plane would come in. I think they did actually try from Australia to send a plane in but they never made it all the way to us. They had to go back but our airplane that had the accident was repaired with Elmer's glue and army blankets and boards and whatever they could find. The men worked for hours getting that plane repaired and they did get it repaired. And it went on but we lost all of our luggage that was on there.

I had only a musette bag by that time. I left Bataan with a musette bag, no with a barracks bag. That's a big one. Left Corregidor with a musette bag. It had my orders and 200 dollars that was to buy air mail stamps for the air mail that I was carrying to mail in Australia for people in Corregidor. An air mail stamp was expensive then and I had 200 dollars that had been given to me by one of the priests in Corregidor and a whole bunch I tied up in a silk handkerchief that I held on my lap. But I kept that and got out with that but I lost everything else. I had a sweater and that was all I had when I got off the plane. But we didn't get any, well, I didn't have my hopes up that we would ever get out of there. I just thought this is the end of it and we will be captured here. And we were.

So the morning that we were formally captured, I remember Col. Wood came to me. I was sick again with my usual malaria and I was in the dining room asleep on a governor, we had a place where we were being billeted that we called Gov. Fortig's home and I was in the dining room on the floor.

I heard these two men come in the middle of the night and I spoke to them and I said, "Is there a plane in for us?" They said, "No. Not yet." There was no more talking because you didn't talk if everyone else is on the dining room floor sleeping, you didn't disturb them. So the next morning at a quarter of five, it was just barely daylight, I heard an airplane. I hadn't slept very much but I got up and went over where these two men were, Col. Wood and the transportation officer. I said, "Come outside." They went out with me and I said, "I hear an airplane. Is that the one that's coming in for us?" And they said, "Well, Sally we'll tell you something if you promise not to tell and not to cry." Well, I knew that was good news, didn't I? So I promised.

At 10:30 that morning, Col. Wood told us we were going to be captured formally by the Japanese. That we would have to go up to a hospital. They called it Force Base hospital #1. It was a USAFE organization that had a staff of Filipinos and one American doctor. And there was a hospital barracks for the nurses and they had a lot of room for all of us, 13 women. I think we did have to share a room, some of us shared a room. I shared a room with one of the nurses but we were billeted in their quarters and that was the 11th of May that the Japanese formally captured us.

So we stayed there until in July and then they moved us again. I'd have to go back to my orders to get that. We were moved in July from that place to a little town where they hoped to find a ship. The Japanese were going to ship us to Manila. We were taken from Cagayan and we went to Davao by a dirty little boat.

We did have a bunch of missionary women join us by that time and I was thankful for them because they knew how to get along in these backwoods countries. We didn't. They were really a help to us and we liked having them in our group. And we had a male missionary. His name was Mr. Downes. He had lived in Japan for 22 years and he spoke the language fluently. He knew the Japanese mind. He was a great deal of help to us. It really made it easy for us to be prisoners as long as he could interpret for us, don't you see? It was really very nice.

So, we were on that boat for about 4 days. It was a dirty, filthy boat. The Japanese had fresh showers, I think. We had fresh water to drink but we couldn't shower. I got a bath by using my share of a canteen of water and a girlfriend gave me her share of water and one of the men gave me his canteen. I put it in my helmet and went down in the hold of the ship and took a bath. No one else was down there. It was too dark and too hot. And that's how I had a bath on that dirty boat.

We got into Davao the 26th of August and by then the Japanese told us that we were going to be repatriated to the United States, a few of us. And they did take 25 of this group into Manila. And we went on a nice, clean boat. But the day that we left, the 26th of August, no it wouldn't have been. We arrived the 26th of August and we left in about 5 or 6 days because it only took us about 4 days to get up to Santo Tomas.

I remember the day I left Davao with this group of 25 Americans on this clean, nice boat. But it wasn't loaded. We were on "D" deck and it was very high. The boat wasn't loaded so it was high in the water. They had a rope ladder strung down from "D" deck all the way down to the ground, to the pier. I had to climb up that ladder with my 103 degree temperature. I knew that if I looked down or if I looked up it would make me feel sick. So I just looked straight in to the ship as I crawled up.

I was carrying my blanket with me then. We had a blanket roll that we carried all of our possessions in. I didn't even have the musette bag. I had nothing. We carried our bath towel, soap, and a wash cloth and whatever toilet articles we had. And if we had a change of clothing, I guess we did, rolled up in this bag in our army blanket. And it was tied shut with what I don't remember. I carried that in front of me and I crawled up the side of the boat.

Well, I got there. While I was on that boat, something happened to me that was very good. I was so sick I could not get up to go get my meals and my fever was very high. How high I'm sure I don't know but I was lying on the deck and one of the nurses that had been taking care of me all along, her name as Evelyn Whitlow. Greenfield later. She married a man named Greenfield who had been in prison camp with us.

Evelyn was by my side and a Japanese medic came along and looked at me. He said, "Oh! You very sick." He took my temperature and touched my head. He said, "Hot! Very hot!" I don't know if he said "very" or "velly". Anyway, he got it out that I was very hot. He said to this girl, "I got ice. You got ice cap?" She happened to have an ice cap and he said, "Come with me."

He took her to the galley. Is that what it's called on a ship? He took her over there and he told those people to let her have all the ice she wanted. So she kept ice on my head all the time which helped my temperature. And he came back with some pills for me. As I recall, they were 2 little black pills. He lifted my head, he gave me the pills, and he carried some water and gave me a glass of water. Now I call that being humane.

Mr. Cox: It was sure compassionate. Contrary to what you would expect.

Mrs. Millett: Well, yes. I wasn't expecting him to hit me. I wasn't afraid of that, but I didn't expect him to take care of me. But he did. And then as I said, I was too sick to get up and go the kitchen to go out to where they got their meals. There was an American woman who had a little baby about 6 months old that couldn't crawl yet. It was left on a little blanket by my side when they all went to eat. This woman left her baby on this blanket when she went to eat. She couldn't hold her and carry the dishes that she went to get her food with. So, there the baby was. The baby began to cry. This same medic walked by and patted the baby a little bit and the baby stopped crying. Then he backed away and watched it for

a few minutes and it cried again. He went over and patted it again. It stopped crying and he walked back to see if he had put her to sleep. The baby cried again. That time he picked the baby up and he held it in his arms. And I remember its head was in his left hand and he reached over and down and walked back and forth and kissed that baby on the head. Maybe 75 times! I'm not exaggerating. He kissed it constantly as he walked back and forth with it. When the woman came back, the mother of the baby, she took the baby. He reached into his hip pocket and pulled out his billfold. He pulled out a picture and he showed her the picture. And you know what it was, don't you?

Mr. Cox: No.

Mrs. Millett: He showed her a picture from his billfold

Mr. Cox: Was it his own child?

Mrs. Millett: His own baby and if that doesn't make you cry, this will. He said, "That was the age my baby was when I left home 8 years ago." He had not seen his baby for 8 years. So he was kissing his baby.

Mr. Cox: He sure was.

Mrs. Millett: So I always had that feeling that they're not all bad. It was the nicest thing I ever experienced in that camp. I didn't take very many chances but I mean that to me was a lovely thing.

Mr. Cox: It sure was. It shows compassion.

Mrs. Millett: Well, Japanese love babies. That's what Mr. Downes, that man, that wonderful man that had lived in Japan for 22 years said. He said those people had been so nice to him. He had a little blonde girl going to school and he was going to take her because she was going to have to ride on 3 different busses. He took her for 3 days and the third time he showed up at the bus, the driver said, "Sir. It is not necessary for you to go to school with you little girl. We will see that she gets transferred to the proper bus." And he said he never worried about it again because he said the Japanese bus drivers, or whatever she rode on, took care of it for him. Never again did he have to go. You could trust the Japanese people completely. So I felt relaxed after I heard him tell a few of these stories.

Mr. Cox: Plus with what you witnessed.

Mrs. Millett: Yes, that was helpful. Now that was on the boat.

When we got up to Santo Tomas, I was told by one of my friends, Don Hanning said to me, "Now Sally, when you get to Santo Tomas look for Bert Holland and tell him Don's o.k and all the rest

[End of Tape I, Side 1]

are too." I asked him, "How will I find Bert Holland? There are 4000 people maybe up there", and Don said, "Sally, everyone will know Bert Holland. Just ask for him." And when I got off the bus when our ship docked and we were taken by bus To Santo Tomas, the bus driver was told where each of us were to go. I heard them call off the names, "This one so and so, this one..." and when my turn came the bus driver said, "Take this one to the hospital, Bert." That triggered my mind that I had a message for Bert Holland. And when I got down on the ground, this man said, "Do you want a wheelchair?" I said, "No, I can walk." But I could barely take a step but I was going to walk. I wasn't going to be in a wheelchair. So, I said then, "I have a message for Bert Ho..." I didn't even get his last name out. He said, "I am Bert Holland." And I had a message for the man whose

arms I stepped into when I got into Santo Tomas. The only person I had a message for was Bert Holland.

Mr. Cox: And he greeted you.

Mrs. Millett: Yes, he greeted me and he was a nice man. Really a wonderful man. He was always busy. He had been an efficiency expert in the Philippines someplace where he worked. So you know he had to be an efficient kind of guy. He did a lot of volunteer work in the hospital. Incidentally, he developed tuberculosis in our hospital, Santo Tomas, with tuberculosis. I remember him vividly.

And so in Santo Tomas I went to the hospital and I was very sick. The other nurses were billeted with the other nurses in the main building. They had just been in those rooms a few weeks, I guess. But they had been in those rooms because the group of nurses from Corregidor had gone into Santo Tomas in July. About July 2nd I think they went into Santo Tomas. The Japanese took them across.

And that's another good story I could tell about the Japanese. The captain in charge of the group collected all of their jewelry and their watches and everything the nurses had that he could see. He took down their names and listed what they had. They just kissed it all good by. They never expected to see it again. And sometime later he came into Santo Tomas and I think he searched Miss Josie Nesbit and gave her all of the stuff for the nurses. He didn't keep it. He was afraid, I guess that the Japanese soldiers or sailors on the ship might take it away from him. This is what I think. He took it and listed it and they got it all back.

Incidentally, he served tea and crackers or something on the boat, they told me. I was told this by different people on the boat from Corregidor to Santo Tomas. This was a big group of nurses, about 59 of them came across. By the time we all got into camp we were about 69 nurses and there were 3 other women that were not nurses. But they were assigned 2 dieticians and a physical therapist worked with our group all the time. And then we had a Red Cross worker, a woman, that stayed with our group.

When we left Santo Tomas all these women left with us. We always say there were 69 nurses but these 3 other women were with us all the time. They were with us on Bataan and they were with us all through Santo Tomas.

In Santo Tomas our duties were just like duties in any other hospital. We didn't have very many up-to-date facilities but if you worked 4 hours in a day, you could have a noon day meal. And more nurses were needed to work the morning shifts so there'd be 4 nurses put on duty to work the morning shift in the main hospital where most of the nurses worked.

In Santo Tomas we had more than one hospital. We had a mother and children's hospital in Santo Tomas. There was, oh what would you call it? A hospital in the gymnasium for the old men because they had nurses on duty all day long. I never went to that building. I never saw it but I'm sure they had facilities for caring for those old men that were so old they could not walk to the main building to get their food. Everyone came to the main building twice a day to what we call "the main line". You are not supposed to mistake that for the Philadelphia Main Line. (refers to Philadelphia Pennsylvania railroad). It's entirely different.

We did get fed if we worked in Santo Tomas hospital. Catalina was the name of the hospital. Whoever worked over there got an extra meal at noontime. The rest of the people did not get a noon day meal. If I did not work 4 hours a day, I did not get a noon

day meal. Everyone was supposed to work that was able bodied. There were a few people who would shirk and not work. But most of the people would work. Do their share. And the work that was to be done made you think about 3500 people always in the camp. Those people are going to need services.

Some one is going to have to work with their shoes. We had a shoe repairman in there for awhile. We had one man who washed the mosquito nets. It was too difficult for women to wash mosquito nets. And a man who was a banker, a banker, washed mosquito nets for us. He washed them all day long. He liked being out in the sunlight. All day long he washed mosquito nets. I met his son about 5 years ago at one of the reunions and I reminded him of that and he said, "Yeah, I remember about washing mosquito nets. One old woman asked us, she give us 75 cents or whatever the coin was, if we would wash her mosquito nets. So we took them down and gave them to my dad and he washed them and we got her money." He didn't tell his dad, naturally. Kids are kids.

Mr. Cox: How did they wash these mosquito nets?

Mrs. Millett: Just threw them out in the water and hung them on the line to dry. But you had to have a net or you would be eaten up by mosquitoes. Mosquitoes were terrible and bed bugs were in the camp just like ants are in Kansas. In the state of Texas you have all kinds of ants.

We had bed bugs and we had pigeons that roosted on the top of the main building where the nurses were billeted. And my roof had a corrugated roof right outside the window. The pigeons roosted up above and they dropped their calling cards down below. And when the sun shines on it, it becomes highly "odoriferous". We had to scrub that thing every day. And if you were not on duty, and you lived in that room, you had to scrub that corrugated roof. You had to crawl out through the window to get it scrubbed clean. It took 3 or 4 buckets of water to wash it clean.

I remember I had that duty more than anyone else because I was sick so much with malaria. I couldn't work 4 hours but I could scrub the pigeon dung. If anyone needs a dung scrubber, I'm ready. I'm well qualified. But it was so funny the things that happened there. Men took duty, like the man that washed the mosquito nets, the man that swept the floor in front of our rooms, swept the corridor. The men could not go inside our room, mind you. We only had a curtain up to the doorway, but a man could not step inside our room. Not at all.

Mr. Cox: The Japanese would enforce that rule?

Mrs. Millett: No. The Americans did. The Americans really kept us pure.

But I was carrying my bucket up the hallway one day and the man that was sweeping the hallway in our corridor, I knew him very well because he dated Evelyn Whitlow and who later married her. Evelyn was the girl who was so good to me on the ship when I was sick.

And here Milton looked at me and said, "What the hell are you carrying that water for?" I said it was my week to scrub the pigeon dung off the roof and he jerked the bucket out of my hand. "Give that to me. " So he got another bucket and he went down to the women's bathroom. I guess they would let him in there to fill the buckets with water. But he went down to carry the water. I had to carry it a long ways. It would have been 60 steps going and 50 another way to carry this bucket of water. And I had a big surgery on my abdomen about 6 weeks before and I wasn't really strong enough to carry that water.

So Milton carried the water and he was a multimillionaire. How about that! Pretty good, huh, to have a multimillionaire carry my scrub water for me? Well, that was the way it was.

You'd see the people going around doing duties and some of the most menial duties like get on the garbage detail. They'd haul the garbage out and dump it in the big whatever bins they had. And these men had been businessmen in town and they were riding the garbage truck. I can remember seeing so many men. You wondered what they did in private life. Out doing the most menial labor.

And the food line is worth talking about in Santo Tomas. Everyone wants to know about prison life. In Santo Tomas there was the main building. And in the center of the building was an airway, big hallway, and the bottom floor was called the patio. And as you go up the stairway there would be a wide landing on the stairwells as you turn because it would be at the front of the building. One big wide stairway and then you turn left and right.

So people would bivouac, put up their beds on these areas on the first floor, and the food was served on the back of the building. The people could come from each side of the patios to get to the food, or they could come from outside in two different lines. It was..., it's easier to diagram it. You see, a group of people coming in from that side, and the main line was in here, and they had two sets of service. You could get the same set of service up half way and then you were finished. And you could either go up here if you want to but there would be another line of people coming this way. And there would sometimes be a line of people coming from there and a line here. And this was the food service, and the food service people stood back here.

You had all these people milling around. It was more than at Lata Cockerell's theatre down town. Milling around in there with their trays of food and I tell you, I remember not ever hearing anyone turn a cross word in any of this milling around carrying their tray of food or whatever they had to carry. No one ever got angry with all of this mishmash going around. It was bedlam. Can you imagine?

Mr. Cox: I just can't imagine how that would be.

Mrs. Millett: And if some of the people didn't want to go back the way they came, they could go outside and eat on big benches with a corrugated roof on top. That's where a lot of people ate because they didn't want to go back in their rooms to eat in the hallway by their rooms. Maybe there was not space. So it was a big mess but always everyone was courteous, I thought

Mr. Cox: What type of food did they serve you? Salad basically?

Mrs. Millett: Oh, wormy rice. Lots of worms. Breakfast was horrible because breakfast was a meal that was just only one thing. At first they offered us sugar with our rice but eventually, not sugar. The internees had lots of ingenuity. They would grind up the coconut and squeeze the milk out of the coconut. That was sold to us if you had money. Anyone who had any contact at all could buy coconut cream for their cereal of a morning. But even that got "iffy" toward the end.

But you ate the rice, it were never good enough to eat the worms. It was never good. We had cracked wheat which to me was tasty but it had more worms than the rice had. And then for noonday meal I don't think they ever served even a soup to anyone. But at evening time we'd have rice again. Always rice. We never had, as I recall, cracked wheat at nighttime. You would be given rice. The meat was caribou meat.

The meat would float around in a broth and we never had a knife. I didn't even need a knife. I used a spoon to eat with because the meat was not big enough to cut. Caribou meat was cut up and put in this stew. I don't think they even thickened it much with flour, or I don't believe they did. It was just an awful thin stew that they put over our rice. We had a vegetable that grew there. It was called tallenum. It was slimy, it looked like spinach but was slimy as okra. And it always was slimy. You'd pick it up and that stuff would just slip off of it. It was bad but you ate it. But it was good raw. Tallenum wasn't slimy, like okra isn't slimy when it's raw. But when you cook it it gets slimy, if you don't know how to cook it. But they may never learn how to cook tallenum but it was boiled like we boil spinach. And it looked like spinach except it was stringy. And those were the two main things we had to eat. I can hardly remember another vegetable ever. Just tallenum. And it grew, I suppose, profusely in the fields.

I don't think the Japanese ate much better than we ate because I ate with some friends whose cooking area was right by the Japanese kitchen. The guards had a place where they cook their food. And this friend that invited me to eat had the cabin right there which was a dividing wall between the Japanese kitchen. And they ate little cakes, little tiny rice cakes. They didn't have very many of those cakes. You never saw them have very much to eat.

One day they did get caribou liver. The Japanese did. And there was a well. And my friend had a place he could cook. They usually cooked outside. You didn't like to cook inside your shanty but you could. But my friend had a little pot he cooked in. They looked like flower pots or what was out at the top and then it's concave and you can put charcoal up there and down below there's a little eagle looking opening. And you can put some wood down in there to burn to get your charcoal to burn. And your charcoal will hold the heat for a long time. But you have to put something down in the deep below it. And then you get your charcoal going. And after you do that, you could put a grate on top of your hibachi. I think that's what it's called. And you put the grill across that and that is the way we cooked our food.

Well, this friend of mine was quite a guy. He saw that the Japanese cook had left a caribou liver in a big dishpan right at the water spot. There was a pump where you pump water. The Japanese used it and that is where my friend got his water for his cooking. So, the Japanese left the liver. Oh, my, that was too much for this guy. He couldn't contain himself. He ran out and grabbed the dishpan in the daylight and ran away with it to his cousin, who was a girl, and her husband who had a cabin that was about maybe 400 yards away. He ran with that liver to that cabin and they hid it.

Eight-thirty at night this girl, Sis Knox, came to me. She slept in the room next to me, I think. She came to me and she said, "Come with me." I'd already gone to bed. We were not supposed to be out in that area at all. She said, "Dick got the liver from the Japanese and we want to cook it in our shanty and we want you to come over and help us." They could have done it without me but I guess the more the merrier, huh?

Well, I said, "I can't get over there. There's a guard." "Oh," she said, "I'll give you one of my aprons. I go through there all the time. I have a white coat I'll give you." So she gave me a white coat that she wore like a doctor's jacket or something, or a patient gown. She said, "I go to the isolation hospital to duty. You just come with me and you wear a gown and you get a slip like you've got a pass to go to the hospital. You show that to the guard." I happened to have a pass that gave me a dental appointment and you had to show it to the guard as I go to the hospital. So I just took out my dental appointment and showed it to this guard as if I was going to the isolation hospital. He looked at me and he said, "Huh, huh." And I went on with this girl.

We cooked the liver and it took us about 2 hours to cook it. We got it all cooked, put it in

jars and this man gave me 2 jars of it. It was mostly broth and he said, "Your take this to 2 of my friends who are up on the 3rd floor. They don't know how to boil water and they are really starving. Give this to them and tell them it came from Dick."

Then, he gave me some more and he said, "Do you have anyone you want to give some liver to?" And I said, "Yeah, I'd like to give it to our doctor who works in the clinic with me. She has 2 little boys and I'd like to give them some liver." So, he gave me 3 pieces of liver. And when I went to give it to her, I said, "Listen doctor, I have a gift for you but I don't want you to ask me how I got it." And I was'nt accustomed to stealing and I really felt like a thief. I said, "Don't ask me any questions."

Later I thought she could have thought I had gotten it from the Japanese some other way. But anyway, Dick had given me this liver and I gave it to her. And I said, "Don't tell where you got it." She said, "I promise." The next day I met her in the clinic in the afternoon and before I could ask her how she liked the liver, she said, "I want to tell you about the liver. In my cabin I share it with 3 adults and 2 children and that liver would not have made any difference to any of them." Now, she's the doctor. She said, "As the most valuable person in my group, I thought that I should take the liver and eat it myself because I need to keep my strength up to help take care of the people in the camp. So, I stopped in the women's bathroom on the way home and ate it all myself."

That's a shocking story but, that's her kind of triage and it was right. She did make the right choice. Hard for people to understand but she had to work every day, she had 2 little boys she had to stay well for and that must have given her a terrific boost.

I don't even remember eating the liver, but it must have been good. And the Japanese came back that day and the fellow that lost it, he was highly excited. Everybody was very excited. Dick invited them in to look in his cabin. And Dick went out and looked all around for them to see if he could find it. And he couldn't find the liver either. I think that's one of the neatest stories.

Another time the other man that helped cook the liver, his name was Dee came to Dick's cabin at four o'clock in the morning and he said, "Come with me. Come with me. The bodega is open where the sugar is." And it was just across 15 feet from Dick's shanty and about 20 feet from the Japanese kitchen. But someone had gone in and the lock on it was not like a lock. It was an easy thing to turn.

Mr. Cox: Like a latch.

Mrs. Millett: Yeah, and it was open. It was too good for this Dee guy to miss. He said, "Get some containers. Let's get some sugar." So, they got some sugar and they rushed it across to Dick's cabin. Dick had a hole cut in the floor of his shanty and he had it covered somewhere down below so that no one could see what it was. And he lowered, I don't know how much sugar, down into his den inside his shanty.

And then, early morning, he came to me over in my room, I guess, and asked me if I would come over and help him. He said, "I'll tell you when you get over there what I want you to do." He wanted me to help scrub the floor of his shanty to get the sugar off the floor. He was afraid he'd have grains of sugar. So we put a lot of water over the floor of the shanty and he had sealed the sugar so it was air tight down below and it wouldn't get wet. They never even missed the sugar because it was in a big bin in this bodega. We all had a lot of sugar after that.

Everyone stole from the Japanese, if they could.

Mr. Cox: Well, you stole to survive, didn't you?

Mrs. Millett: Yeah. The Japanese guards like wristwatches and fountain pens, at that time they were fountain pens. Any kind of jewelry that you want to barter with them to get them to walk away and leave their post. We had what we called Over the Fence delivery. The Japanese would walk away and there would be someone on the outside who was fencing stuff. They brought whiskey into the camp all the time. And if they caught you fencing, you were put inside. The Japanese had a prison inside their prison. There was a prison and you got water and rice if you did things you were not supposed to do and they caught you at it. Or if you were AWOL they put you on rice and water. Any little thing like that was what their prison was for.

But, this fencing thing went on with the guards. The guards knew it but the guards profited by it. And the guards were very lenient until we began to win the war, then everybody got very nervous and things clamped down.

But in the prison camp, we had a lot of entertainment. There was a lot of stuff going on. You got 3,000 people locked up, what are you going to do with them? You have to organize and you know Americans organize right down to the little cub scouts. Don't they?

Mr. Cox: Yes they do.

Mrs. Millett: The Americans, you know what they did? I think they were foolish. Within a week's time, they had Santo Tomas so organized, the Japs didn't think any more about sending them any place else. The Japanese, in the beginning of the war, Manila was made an open city, and the Japanese went around to the various homes of the people and told them, I think maybe the Americans had captains, precinct captains maybe. But they go around and tell people, "Stay here and we will take you to Santo Tomas later."

One time they told, it was ludicrous to hear, the Japanese came at 7:30 in the morning and said, "You wait here for transportation and we will take you sometime today to Santo Tomas." These people waited, can you imagine, all day long. Waited for the Japanese to come and take them prisoner. I thought that was so funny. A lot of people had that story to tell.

Well as soon as these people got into Santo Tomas, the Japs said, "Bring clothes, food and clothing, enough to last you 3 days." So every one that went into Santo Tomas had an idea they were going for 3 days. Well, it was 3 years or more for them!

And when they got inside, all these people, you had to have facilities for them. Bathrooms, toilets, someplace to heat up water and the Americans just took over and began to organize. Get everything set up, and I suppose, I don't know whether they had stoves in that building or not. It was a university building we were in. But by the time I got in there they certainly had big stoves set up. Cooking in those places just like it had been there for 20 years.

Mr. Cox: Let me ask you, did they have, from what you say, it was like a self-style government. Was there somebody elected?

Mrs. Millett: Yes, we had the central committee. We sort of thought they were communists, I guess. The central committee had more "don'ts" than "do's". We had more restrictions than privileges for sure. And the Japanese had their little system. We had a commandant and he had 2 or 3 people working under him. Then we had the camp government and we had a, what did we call them, I don't know what we called him, our camp commander. I've

forgotten what we called him. But we had our number one man, American man that helped negotiate with the Japanese. I think he spoke Japanese to them. And they, Japanese, gave us a few rules to go by, but the Americans, and we had a lot of missionaries in there, they carried a big stick. They really and truly did. We had so many restrictions that we couldn't do this and we couldn't do that.

Of course the Japanese don't believe in showing affection publicly, so there was a rule that Americans were not to be affectionate. I think handholding might have been abided by. I don't know if they allowed that, but no kissing in public. None of that. And when they allowed people to have shanties, I haven't talked about that. People could build shanties which were built out of bamboo and all those little things which grow in the Philippines that they have their native huts out of. Nepa shanties. People could build a shanty in a day and a half a days time. Shanties could be erected and it was very cheap in the beginning. Everyone that had money, had a shanty. And they could use it in the daytime, but at night they had to sleep inside the buildings.

And that eventually became so crowded that the people were allowed to sleep in their shanties and the Japanese had before not allowed any physical contact. Well, when they began to allow people to sleep in their shanties, the birthrate increased.

We had a lot of babies born in Santo Tomas. And, in a way, I don't blame people for being angry about it because we had only a certain amount of food allocated. And every new baby meant another mouth to feed. And when the mother was pregnant, she was given food. So it wasn't really quite fair. Women who got pregnant weren't very popular, and the men who got them pregnant, if they found out who it was, were put on the rice and water diet for awhile. They locked them up. That was humorous.

So many things, like school, were going on. We had entertainment, like musical programs. And Don Bell, who was a radio operator/announcer in Manila before the war came with his ability to announce and entertain. And he entertained us over the loud speaker with all sorts of little tidbits and news of the day. And new restrictions were put out nearly every day. And you could hear this news broadcast over the camp. You could hear it in all the buildings, what was going on. And they let us have 3 movies, I think. I saw one movie, maybe there was only 2, but I remember one of them I was sick and you know I had to be pretty sick to miss a movie. It was when I had my big operation. I was really sick. And I couldn't go to the movie because I hurt so much and I was the first person operated on as an emergency surgery in our new operating room. The Japanese allowed us finally to equip surgery and it was with wonderful German implements. Their tools are really great. You know everything the Germans make is good. You had these good, heavy, German implements in our surgery and I made the little quip, "I hope they don't operate on me." And I was the first emergency.

Mr. Cox: Was there an American doctor that operated on you?

Mrs. Millett: Oh, yes, the doctors allowed American doctors to come in. They needed, they didn't have enough doctors. Even our commandant, Japanese commandant, got sick. I think he just had the diarrhea. He came into the camp hospital and he was treated by our doctors. Dr. Stevenson was his doctor who was a young missionary doctor. And we had 2 wards in that Catalina hospital. One ward was for the men and one ward was for the women and there were about 40 beds in each ward. I remember the story they told about the Japanese commandant. He was feeling pretty good the last night he spent there. The doctor said, "You're pretty good and I think by morning you ought to be well enough to go. But, I'd rather see you in the morning before you go back to work."

That Japanese got up and he dressed himself. He sat on his bed, had his sword by his

side and waited for the American prisoner to give him permission to go back to duty. They have great respect for authority.

Mr. Cox: Yes they do.

They do, but they didn't respect soldiers who let themselves be captured. There was no honor in that. No honor at all. So they treated our American prisoners, the men, like dogs. They had no use for them.

Mr. Cox: Did you ever come in contact with any of the soldiers that had been captured after you went in to Santo Tomas?

Mrs. Millett: Well, the only American soldiers. There were a lot of GI's that passed themselves off as civilians and got in the camp. And finally one of them, I shouldn't tell this story. This is not good to tell. But anyway, one of these fellows that was passing himself off as a civilian had really been in the navy or something. And he did something that no one appreciated. I guess he stole something, I'm not sure. But anyway, they got mad at him and someone turned him in and he turned all the rest of them in. That's the way I got this story. A whole bunch of them were turned in. And I only knew that one. That was the only one I knew that had been a civilian.

But I talked to one of the airmen at nighttime one night in the prison camp. He had passed himself off as a civilian and got into the prison camp. And one of the nurses came to me and she said, "Sally. There's a soldier out here. He's one of the air corps boys. He said he was in a car that took you down to Mariveles pier the night you went to Corregidor." "Well", I said, "I was in an air corps car." And she said, "He says he's got your helmet." And she told me what he said about my helmet. I said, "Well, that's right." She said, "Well, I said I didn't believe him. And he said, 'You just go get her and you bring her out here and you'll see I'm telling you the truth.'"

So, it was dark and she brought me out some place on the grounds where no light was shining and I didn't see his face. He asked me, "Now, are you Sally Blaine?" I said, "Yes." He said, "When you left our car, I got your helmet and you must have taken mine." And in my helmet there were 3 spaces on it and on some space this guy had written, "Sally Blaine, single, husband wanted." And my serial number was in there. So sure he would remember me, wouldn't he?

So when I told him, and I never saw that man, because he said, "I'm going to leave. I have to get out of here." He didn't want me to see him. And this Whitcomb that I told you about a while ago. He escaped and got back to the Philippines. And when he escaped from where ever he was in the Philippines in the very beginning, he passed himself off as an engineer up in Baguio. And he claimed his name was Johnson. And he found out there was a man named Johnson who had died and he got Johnson's, all of his information like a serial number or whatever it was he got. His social security number, that is what he got, birthdate and all the information he could get on him. And he told the Japanese he was a civilian. They put him in Santo Tomas. Well, Whit, my girlfriend that was so good to me all the time, she went through the chow line and he was serving the food. And she looked at him and yelled, "Oh Whit, how'd you get in here?" And he put his hand over his mouth to shush her so she was quiet. She knew that she was not supposed to talk any more.

That evening he found her and he said, "Don't act like you know me. I'm not supposed to be here. And I'm not Whit in this camp." Then he told her what he was and he said, "Don't you dare tell anyone." Of course she couldn't wait to tell me. So I knew and she pointed him out. I'd never seen him. But she took me through the line so she could point Whit out to me.

Mr. Cox: I guess the reason the military told the soldiers not to go in the civilian camp was because their chance of survival was poor.

Mrs. Millett: Oh, sure, he was going to be killed. Unless you did something real bad like break out, leave the camp. In the very beginning at Santo Tomas, I think it was 3 British people, that happened before I got in the camp, 3 British men escaped. The Japanese found them and made them come back and they took them out to some area I don't know. And they brought some other internees, prisoners, to watch this procedure. And there was a hole dug, or they dug the hole, and these prisoners had to sit down, put their legs, feet down in the hole and the Japanese shot them. They blindfolded them and then they were shot.

I read a story where one of them was the last to go. Wouldn't it be horrible to be the last one? And then at the end of our time in Santo Tomas, they beheaded 3 of our internees. And the irony of that one was that a man named Larson was killed and they got the wrong Larson. There were 2 Larsons in the camp and they got the wrong Larson. They took out a man that was not on the internee's board at all. They took out the number one man and there were 3 American men taken out and killed. And eventually the American men in the camp found out who it was. But that was early January, I think, when they beheaded those men.

About the 15th of January all the Japanese guards left our camp momentarily because something happened. I really never knew what happened. I don't know if anyone ever found out. I never found out. But the Japanese apparently thought they were going to be overrun and they left our camp. We were without guards for a little while. But I think it was the 15th of January. I must not be held for that date. It might have been another time. Then the Japanese came back in because we were picked up later. The Americans came into our camp February 4 and there were 77 Japanese guards back in camp at that time. But something happened..

Mr. Cox: Did you come to know why these 3 fellows were executed?

Mrs. Millett: The last 3? They thought they were receiving information from the outside troops, American troops. And they thought they were giving out information. They thought they were spies in other words. And I don't know if they were or not. I certainly wouldn't criticize my countrymen if they were spies. I hope they were. Just sorry they got caught, you know.

And another interesting thing I thought, the Japanese asked us or told us or ordered us or whatever, to sign a paper agreeing that we would do no harm to the Japanese army. Well, now, what would you do? They had the guns, the saber, the sword, would you sign or would you not? What would you do?

Mr. Cox: I think I would probably sign.

Mrs. Millett: We signed. And not a one of us felt like we were signing away anything because there was not a one of us that would not have broken that. And I did. I stole from the Japanese, you bet. And I would have done it again. I mean anything. Everyone felt the same way. You didn't care.

The Japanese inspected our rooms for a while. Not too frequently. Now I never had a real fear of the Japanese and I know it was because of that one guy that was so good to me on the boat. I really didn't think they were going to cut our heads off. I didn't think we'd be hurt. And they did search our rooms. I was a little uneasy because I had money in a cigar box, American money, and I had some letters. They really were letters my mother had sent to me and I had that in the cigar box and I don't know what was on top.

Nothing much, maybe some cosmetics. But the money worried me because I knew it was something I wasn't supposed to have.

I had Hitler's book, and that was on a list we weren't supposed to have in camp. And I knew that, but those Japanese couldn't read very well, you know. And I was so afraid they would get my American money, I pushed my cigar box up in front of him, just handed it to him. I said, "Here. Letters from home. Letters from home." I showed him this stuff. They didn't bother me. They didn't take the thing from me to see. If I'd tried to take it back or hold it from him or hide it behind me, they would have reached for it, of course. So I out foxed them.

Mr. Cox: Now, how did you learn that you were going to be repatriated? Did the planes come over and drop leaflets?

Mrs. Millett: Oh, you mean liberated? When Don Bell was our radio operator and something would happen that the Americans would win something, Don Bell had a way of letting us know. One down, three to go, something like that you know. One place captured, three to go.

The night before we were released, he played Ring Out the Barrel, Santa Claus Is Coming Tonight, or something like that. There's a song, Roll Out the Barrel because Santa is coming tonight.,

Mr. Cox: Right before you were released ?

Mrs. Millett: Yes, the night before they came in to liberate us. So he did, he played that song. And also, some American pilot who flew over had a note tied to a rock and dropped it and it said I think right on the rock., Roll Out the Barrel, Santa's Coming Tonight.

But Don Bell had a thing, I've forgotten what he played. I should have looked it up for you. But he also played a record that told us what was going to happen.

Part of the amusement was for the entertainment of the people and part of it was for their enjoyment but we had baseball games that really had a pretty good audience. The Padres were there. We had 17 Jesuit priests there and a lot of other priests as well, I think in the prison camp. So it was the Padres against the Internees. And I heard a priest much later, I think it was 1980, say that that was the most carefree time of his life while he was in Santo Tomas. He didn't have to preach any sermons, did he?

They played baseball and then the men were just as hungry as the women and we all sat around and looked at pictures of food and copied recipes. You could see a man sitting down, and we had these student chairs with a little table out to the right. Men would be sitting in the hall looking at a magazine and writing. They copied recipes from the magazines they were so hungry. I was just as hungry. I read a story in How Green Was My Valley was the name of it about a mining family in Ireland. And they described this stew and it was made of mutton. I don't like mutton but they had new potatoes and lovely fresh peas in there and carrots. It sounded so good and oh, I longed for that.

Mr. Cox: This is while you were a prisoner you read that book?

Mrs. Millett: Yes, and I longed for that food and I didn't know the recipe. I didn't copy it down from there. I wished I had. Later on I was a patient at Walter Reed after I was sent home and I thought about that food and I was curious. Would it be as good? I got the book out of their library and it was not nearly as good, didn't taste nearly as good in Walter Reed as

it did in the prison camp.

Now the men were just avid for food like we. A lot of them said they were going to go to school and learn to cook. And one man really did go to Paris and got his certificate from that school. I don't know how many years you have to go. One year at least. He went there and he really became a chef because of his hunger. You just couldn't believe how hungry you could be.

The nurses were fortunate in that respect, in two ways. A lot of the nurses worked 4 days and got to eat that extra meal at noontime. So we didn't get in as bad a shape as a lot of the people. However, some of our nurses did get very thin. But we had an angel that took care of us. Beth refers to it in her book. (Refers to book: We Band of Angels, Elizabeth Norman: CR 1999). I called her Mrs. Hughby, she called her a different name. But we had a woman that was I think, she was a German and she had been in the American army nurse corps. But later, she married a German man. I've gotten this mixed up, but anyway, Mrs. Hughby had been married to a German and she had also had an association with the army nurse corps.

When she found out we were in the prison camp, she knew, I believe she knew Josie Nesbitt. She contacted our chief nurse and offered to give us food. And she did. She brought food about once a week, I guess, to us. Not a lot by the time it was divided, but it was enough. She was very kind to us. But she came. The Japanese let her come to the gate. We had a package line.

I didn't mention that to you but there was a package line where people who lived inside the camp had servants outside who were loyal to them and the people in the camp had ways of getting money. This is probably not made clear to lots of people. People who lived inside Santo Tomas frequently had access to funds outside. Or they had someone they could borrow from. I was able to borrow money through our chief nurse. She had contacts and businessmen would lend money to us.

So Mrs. Hughby was very good to us in that respect. She gave us food and we were very grateful for it

{End of tape 1, side 2}

We were working at the vegetables. The women prepared the vegetables and the men did the cooking.

Mr. Cox: This book is Prisoners of Santo Tomas.

Mrs. Millett: Yes. A woman prisoner wrote that.

Mr. Cox: When you found out that you were going to be released, did the Army come into the camp?

Mrs. Millett: Oh, sure. Well, all afternoon of the 4th I could hear a rumbling noise. And I knew it was tanks. I'd heard enough tanks, you know, that I knew it was the noise of the tanks. I could hear, there was nothing to drown out the sound. And that night we all had to go to bed by dark. We had to be in our rooms at 7:15, I think, or 7 o'clock. But after things got tense, the Japanese really clamped down on us. So, we were inside and they came about 8:30.

We had already gone to bed, there was nothing else to do. We couldn't have lights on. We were in blackout, so we went to bed. And at 8:30 I heard a noise and a commotion outside and I got up pulled on my coveralls to see what was going on. And we heard a

little bit more noise and loud noises outside and I went downstairs and my goodness, the Americans had come in with a tank and someone yelled, "Who's in there?" And, I don't know, somebody else yelled, "We're Americans" or something. We didn't even know for sure if it was Americans coming after us. But a tanker came down and one of the Japanese guards went out and threw a hand grenade at a tank. Of course, that couldn't do much damage. Wouldn't blow a tank up, I don't think. He had to do that. It was his way of showing his bravery. And then, our commandant was killed.

This is sort of a sad story. He was killed and he was taken back in the emergency place where we treated all the other people. And someone said that he was put on a woman's bed and she came and kicked him off the bed. I don't know if that really happened or not.

But another person came to me and said, "Come, let's go see the commandant. He's dead. He's here in this room. Let's go look at him." And I went. I felt rather sick to my stomach to go look. I looked at him but I didn't enjoy the sight. I had no feeling of joy at all looking at that man. It was very depressing, the whole mess.

Mr. Cox: Did he commit suicide or did somebody shoot him?

Mrs. Millett: I don't remember. I'm sure they must have shot him because he was very effective with his grenade. Then one man that was on the tank was carried inside on the shoulders of the internees. It was just bedlam inside in the main building where I was. Absolute bedlam. Everyone was crowded around. Then in a few, oh maybe in a hour or two, we began to get wounded soldiers in. A lot of them were wounded. There must have been 100 casualties but we didn't put very many to bed. We had maybe 40 in bed. But, when we got our soldiers in bed I remember I was asked by our chief nurse to ask the women in the room next to the clinic, our emergency clinic was on the front of the building. Josie said, "Empty our that room. Ask those people to get out of their room and we will put the wounded soldiers on their beds." Well, they did, but at the head of every bed was a T-bar that the women hung their clothes on. And up here was this bar, like a cross, and the women's clothes were hanging up there and here was this pole down there that they had hung other things on. And when you walked down the aisle, here are all of these big American men lying in bed with women's clothes! What a picture!

I remember when we got them all quieted down and every thing was calm, I went up and down the aisle just to look at them. And then I was gloating. I was so happy and they look so wonderful. They were well fed and their cheeks were full. They had haircuts and they looked wonderful, these guys that came in. And even though they were wounded they looked wonderful. And I went over to a sergeant in the first bed. They were in their uniforms, these men were, and I reached down and touched him on the shoulder and I said, "Sergeant, you have no idea how wonderful you look to me." And he reached up and he pinched me on the cheek and he said, "You don't look bad to me either."

Mr. Cox: Still had a sense of humor, didn't he?

Mrs. Millett: Yes. And then in a little bit a sergeant came to me and he said, "Nurse. My colonel's out here and he's injured. He's in a lot of pain. I wish you'd come look at him and see if you could help him." So I went out to see this man. He was a colonel in charge of the outfit that had liberated us. And this is shameful for me, but I don't have that piece of paper to tell you what outfit it was.

On this first night of our liberation, there was lots of confusion but I remember the sergeant that said my colonel is hurting. And when I went out to see him he had a gun shot wound or some type of wound in his leg, in the calf, but I didn't have to undo it. It was freshly bandaged and I didn't attempt to undo it but I gave him some morphine and I

gave him about a grain of morphine because that was the way it was setup in my bag. I had a 20cc syringe, and I put 20 grains of morphine in there and I shook it up real good. In those days we didn't have it already dissolved. We had to dissolve a tablet, so I shook this all up and I went out and I gave him a shot of morphine. About almost a cc of the stuff and he calmed down and he went to sleep.

Four hours later the sergeant came back and he said, "The colonel's restless again. Could you come and look at him again?" And I went out and I gave him that other shot with my gun and he quieted down. About sunrise I thought I'd go out and see the colonel and see how he's doing. And I went out and spoke to him. And I said, "I understand you had a pretty rough night?" I didn't tell him what I had done. "You had a pretty rough night last night, didn't you colonel?" "Oh, no, I slept like a baby all night." He never knew I gave him two injections of morphine. Not until I wrote and told him 2 years ago. I thought that was so funny. And I had forgotten his name, either Conner or O'Conner was all I could remember. And I kept asking people, "Who was he?" And finally, they put it in their Saber, monthly newsmagazine and 3 or 4 people wrote to me and told me that his name was Conner.

He has broken a hip since then but his wife has written to me a couple of times. So he is in Washinton and he said it was the highlight of his life. And so did this man that was here. Some man from Tennessee also wrote to me and told me where Conner was. He said there's bittersweet memories from that.

Mr. Cox: I'm sure there would be. It was quite an experience.

Mrs. Millett: Yes, it was. And when the invading troops came in then, and the officials who were going to set up their camp, there was an officer named Alexander. And he came to me. And I was walking toward the main building in my kakhi uniform, I guess the nurses who came in wore kakhi also. But this man said, "Are you one of our nurses that's been a POW?" And I said, "Yes, I am." Then he said, "I guess you'd like to go home, wouldn't you?"

Mr. Cox: And you said, yes I would, didn't you?

Mrs. Millett: Yes. And that time I cried. I never cried any other time except once. I can't remember what that was. But I cried. Yes, I said, "I guess I would."

Mrs. Cox: Probably one of the most happy times in your life.

Mrs. Millett: Yes, they were tears of joy for sure. And then I went up to sign my name and I got to go. In about 2 more days they took us out. But, it never bothered me. I was tough. I could do it. I could handle it. But not when I had those soft words....

Mr. Cox: Well, Sally, I want to thank you very much for relating your experiences to me so we can put them in our archives so future generations can tell how it was. This is from my heart.

Mr. Cox: Thank you. You know when we got out of camp, we left February 12 and there was a C-46, I believe it was, came in to take us out. There were about 86 of us on that plane and the 2 pilots were young men. One was not even 21 yet but he said he was going to be in 2 more days. We had a pilot who was not quite 21 and his co-pilot walked up and down the aisle and took pictures of us. He was happy. He was on vacation. It was a lark.

And I had a brother who was a pilot in the air force at that time. But he was stationed at the Pentagon and he met us in San Francisco with the co-pilot that brought Gen. Bliss out. Gen. Bliss had a son who was coming to San Francisco from the war about that

time. I don't know how that kid got there, but he was there when we go there. Gen. Bliss got to come out too. He was Surgeon General. I told my brother and Surgeon General about this and my brother looked at the general and said, "I don't like the sound of that, do you?" And the general said, "No, not at all." Like the sound of it? We were already home and safe.

But actually, the plane did have one engine that went bad. And I never found out if everyone had to get off the plane. I got off the plane. I think what they did was unload 40 of us and I got on a different plane because we landed at Mindoro at San Jose. San Jose is the capital. And we landed there and I got off the plane with a bunch of the nurses. Forty of us got on to another plane, which I thought was a C-47. We went out on a C-46 I thought, from Santo Tomas, then got on a C-47 and flew down to Tacklobun to Leyte where Gen. Eikelburger was in there. He had captured the island of Leyte. And he went to this base, Eikelburger's headquarters and we stayed there from Feb. 12th until Feb. 24th. And they refitted us with uniforms and cleaned us up a little bit, you know. Tried to. We looked pretty sad even then.

But I expect you have pictures of us up there getting off the plane?

Mr. Cox: I think so.

Mrs. Millett: Probably do. I'll look sometime when you take me up there. If I think there's some you'd like to have up there, I'll give you some because I have extras. And when we flew home, we flew, I think, to Quadjulan I guess, and from Quadjulan to Honolulu, and from Honolulu to San Francisco. And in Quadjulan a man that became the co-pilot, we had different planes, I guess, that took us. I thought it was the same airplane, it looked the same to me. But at Quajulan, the co-pilot signed the menu. And I remember his name was something like Grenick, Greinick, or something like that and I thought what a funny sounding name.

And a year ago, he and his wife found me here. And he said, "I always wondered where you nurses disappeared to. I wondered why there was no one in San Antonio." And now I see them quite often, but not as often as I'd like.

Mr. Cox: Does he live here in town?

Mrs. Millett: Yes. He found out I was here because he was one of the Confederate pilots that had an airplane stationed out here in Stinson Field. And someone said I know that girl, and so Greinick searched me out. He found me. So now we have a lot of fun. I traveled all the way from Quadjulan to Honolulu with him. I don't think he flew into San Francisco with us, I've forgotten. But we came home in 3 different stages. And on Quadjulan some of the pilots there were so happy to see women. You know they'd been away from white women for a long time. They offered to take me and one of the nurses out for a ride and to show us their airplane. They took us out to their B-29 and asked us to crawl through it. And I crawled through it, the B-29, from the tail end to the front of it. That was a date.

Another place we were entertained in Honolulu, we went to Doris Duke's home. It had been commandeered as the general's headquarters, his bivouac. And they took us out there that afternoon. It was a palatial place to be.

And then I went surfing on a surfboard and there was some man surfing out there. I couldn't surf and I certainly wasn't standing on it. I mean I was clinging to it. I can't even swim. And this fellow asked me, "Where are you from, where are you going?" or something like that. I said, "I've just come home from the Philippines. I've been a

prisoner of war for 3 years. I'm just getting home." "Oh" he said, "I don't believe it." I said, "Yes, I have." He said, "I don't believe that at all." And he became angry with me because he had never heard that there were any women kept as prisoners in the Philippines. And I was afraid of him. I paddled myself back toward the shore. He couldn't believe it.

And another one. Funny things like this happened when we got home. A sailor was riding with me on a train. Mostly a troop train. He was asking me, telling me about things that had been going on in the States. And he asked me if I knew a few people. I think they were movie stars. I said, "No. I never heard of that one either." He said, "Geez, you don't know anything, do you?" And then when he left, he gave me the creeps. He said, "Do you mind if I just touch you?" That was spooky. And that happened several times. It did. And it really bothered me.

But here's the best story I have for you. I have to tell you this one. When we went to Florida, we were told that we had to march for the Inspecting General. You know, we never had basic training, the nurses that were in the Philippines. We'd never been taught to march. So I met a very fascinating colonel down there, whom I later married. And we were told that we were going to have an inspection and we'd have to go out for formation and march. I said to Col. Millett, "I don't know how to march. What will I do?" He said, "You just stand behind me and follow me." And I did for about 18 months and I caught him. And I married him. That's enough stories. That's the truth.

Mr. Cox:

Well, once again, Sally, thank you very much.