

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Bill Lane

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Mr. Metzler: This is Ed Metzler. And today is the first of April, 2006. I'm interviewing Mr. Bill Lane in Kerrville, Texas. This tape is being done in support of the Texas Historic Commission and the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Let me start out, Bill, by thanking you for spending the time to share some of your recollections with us today. And I'd like to start by having you tell us your full name, when and where you were born and a little bit about your family.

Mr. Lane: Okay. I was born in the northeast corner of Texas in a little, small town called Mount Pleasant. I grew up there and graduated there from high school.

Mr. Metzler: You were born in 1922?

Mr. Lane: '22. At the end of 1941, I went to work for a refinery that was in the town there. I worked there for two years and then went to the University of Texas and—

Mr. Metzler: Tell me what your dad did for a living?

Mr. Lane: My dad died when I was eight years old. He was a driller in the oil fields in Oklahoma and had a well, the crown block in the well fell in on top of him and killed him. And my mother came back to Mount Pleasant, with me, to her mother's and that's where I grew up.

Mr. Metzler: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Lane: No. Only child.

Mr. Metzler: Only child. Spoiled. Spoiled. (laughter)

Mr. Lane: No, I wasn't spoiled. My mother wouldn't let me be spoiled.

Mr. Metzler: So after you got out of high school, you worked for a while at a refinery—

Mr. Lane: Two years.

Mr. Metzler: And then you went to UT.

Mr. Lane: Went to UT, yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me what you were studying there.

Mr. Lane: I went to UT to be, in what they called pre-med. To be a doctor. And all my family, my mother had three brothers and they were all three dentists and they all thought I would be a dentist but I grew up around dental offices all my life and the last place I wanted to be was in a dental office. I thought, "Well, I'll just be a doctor." And it turned out, I didn't make that. After I went to the University, when December the seventh when the Japanese started the war, about fifteen of us football players, freshmen football players –

Mr. Metzler: So you were on the football team, freshmen football team?

Mr. Lane: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: What position did you play?

Mr. Lane: I was a tackle, right tackle.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, you're a big guy.

Mr. Lane: Well, I was about 240 pounds then.

Mr. Metzler: That was big back then!

Mr. Lane: Well, no. Well, then, yes, yeah you're right. Nowadays 240 is what the quarterbacks are. We all fifteen went to our parents first and said goodbye for a week. Then we all met in Dallas at the Federal Building to join the marines. And in the ensuing medical that they gave me, they found out that I had, what they call a lazy eye. And the marines wouldn't take me. So I went four stores down in the building to the army. And I think one doctor looked in one ear and one doctor looked in the other ear and if they saw each other, you were okay. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: So the army physical wasn't quite as exacting.

Mr. Lane: No. They took me very happily. And the next thing I knew, I was on a plane, I mean a train, on my way to Custer, Fort Custer, Michigan. And while I was up there, I got my beginning, basic training.

Mr. Metzler: Let's see, you're a Texas Oklahoma boy and all of a sudden—

Mr. Lane: Well, I wasn't from Oklahoma. My daddy was born and raised in Texas. But he had to go up to Oklahoma to do his work. Because they have oil up there also.

Mr. Metzler: Right. So you're a Texas boy and all of a sudden you end up in the winter up in Michigan. Tell me about that.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. It was something else! I've never seen that much snow in my life. I was there for about eight weeks on my basic training and that's also the home for all the military police in the army at that time. I don't know whether it still is or not. They sent me to the military police to become a military policeman.

Combat MP they called them. I was there for about five weeks in that training and then I went to, they sent me to New Mexico, it's in there somewhere—

Mr. Metzler: Well, anyhow, somewhere in New Mexico.

Mr. Lane: Where they have a prisoner of war—

Mr. Metzler: Ruidoso.

Mr. Lane: Ruidoso. They had a big prisoner of war camp there and they were all. At that time, all they had were submarine, German submarine sailors. No army or anything, German army, or for that matter, Japanese.

Mr. Metzler: So these were POWs from the U-boats.

Mr. Lane: U-boats, yeah. And they were definitely Sieg Heils. They came out every morning at 5:30, stood in line and stood up there, with their hands up and said, "Sieg Heil!, Sieg Heil!, Sieg Heil!" And then later on, when I was about ready to leave there, we got the first prisoners of war from North Africa, German prisoners. I didn't even get much of a chance to even see them because we were put in a barracks and they came in and gave us a cardboard stencil with numbers in it and a paint thing and you had to take your barracks bag and paint those numbers on your barracks bag. And it was the same number for everybody because we were all going to the same place. We were also told not to leave the barracks under any circumstances because they didn't know when we would be going.

Mr. Metzler: Did you know where you were going to go?

Mr. Lane: No. And at the end of the first week, one of the officers came in and said, "You're scheduled to go to the European Theater." We said, "Oh." Of

course, they were asking, “When?” They said, “Don’t ask now.” A week later, they came back with another stencil, another paint brush and a little can of paint and said, “Paint that other one out, that number out on your barracks bag and paint this one on.” And we all asked, “Why?” And they said, “You’re going to the Pacific Theater.” We said, “What happened?” (laughter) Next thing I knew, two days later, a train pulled up out there and we all got on and went to San Francisco and boarded an old, not old, it was brand new for that matter, but to us it was old, Liberty boat. I don’t know if you know what a Liberty—

Mr. Metzler: I know what a Liberty ship is.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. Liberty ship. And so we got on a Liberty ship and our group of ships that were going to go in that direction, what do they call that?

Mr. Metzler: Convoy.

Mr. Lane: Convoy, yep. The convoy took off the night before, because that Liberty ship wasn’t quite finished yet. So we left the next morning. Went under the Golden Gate Bridge about five o’clock in the morning and I got a chance to look up at it. And then a little D, it’s a destroyer escort; it looks like a destroyer except it’s about half as big. It went in front of us, weaving back and forth all the way from there to New Caledonia off of Australia. Twenty-three days.

Mr. Metzler: That’s a lot of weaving.

Mr. Lane: Twenty-three days of that.

Mr. Metzler: Now, was this the first time you had been on a ship?

Mr. Lane: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: What was that like?

Mr. Lane: I was just out of northeast Texas; I'd never been on a ship in my life.

Mr. Metzler: Probably never seen the ocean!

Mr. Lane: No.

Mr. Metzler: So, did you get seasick?

Mr. Lane: No, I didn't. It's funny but I never did get seasick. A little bit after we went underneath the Golden Gate Bridge, we first started hitting the waves and I got just a little bit queasy there. But that's the only time I ever got even that much.

Mr. Metzler: Well, that's lucky.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, I was lucky.

Mr. Metzler: It was twenty-three days of it!

Mr. Lane: Every railing had somebody bent over it.

Mr. Metzler: Oh my goodness.

Mr. Lane: It was terrible. And then we got out there, I don't know, several miles off, out into the ocean and we, they stopped, and some guy who was supposed to be the, somebody told me, he was the guy that helped get the ships out of the Golden Gate area—

Mr. Metzler: They call him the pilot.

Mr. Lane: Pilot. And he got in a little boat and went back and he did it all again.

Mr. Metzler: So, twenty-three days en route to New Caledonia. So, what was New Caledonia like?

Mr. Lane: It was a little, small island. What it was originally, it was a French penal island. That's where the French sent all their bad prisoners. That was years ago, of course, and they had one big city, one big town, I guess you'd say, called Noumea. And down on the south end of the island was an air force base, Tontouta Air Force Base.

Mr. Metzler: Now had New Caledonia been occupied by the Japanese?

Mr. Lane: No. They never did. We were just off from the Japanese at that point. And then one day they told us, "Grab your barracks bags and your packs and be ready to go in one hour." Everybody said, "Where we going?" We didn't know. They put us aboard a regular ship, not a navy ship. But we had to sleep in bunks on top of each other down in the hatches, underneath.

Mr. Metzler: In the hold.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, in the holds. They took us up north and to the west a little bit to an island called Guadalcanal. And we landed there in the night about four o'clock in the morning. And a great big, huge square barge-like thing, it had a great, big, huge outboard motor on the back of it and we had to go over the side on nets and down, with our packs on our back and our bags were left in the boat because they'd haul those out separately and we'd get them later on. We got down there, and they kept bringing people down, bringing people down, and there was no things on the side of it, it was just flat barge, I'd guess you'd call it.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, a floating flat surface.

Mr. Lane: It was a square, floating block with a motorboat, great, big, huge motorboat engine on the back of it. So those of us that were standing near the edge were thinking we might fall off. We didn't, fortunately. We landed on the beach and had to jump off into the water—

Mr. Metzler: Now this was at night?

Mr. Lane: Yeah. Well, by the time we got down there, it was probably close to five o'clock.

Mr. Metzler: Now roughly, what time in '42 was this?

Mr. Lane: This was in the latter part of '42 as it was right around Christmas time.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, so it's getting toward the end of the year.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. Then we got off and put ashore on the beach and there was a whole row of army trucks sitting out there waiting for us and some officer, I don't know who, 'cause he was already there, told us that each squad and so on would get in each truck and they'd take us to the front line. Now we had never been in combat.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, now were you still a combat MP?

Mr. Lane: Yeah. But my job, see mainly was supposed to have been, and most of the time it was, but a great deal of the time I was just a plain soldier.

Mr. Metzler: Infantryman.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. And ah, my job as a combat MP was mainly to, for example, at crossroads where soldiers were going through and wondered which way they were supposed to go and I was supposed to direct them and so on. I did a lot of that in the war. But I did more as a regular infantryman, in those days.

Later on it got better. Guadalcanal was the first battle that we really had in the war.

Mr. Metzler: What division and company and battalion – did you have all those designations?

Mr. Lane: Well, yes, we had our officers and we also had, at that time I was an infantryman first class.

Mr. Metzler: Which Army was this?

Mr. Lane: When I moved from New Caledonia up there to Guadalcanal, I was joined to the Americal Division, which is the division that was put together in New Caledonia. That's where it got its name.

Mr. Metzler: A-M-E-R—

Mr. Lane: I-C-A-L. Yeah. Americal Division. And that's in that thing too also.

Mr. Metzler: So, here you are on Guadalcanal. Tell me what happened?

Mr. Lane: Well, when we got there, they put us in those trucks and took us to. That island, I didn't know at that time but I found out later, was owned originally by Pete, what's that American company that makes soap? I can't think of the first name.

Mr. Metzler: Colgate Palmolive?

Mr. Lane: Palmolive Pete. That whole thing was full of old coconut trees.

Mr. Metzler: Right. Because they'd take the oil from that and make soap from it.

Mr. Lane: Yes. These trucks, it was night time of course because it hadn't gotten to dawn yet, they'd turn on little bitty lights on the front of those trucks, they don't shine or anything but at least it lets somebody see that—

Mr. Metzler: That you're coming.

Mr. Lane: And we drove through one of these orchards of palm trees up to the point where, there was a hill going up and right down at the bottom there was a row of foxholes and marines were in there. Because the marines went there first. And ah, some marine officers came out and said, "Okay we want, squad by squad to follow these officers here and we're going to put you in these foxholes and marines were going to go out because they've been there for a long time."

Mr. Metzler: So in essence, you were relieving the marines.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, they were leaving and we were taking their place. The funny thing was, the marines had been there for so long and they, Malaita Strait where Guadalcanal is, was mostly controlled by Japan. Their ships and so on. They could not get supplies up to Guadalcanal for us. We wound up the last, the marines were the ones that started it, when we first got there we had a little bit of supplies to eat but shortly after that ran out and the marines had found a big supply of Japanese food in a big box-like house that they'd left up when we, the marines first landed.

Mr. Metzler: Kind of a warehouse.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, kind of a warehouse. Mostly rice and that's about what we lived on. I guess for about four months. Just this old rice. Lost a lot of weight.

Mr. Metzler: I bet you did! It was better than K-rations, or C-rations.

Mr. Lane: Even that would have been great. Then after about, around March of 1943, they pulled us out, the Americal Division out and we were sent down to Australia for rest and recuperation.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, R&R.

Mr. Lane: R&R, yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Now did you actually see any Japanese when you were there in Guadalcanal?

Mr. Lane: Oh yeah!

Mr. Metzler: So tell me about that.

Mr. Lane: Well the marines had done a damn good job before we got there. (laughter) But there was still some, I think the worst battle we had was up on the north end of Guadalcanal, there is a river that goes through there and out to the sea called the Tenaru River. I don't know how you spell it but that's the way you pronounce it. And the tide would go out and come back in so the level of the river would rise and fall. We got to the bank of the, on our side, the south side and we were getting ready to try to figure out what to do and we knew the Japs were over there because at night they would yell and holler and scream and do all kinds of talking in Japanese.

Mr. Metzler: So you could hear them talking?

Mr. Lane: Oh yeah. Across, on the other side of the river.

Mr. Metzler: Why would they do that?

Mr. Lane: I have no idea.

Mr. Metzler: Trying to scare you guys off or what?

Mr. Lane: Well we were quiet as hell, trying to make sure they didn't know we were there. And they were just screaming and hollering.

Mr. Metzler: Maybe they didn't know you were there.

Mr. Lane: I kind of think they didn't. But the next morning about dawn, or just before dawn, the tide went out and here the Japanese came down the bank and splashing across the bottom of the river, which wasn't that deep. Because when the tide went out, I mean, the water went out. The battle started then and they finally reached, coming up our side there. And the closest they ever got to where I was, at that point I had a, they had given me, I had normally been carrying a Tommy gun and they changed me over to a BAR, Browning automatic rifle. I was sitting there with a Browning automatic rifle and they got up to me, about as far as from here to that lamp—

Mr. Metzler: So just a few feet away.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. And that BAR was (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: So you just let them have it?

Mr. Lane: Yeah. I had a whole bunch of them there in front of me.

Mr. Metzler: My gosh. So you're practically hand-to-hand combat here.

Mr. Lane: Well, I don't remember seeing anybody that close to where it was hand-to-hand but they got nearly right up to the top before they finally, a few of them turned around. The few that were left. Then we went down and followed them and chased after them and when they got up to the north end of the island. And this was the first time I saw this happen, I couldn't believe it.

The Japanese ran off into the beach and out into the water and ran out in the water and drown themselves.

Mr. Metzler: Isn't that something.

Mr. Lane: It was unbelievable to me. I thought they would finally surrender, you know, after they were cornered up there at the dead end of the island. I saw that twice, in another place, in the Philippines. Up on the north end of the Philippines. We were fighting up there. We ran nearly a whole division, on the north end of the Philippines is a drop off down to the sea.

Mr. Metzler: Kind of a cliff.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, it was a cliff. They ran and jumped off that cliff into the water and killed themselves.

Mr. Metzler: So after these guys in Guadalcanal drown themselves, then what happened?

Mr. Lane: Well, that was the end of it, really, because there weren't any more Japs on the island that we could find. About two weeks later, we were sent back to Australia to Sidney for R&R.

Mr. Metzler: So where in Australia did you go?

Mr. Lane: In Australia? Sidney.

Mr. Metzler: Sidney. Okay.

Mr. Lane: They had a stadium that they used, the Aussies used for, I think soccer, and the American army came in and put pup tents all up and down the whole inside of it. And our whole division was put in there and that was where we stayed.

Mr. Metzler: So what time of year was this then?

Mr. Lane: Early part of '43.

Mr. Metzler: So that's summer time there.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, it was. I don't know if you want to put this in there or not but I'm going to tell you this anyway. At that time, over in Europe, North Africa was being, going—

Mr. Metzler: Active campaign.

Mr. Lane: In Australia, all the Australian fighting men, if they were eighteen to forty, were all gone. The British had moved all the Australian men into North Africa. So when we got there, (chuckle) there weren't any men younger than forty or older than eighteen and the women, the Australian women, bless their souls. We were cornered in this stadium and to get out we had to go through a gate up there and had to show our tags and what not. But outside of it, every afternoon, at each gate there would be 15, 20 maybe 30 women, young women, with blankets underneath their arm and a little thing with some sandwiches in it, waiting for some American who'd want to come out and go have, as they'd say, "Have a go at it, don't ya?" (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: My gosh, that was some kind of R&R, wasn't it?

Mr. Lane: I didn't leave the stadium very much. But it was good rest and recuperation.

Mr. Metzler: So the Australians were friendly, huh?

Mr. Lane: Oh yeah. Very, very friendly. Those were, I guess they are now.

Mr. Metzler: How long were you there?

Mr. Lane: We were there about three weeks. And then, from there, we had to go back aboard ship and they took us from there up to Bougainville.

Mr. Metzler: Now when you were in Sidney, did you get into town to see what Sidney looked like?

Mr. Lane: Not much. The nearest I got in there one night, this girl had her blanket and I said, "Let's go get something to eat. Is there any place around here?" And she said, "I'll take you downtown. We'll go eat down there at a restaurant." Of course, she said it in an Australian voice, not like I'm saying it now. We went in there, and sat down, and there wasn't anybody waiting on us and finally she got up and just yelled and hollered at them and in a few minutes, this Australian man, looked like he was about 65 or 70 years old. But nearly all the other men were all gone. He came out and took care of us. And when we came out, we started to walk back, kind of toward the stadium where I was trying to go. I wasn't wanting to go out in the bushes. And ah, three Australian soldiers were coming down the sidewalk in front of us and I got to looking, as we were walking toward them and I thought, "They see me with this Australian girl, we're liable to have"—

Mr. Metzler: Problems.

Mr. Lane: Some Texan-fightin' here. I was so amazed when they walked up, they walked right up to me. Right up in front of us, both me and the girl, and they said, "All right mate. Give her a go now." (laughter) And then they went on. Are you getting that?

Mr. Metzler: You bet. Sorry about that.

Mr. Lane: Anyway, well, you can always blot it off. Anyway, we were there about three weeks and then we were sent up to Bougainville.

Mr. Metzler: Bougainville, yep.

Mr. Lane: And we were surprised at Bougainville because we had thought that the Japs were really swarming up there. As it turned out, they had already taken a great number of their troops out of Bougainville to move to another island somewhere. We didn't have much of a battle to start with, but—

Mr. Metzler: So what did you do? Go in on a landing craft?

Mr. Lane: They took us up in submarines.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, well tell me about the submarines.

Mr. Lane: And then they took these rubber boats and put us in them, at night and we went ashore and it got about dawn.

Mr. Metzler: So how many of you went in that way?

Mr. Lane: About two squads. What they were trying to do was, they were fighting down here and they're. I don't know if they did it with planes or what, but they found where all the bunch was located up there. So they said, "We're going to take these", whatever it was, three or four or five squads, "and put them on landing boats. And we're going up the beach, up the side of Bougainville, and when we get up here, behind where all these Japs are, we're going to put them on shore and let them come in from behind"—

Mr. Metzler: Kind of behind the lines.

Mr. Lane: The only trouble was. (laughter) The best laid plans of mice and men! You know how it goes. When we got off the boats and got on the edge of the beach and started heading for the trees, we got fired on. And it must have been 400 Japanese there. And we were caught in the sand of the beach. We

couldn't, the boats had gone that brought us up there because we were supposed to go on down and we were caught up there on the beach and couldn't get up because of the fire from the Japanese. We fired at them, but you had to lay down in the sand and try to stay down in the sand as much as you could. Finally—

Mr. Metzler: Now was this at night?

Mr. Lane: No, this was probably, when we got out it was just at dawn. But when we started up the beach it was probably around six o'clock in the morning. I don't know what time it was.

Mr. Metzler: It was just coming up daylight.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, it was daylight. By the time it got to noon, we were still, I guess there were about eight of us left, that got up and started running down the beach, back toward where we came from. And we lost two of them on the way, so I think there were about six of us out of the five or six squads. And there's about nine or ten men in a squad. So you can imagine how many—

Mr. Metzler: You lost almost—

Mr. Lane: So we were just really slaughtered. And I was, I think now, sixty-three years later, how easy it could have been. How did I get through all that fire? I had one bullet ricochet off my steel helmet, but it didn't hit hard enough to even bend it hardly. That's the closest any of them got to me while we were running down the beach. They didn't follow us. They just stayed up there while we ran down there. But we had to run for about eight or ten miles down the beach to get back to where the whole major force was. By that time,

they'd gotten some more recruits in from somewhere and we went right on up and wiped them out.

Mr. Metzler: Well now, where did you board the submarine?

Mr. Lane: Well, they had little rowboats. The submarine, the submariner, I guess you would call it, would paddle this little boat into the beach and we'd. I guess it would hold four or five men and they had about, oh I guess, two or three submarines. I'm not sure how many now. That was a long time ago. Anyway, they had enough so that they had a whole bunch of those boats, little rubber boats and they hauled us all in there. And then we went in to a hatch, back on the back of it that went down into where the torpedoes were. That's where we stayed, down there, until we got ready to go and then we went back up this ladder, on that same. They opened that lid up and we came out and got back into the rubber boats and went to the beach and onto shore.

Mr. Metzler: Did you have a long ride on that submarine? Or was it just an hour or so.

Mr. Lane: To me, I thought it was for about four or five years. I have claustrophobia. And when they told me, "You take your squad, Bill and join all these other guys and meet these sailors out here and you're going to go in this boat up the islands." They explained all the things, you know. I said, "Did you say in the submarine?" (laughter) I don't know how I made it, but I did.

Mr. Metzler: I guess if you have to, you do it.

Mr. Lane: Well, they said, "Go." and I had to go. Then, we were there for about three weeks. Because there wasn't much on there except for those that we wiped out. Then, four or five navy ships, I mean navy passenger-type ships—

Mr. Metzler: Troop ships.

Mr. Lane: Troop ships, yeah. Came in and picked all of us up. And took us to a little island called Palau. There, the Japanese had already left, when we got there. Here we came with all these, we had about three battleships and I guess about four or five cruisers, sitting out there firing into the palm trees. And when we finally went over the side and got in little landing boats and got up there, we ran real fast to get into the woods and get off the beach. You get caught on the beach and you're dead nearly. We got into the trees and there wasn't a sound. And we started moving forward and we moved all the way into where there was a little kind of mountain there and we never found a Jap. All these ships, all these men, and there was nobody on the island.

Mr. Metzler: There was no resistance what so ever. So that was Palau. How do you spell that?

Mr. Lane: P-A-L-A-U. The reason I know is because when I was writing that thing there, I thought to myself, "How did we spell Palau?" So I got my big dictionary and I thought, "Do you suppose they have that in there?" And sure enough, I got over there in the Ps, and I finally found P-A-L-A-U.

Mr. Metzler: So what happened after Palau?

Mr. Lane: Well, we were on Palau. They left us there for a while, I guess, for about three weeks. There was nothing to do. Which we were kind of happy for, because we had been on Guadalcanal and then Bougainville, and outside of those three weeks in Sidney, you know, we'd been in combat all that time. And we were kind of happy to have a little break in it. And then they put us in

a ship, along with a bunch of other ships. As a matter of fact, it was more ships than I believe I thought we even had. Battleships and other things, and we went up to place called Leyte, in the Philippines. And we landed on Leyte. And there the Japs were waiting for us.

Mr. Metzler: There was a little resistance there.

Mr. Lane: Yes there was.

Mr. Metzler: So tell me about the landing there. How did that go?

Mr. Lane: It was about like most of them. We landed on the beach and ran into the woods to get out—

Mr. Metzler: There wasn't any resistance landing on the beach?

Mr. Lane: No. They were firing out at the landing craft when we were coming in. But when we got up there to where they put the clip down and we ran in. The funny thing, the boat that we were on, when it came in, it didn't go in far enough and he flopped the lid down and we ran out and it was (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: Right up to your neck?

Mr. Lane: Yeah, so we had to go through all that to get to the beach. And then of course everything was wet, all your clothes and shoes and everything.

Mr. Metzler: Even the rifle?

Mr. Lane: At that time, I was carrying a 45 caliber pistol. I was a sergeant in charge of nine men. It wasn't that bad. But after you got in there, you found that you weren't alone. Because they had, every tree had somebody in it.

Mr. Metzler: Snipers.

Mr. Lane: Snipers. Yeah. And we fought snipers 'til we were sick of it. We had to have about half of our squad constantly keeping their eyes on the palm trees because that's where they'd get in those palms, on top of the palm trees and they all had these Japanese sniper rifles. My son's got one at home that I brought home with me. I gave it to him. My middle son. We had to fight pretty hard on Leyte until we took the island. Then—

Mr. Metzler: Did you have face-to-face contact with enemy?

Mr. Lane: Yes. Head on.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Lane: There was an awful lot of bayoneting that we'd not had to use before, because we hadn't gotten that close. We'd fire at them and killed them but we never had real close contact with them. That was the first time that we had that. Of course, a lot of times you'd stab them with the bayonet and then fired and blew them apart and made sure that they were dead.

Mr. Metzler: Were they tough?

Mr. Lane: You know, the Japanese were. Well, you know they fought in China, back in the late twenties all the way up into the, until they got with us, against the Chinese. So they were all veteran—

Mr. Metzler: Battle-hardened.

Mr. Lane: Battle-hardened people. Our bunch that came overseas there, we'd never fought a battle in our lives. First time we did when they put us in that foxhole there on Guadalcanal. We knew nothing about what we were doing. But we learned very quickly.

Mr. Metzler: It's amazing how fast you learn when you have to.

Mr. Lane: One thing I thought was funny. I don't know if I put it in that thing there but. We were right on the edge of this palm tree orchard, plantation and right at the edge of a hill. Later on it was called Bloody Ridge. I don't know if you've ever heard of it. We were in foxholes right at the bottom. And ah, it was dark, and one guy in each fox hole was supposed to stay awake. The other two could sleep. One would, and then they'd shift off. But nobody would sleep. I'm talking about that first night we were there. First night we were in any kind of combat. We came off that barge and they took us in there. What happened was, we were told, "Don't fire in these foxholes." By these marine officers who had put us in there.

Mr. Metzler: Why's that?

Mr. Lane: That's what we asked ourselves. We hear shooting. Why don't they want us to shoot? And then, up in one of the palm trees was a bird that's located in Guadalcanal, which is, I think they're called cockatoos. One of the trees right above us, one of those palm—

(end of tape A, side 1)

Mr. Metzler: Okay, you were telling me about the cockatoos.

Mr. Lane: Yes, and when he squawked, about 500 men fired their M-1 rifles, ___? Rifles. You know, we didn't know. Of course, the muzzle blasts on the M-1 rifle is about two and half feet long when it fires. So if you're a Jap and you're sitting over here looking on this hill looking down, you see that, they know exactly where you are.

Mr. Metzler: They know where you are.

Mr. Lane: And that's when the marine officers came running up saying, "Cease fire! Cease fire!" And then we learned our first lesson of warfare. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: You learned that on Guadalcanal.

Mr. Lane: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, so here you are in Leyte and we're having a go at the Japanese—

Mr. Lane: Well, we whipped them on Leyte. Not rapidly, but fairly good because we were, by that time, we were pretty seasoned. Most of us were—

Mr. Metzler: So was that some of the toughest fighting you experienced, on Leyte?

Mr. Lane: No, we had more battles up on Luzon, which is the larger island, in pushing them on up to the north. The powers that be, put some troops coming in on each side of Leyte and the main body coming up the center through Manila. That's where I had to go through, Manila and through the edge of the old city, they called it. And ah, and we were to go up, they were coming in from the side and we then pushed the whole Japanese troops to the north of the island. To the end. It's another one of those drop offs.

Mr. Metzler: Cliff.

Mr. Lane: Off they went.

Mr. Metzler: So they just took a dive.

Mr. Lane: They just took a dive. Dropped their rifles and jumped over.

Mr. Metzler: That must have felt strange watching that.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, we're sitting there with our rifles, thinking, "Where the hell are they going?" (laughter) But they went.

Mr. Metzler: That's when you realized they're really different from us.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, they're totally different from us. They believed that to die in battle, you were allowed to go to, wherever the Japanese go to in heaven, and you were allowed to have so many women, as part of your benefit for being, getting killed in war. At least that's what they told. I had a Japanese girl, that's future ahead. But we cleared the Philippine Islands completely of Japanese.

Mr. Metzler: So the toughest fighting was on Luzon.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, Luzon was where. There and right around Manila.

Mr. Metzler: Which is on Luzon.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. Manila was probably the toughest battle that we had, that I can remember. The Japanese really wanted to stop us, because Manila was right down. There's a great big bay there and Manila was right on the edge of it and beyond that was all the islands of the Philippines. But Manila was the capital and it was the big place. And that was where they called the Old City was, that's where the old original city was.

Mr. Metzler: Did you get a good look at that?

Mr. Lane: No, they wouldn't. I didn't get a chance to. Some of the guys broke into that part and the officers told them to get out because it was not involved in the battle. So we couldn't go into the old city.

Mr. Metzler: Did you get involved in liberating any of the prison camps there, where they had some of the—

Mr. Lane: Not there, but in Japan we did. They took all the Japanese, the Japanese took all the American prisoners they got on, back when MacArthur—

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, Corregidor and Bataan.

Mr. Lane: I left an item out. When I was in Sidney, I was picked by somebody, I don't know who, to drive MacArthur around the city where ever he wanted to go, in a jeep.

Mr. Metzler: Really!

Mr. Lane: I did that for two weeks out of the three that we were there.

Mr. Metzler: Well now, tell me more about that.

Mr. Lane: Well, I hate to tell you because I. I'll have to say this. I think that MacArthur was probably the most fine general in war that I, even including what's his name over in the European Theater—

Mr. Metzler: Patton.

Mr. Lane: No, Patton was on the same order as MacArthur. Except MacArthur did it a different way.

Mr. Metzler: Right.

Mr. Lane: But he was the meanest asshole I ever saw in my life. Driving him around was the. I want you to understand now. I really admired him as a general, but I hated him as a person. And when that two weeks was up, I was so glad to get out of that job as I could be.

Mr. Metzler: So give me some examples of what, how he was mean.

Mr. Lane: The way he talked to you. The things he said to you.

Mr. Metzler: Now you were just a sergeant as the time?

Mr. Lane: At that time, I was a corporal. That was right after Guadalcanal. And ah, the way he would talk to you and the things he would say to you. And ah, the attitude is what I think I mostly, the attitude he had toward you.

Mr. Metzler: Like he didn't seem to respect you?

Mr. Lane: No. I hate to say that, but I still admire him for being one of the best generals I believe we ever had. But—

Mr. Metzler: So where did he want to go? What kinds of things did he want to see?

Mr. Lane: Well, he was always going to different buildings for something, and I had to stay there and sit there and wait for him to come back and get in this jeep and—

Mr. Metzler: So it's just you and him?

Mr. Lane: Yeah, just me and him.

Mr. Metzler: I'm amazed he didn't have any guards or anything.

Mr. Lane: That was in Sidney.

Mr. Metzler: That's true, that was an allied city.

Mr. Lane: So it was pretty clear, there wasn't any problem there. But then, to go on, we wiped them out in the Philippines and ah, then we started staging for Fanningham's Bend(?) which was right across from there. They brought up landing ships out there and we were sent out by groups, you know, you were in, like if the ships number was 24. It would have a 24 with a line and then one or two or three or whatever landing ship that was. Ship 1, ship 2, ship 3—

Mr. Metzler: Uh-huh. Within that landing ship, yeah.

Mr. Lane: In 24 ship. They would send those out to pick us up and then we would go and get on it and the ship would come up closer to the beach and then we'd go over and get in the boat and come in like we were landing, practicing, to land on Japan. That's what we were doing when we were, one night about six o'clock, word went around about the atomic bomb. And everybody was cheering and happy and some guys up in the hills—

Mr. Metzler: Now was this in the Manila area? Were you still in the Manila area?

Mr. Lane: The north part.

Mr. Metzler: The northern part of Luzon.

Mr. Lane: The northern part where Manila is, Luzon. I was close to a little city called. What they did, they built these houses up on bamboo about, not quite as high as this roof, and then they built a porch up there and they had a little ladder that went down and they lived up there in that. And underneath there was the chickens and their horses and their cattle and so on would stay in there, underneath it. And you could smell 'em a mile off. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: Anyhow, you heard about the bomb and there was a wild cheering—

Mr. Lane: Oh boy, yes. And we had to, they called out all the MPs and we went everywhere we could to stop them from, because the troops were just, going like hell, I mean, they just, they were so happy that the bomb exploded on Japan and they thought the war was over.

Mr. Metzler: So how did they describe the bomb—

Mr. Lane: It really was over, but—

Mr. Metzler: Did you call it an atomic bomb? Is that what everybody called it?

Mr. Lane: Yeah. They called it atom bomb.

Mr. Metzler: So everybody knew what they were talking about.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, well they sent word that the atom bomb had been dropped. And so, they should have just kept quiet.

Mr. Metzler: It would have made it a lot easier on the MPs. (laughter)

Mr. Lane: A lot easier.

Mr. Metzler: But the war wasn't over yet.

Mr. Lane: No, it wasn't really, although it lasted about another week and they dropped the one on Nagasaki, and then it was over.

Mr. Metzler: So what happened when you heard about the signing of the—

Mr. Lane: Well, we were still on the Philippines after, we weren't there when the big battleship came in and—

Mr. Metzler: In Tokyo Bay, the USS Missouri. But your boy was there to sign things over; Mr. MacArthur.

Mr. Lane: Oh yeah, he was. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: I wonder if he was mean to them.

Mr. Lane: No, I think MacArthur was pretty nice. I've seen pictures of it, several times in fact. And he was very, very cool with the Japanese.

Mr. Metzler: He just said a few words, not very much.

Mr. Lane: Very few words. When he said them, he really meant every word he said. And I can testify because I listened to those words back in Sidney. Oh, and the other thing that I was going to say is that, they also, when he left Manila, when President, who was president after Roosevelt?

Mr. Metzler: Truman.

Mr. Lane: Truman. Yeah. No. Yeah, Truman. When Truman. They were fighting in Corregidor and Truman sent word that MacArthur had to come back to Australia, because he was a good general and he wanted him out of the way so he could have him to, you know—

Mr. Metzler: Really.

Mr. Lane: And so he and his wife and his son got on a PT boat, there in Corregidor, on Corregidor and went to the islands and finally made their way to a submarine and they got in the submarine and it took them down to Sidney, Australia.

Mr. Metzler: So this is right at the end of the war then.

Mr. Lane: No, this was before, this was before I—

Mr. Metzler: Okay, this was early on in the war, when Corregidor fell.

Mr. Lane: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: So that was President Roosevelt.

Mr. Lane: But see, he was gone before, and the guy, the general that took his place was captured. And later on, when the war was over with, he got, MacArthur got him out of the Japanese prison, along with all the other prisoners too, and brought him up there to the ship and had him come up there, and I don't know if you recognize that in the pictures of it, but he brought him up there to stand beside him while he signed the declaration of, ending the war. I'm trying to think of his name now, Lt General, (pause) my brain is gone again. Anyway, he was a real good friend of MacArthur. And had worked with MacArthur all these years, and then he got left behind because President Truman—

Mr. Metzler: President Roosevelt (speaking simultaneously with Mr. Lane)

Mr. Lane: called MacArthur out. Then I went in the army of occupation.

Mr. Metzler: So how soon after the war was over did you actually go to Japan?

Mr. Lane: About a week and a half after the signing.

Mr. Metzler: So right afterwards.

Mr. Lane: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So where did you go?

Mr. Lane: Went to Osaka.

Mr. Metzler: Osaka.

Mr. Lane: Actually, the way the Japanese pronounce it is Osaka. (emphasis on the O)

Mr. Metzler: That's the second largest city after Tokyo.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. And they have a, what do you call it, like they have in New York? An underground—

Mr. Metzler: Subway?

Mr. Lane: Subway, yeah. They have a subway there and what they had us MPs doing, going in pairs, walking around down in the subterranean area where the subways are, and once in a while we would get on one of the trains and ride for a way. The best part of the, and I don't know if you should put this in there or not, we were so fed up with these Japanese prisoners, not prisoners but they were prisoners. MacArthur had all the prisoners released at the end of the war, when the war was over with.

Mr. Metzler: All the American POWs you mean?

Mr. Lane: German. I mean Japanese. They were all released to go. So we had a lot of problems, the military police had an awful lot of problems with these former Japanese prisoners, Japanese soldiers who were prisoners—

Mr. Metzler: Criminals I guess, almost.

Mr. Lane: Yeah they really were. That's where I got shot in the leg. But Tucker, my friend, we slept together all the time, he and I were sort of like pairs, you get that way in military police—

Mr. Metzler: They paired you up.

Mr. Lane: We looked out for each other, is what we were doing. And we started to go down the stairs, into the subway, and right in front of us was a tall, probably six, not quite six feet tall, but he was a tall Jap, 'cause most of the Japs are about five-five, and a Japanese girl, had her kimono on and everything. And he was just lambasting the hell out of her, in Japanese, we didn't know what it was, and she was scared to death, and he jerked her by the arm and took a look at me and I looked at him so we speeded up a little bit going down the stairs and got right behind him and when he took a step to go down, I kicked his foot sideways and he fell (laughter) all the way down to the bottom. And this Japanese girl stood there looking at me, and she looked at me and smiled real big and said, "I thank you very much." (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: My word.

Mr. Lane: I thought that was funny.

Mr. Metzler: Well, what did Osaka look like after the war? It must have been bombed a lot.

Mr. Lane: Nothing but debris. You could go for blocks and blocks and blocks and it would just be piles of, well they didn't have very many pieces of wood. The houses they had were made out of paper, most of them, if they were still standing. They had some wood, but it was just piles of just debris for miles and miles and miles because right before the end of the war, we, if you remember, we attacked and they got Saipan. And they made a big air base there for the—

Mr. Metzler: B-29s

Mr. Lane: B-29s. Yeah. And the B-29s were able to go all the way to Japan, bomb, and come back and so on. And they just, Tokyo was just, well every big city was just absolutely smashed by these bombs.

Mr. Metzler: I think they did a lot of fire bombing too.

Mr. Lane: Oh yeah. They sent, at night you could see in, so they were telling me, some of the airmen, you could see, at night, the end of the fuses of the fire bombs going down and all of a sudden there'd be this huge conflagration.

Mr. Metzler: So Osaka was in ruins.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, Osaka was. There were some parts of it, we had, one of the jobs I had there that I didn't like, they had. The Japanese used, all the buildings were, especially the tops of them, if there was any building at all, the tops were usually pretty bad because they'd been hit by fire bombs or by just bombs and, the Japanese made cabarets out of them, by floors. They'd have a piano on every floor and, of course, GIs, American GIs, they would flock to these cabarets at night, and they'd have a line outside and they had Japanese men

who stayed there at the door and whenever one American left, they'd let one of those—

Mr. Metzler: The next guy in line in.

Mr. Lane: Go in. Or if three went out, three went in. They allowed, for example, 500 men in there, in all, in all those four or five floors. Well, they had about four or five of those places that were in our area, in my area, and, one night. (laughter) One night I went in there, Tucker and I both went in there, we talked for a minute with the man up there at the gate, and we were allowed to go anyway, because we were military police. And we walked into the lower floor and there was some dancing going on and they had a bunch of booths all the way around the thing just like you'd see in a restaurant you know, with a table in the center and the booth on each side of it. And I was walking down the side and Tucker had stopped up there at the front and I had not noticed it. I made a bad mistake. He stopped at the door up there where the, the girl that stays up there and counts the number of people coming in and so on, and will take your hats and whatever. He had stopped to talk to her and he didn't look to see that I had gone on. And I didn't look back to see if he was following me, because we always stayed together. And I went down about three or four booths and about the fourth booth, as I was walking along, somebody said, "Hey, MP, you know you're a son-of-a-bitch." (laughter) And I thought, of all things I've been through in these last years through the 1945, I really needed to have somebody call me a son-of-a-bitch. So I turned around and grabbed him, he was sitting right on the end there. I grabbed him, he had on

those GI uniforms that have a strap here on the shoulder, I grabbed him by one of those straps and I pulled him up. I didn't get him up. I got him up about that high and I looked back down there and he was a great big man. I mean he was a huge man and he got on out of the thing. He said, "I wanna beat you up." And I said, "No you're not. You're not going to do that." And I'm thinking, surely you're not going to do that.

Mr. Metzler: So this guy was bigger than you were.

Mr. Lane: Oh yes. He wasn't as tall as I was but he was a great, big man. I found out he was in the Army Corps of Engineers. Anyway, I blocked his first swing and I caught him right in the stomach just as hard as I could. And I'm thinking, "Tucker, where the hell are you, Tucker?" (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: So what happened then?

Mr. Lane: Tucker came. He came running. He said, "I'm sorry." Later he's telling me, "I'm sorry. I stopped to talk to that good-looking Japanese girl and she was just so sweet looking I couldn't leave her." And I said, "Yeah, you left me down there with this dumb engineer." (laughter) So we took him upstairs to a little room and turned him over to some other MPs that came and picked him up and took him to a prison.

Mr. Metzler: Wonder what possessed him?

Mr. Lane: He probably got out the next day.

Mr. Metzler: Why would he say something like that to you?

Mr. Lane: He had some smart remark about you army soldiers think you're the best, or something. I don't know what it was. Just one of those kind of things. I hadn't said a word to him, I was just walking along and—

Mr. Metzler: Just minding your own business.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. I was just walking, like you do as an MP, you walk along and see that everything is doing right and so on.

Mr. Metzler: How did the Japanese people treat the Americans, you and the others? I mean were they very courteous, or were they rude or just scared of you or what?

Mr. Lane: Scared of us, the most of them. I had to go, I was moved into a, raised up in rank and moved into an area where I would go investigate problems that came up with the Japanese people and a bank president called the office and said that, could they send somebody down there to talk to him about what had happened. And he wouldn't tell them what happened. So they asked me to go and I had a Japanese girl who was spoke English—

Mr. Metzler: Interpreter.

Mr. Lane: Interpreter. She went with me and we went down there to another little small town south of Osaka. Funny part was, in Japan, you don't talk business when you first get with somebody. The Japanese. You talk about the weather, any kind of thing like that you can and of course, I had to listen to him talk and then listen to her tell me what he said. And they brought us out these kind of ceramic cups that didn't have things like American cups—

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, just little tea cup.

Mr. Lane: They had some writing around the top and she told me, “Watch what he does with the cup and do the same thing.” I said, “What’s he gonna to do?” And she says, “Just watch.” What he did was he took a sip, and then he turned the cup and he took another sip—

Mr. Metzler: From a different spot on the cup.

Mr. Lane: Different spot on the cup. And what he was doing was, there was a message in the ceramic part of the cup—

Mr. Metzler: Around the rim?

Mr. Lane: I have no idea what it was because I don’t read Japanese, but I had to sit there and sip and turn and sip and turn and sip and turn while we talked in between. And finally, he said to her, which came to me that, that morning an American Navy officer came in with a suitcase and told him that he was there for the American government for the reparations, for the money it had cost the United States and he wanted the money now. And of course, the Japanese, they were all scared of us. I don’t mean just me but I mean all American soldiers, especially a lieutenant in the navy and, so he went back there and piled in several yen, they didn’t have American money. He walked out of there with a bag full of Japanese yen. Probably would have amounted to somewhere around \$10,000 American. I said, well, I told her I said, “How old was he? What was his rank on his uniform?” Trying to get all the information I could get. And I did everything in the world. I worked on that case for about a month and I never did find. That guy walked out of there with that money and

as far as I know, he's still got it or he changed it into American money or something.

Mr. Metzler: But it was worth something? Even after the war?

Mr. Lane: They were still using their Japanese money. So, I thought, I'm a real good person for trying to find out how to be a, ah, criminologist. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: Right. Well, I guess you were an MP.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, that's all I was, was an MP.

Mr. Metzler: So how long were you in the occupation there, forces there in Japan?

Mr. Lane: I went in there about September the fifth or sixth, somewhere along in there.

Mr. Metzler: Right after the war.

Mr. Lane: Right after the war. And I left there, they sent me home, back to the United States and, right before Christmas about the 20th of December. So I was there September, October, November—

Mr. Metzler: About four months.

Mr. Lane: About four months, yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So tell me again about this incident where you got shot in the leg.

Mr. Lane: Well, that's what I was telling you a while ago. Tucker and I were driving in our jeep, going down the street. And every alley we would turn this spotlight in the alley, it was just normal procedure. And when we rolled up there, we slowed down and I turned the light over there and we saw these guys beating, slamming these, and I could see that they were GIs, army men—

Mr. Metzler: So these are Japanese beating up on GIs?

Mr. Lane: These are Japanese beating up on GIs, yep. So I, we stopped the jeep, jumped out, got our pistols and headed down the alley, because they were nearly half way down the alley. And yelling at them. And when we started yelling at them, they jumped up and started running down toward the other end of it. Like I said, there was a fence down there, they couldn't get through it, they had to climb over it. And so we had a chance to take some shots at them, because they wouldn't stop. And I shot one, Tucker shot one. The one I shot, died. And we came running back up, by then the others were gone. We couldn't get them.

Mr. Metzler: How many of them were there?

Mr. Lane: I guess there were about five or six of them. And there were three GIs. And the GIs had pretty well handled themselves for a while, because some of those Japs had some martial (laughter). But we got them and took them and carried them, or helped them walk back up to our jeep and then we got on the radio and called another ambulance to come pick them up and take them. And then we went back on our patrol again.

Mr. Metzler: And so tell me about—

Mr. Lane: The shot that got me, I don't know when it happened because I, in the excitement of shooting at them and going down there, I didn't even know that I was shot. And when we took the prisoners back up to the jeep, and I got in, to get back in the jeep, and I put my foot on the brake. My foot sloshed and I. Of course, it was pitch black, dark night. So I took the light and turned it down and there was blood all the way down my leg.

Mr. Metzler: Filling up your boot.

Mr. Lane: Filling up my boot, yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So what'd you do? So you went to the hospital, I guess?

Mr. Lane: Went to a first-aid center.

Mr. Metzler: And what happened?

Mr. Lane: They washed it a little bit here. They didn't even wash my leg or anything, just around where it was shot here. And put gauze on it and put tape over it and pulled my pant leg back down.

Mr. Metzler: Did you heal up okay?

Mr. Lane: Oh, yeah. But I told you, when I got back to camp, back there where we were staying. I told the Captain, I said, "Captain, do I get a medal for this?"—

Mr. Metzler: Purple Heart?

Mr. Lane: Yeah, Purple Heart for this down here. I said, "They shot me." He said, "Bill, the war is over." (laughter) I said, "Tell the Japanese this war is over!"

Mr. Metzler: They forgot to remember that. So no Purple Heart then?

Mr. Lane: No, that's what that letter is up there, I was talking about.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, your son sent a letter—

Mr. Lane: My son sent a letter to the President Bush, said he thought my daddy, his daddy was, since after all, they were giving full honors to the soldiers over here in Iraq and my daddy was shot in the occupation of Japan. And even though the war was over, I think my daddy deserves a Purple Heart.

(laughter)

Mr. Metzler: Well now, did you come in contact with any American prisoners of war who had been in Japan, in the Japanese prisons?

Mr. Lane: No, not loose former prisoners but we went to a place where, when we first got there, we went to a prison, Japanese prison and released the gates and everything and they had trucks there to pick up all the prisoners. They were in very bad shape.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Lane: Well, they were, the ones that came out through the gate that I saw, and I was standing there by the gate, were emaciated. They just, like they hadn't eaten in months. And, most of them were saying, "Thank you. Thank you so much!" Things like that for getting them out of that prison and, it sort of made you, you wanted to cry. But I didn't. They were so, in such terrible shape it was just unbelievable. And sores all over their bodies. Their clothing was some sort of cloth, I don't know what it was. It was very, very poor stuff. And, the prisoners had to sit there, they weren't allowed to leave, go out of the room they were in, the room they were caged in. So they didn't—

Mr. Metzler: So they didn't have to work?

Mr. Lane: Some of them had to work, yes. But the problem was, the ones that worked, weren't getting any food either. They soon got, either died or else were released back to their prison cells.

Mr. Metzler: So this prisoner of war camp was right there in the Osaka area?

Mr. Lane: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So they were just detained there. They didn't actually have to work or anything. They were just in prison.

Mr. Lane: No.

Mr. Metzler: My goodness.

Mr. Lane: They had them out, so one of the prisoners told me later on, that they would have them come out and work in the, they had a vegetable garden for the officers, not for the prisoners. They had to go out and tend it. They would eventually get so sick and so tired that they'd fall and then they'd haul them back into their room and get another prisoner.

Mr. Metzler: So you got to talk to some of these guys?

Mr. Lane: That was the only one I talked to. Outside of the ones coming out, saying "Thank you. Thank you so much for getting us out of here. Oh thank you." And you'd think, "God don't keep saying that. I don't want to hear that anymore."

Mr. Metzler: Did you go elsewhere in Japan, other than the Osaka area?

Mr. Lane: Yeah, I made several trips. I had to make a trip down to Tokyo, on a case I was supposed to be working on. It didn't come out very good either. And—

Mr. Metzler: So you got to see what Tokyo looked like.

Mr. Lane: I had a chance to come by, where the bomb, the first bomb was dropped.

Mr. Metzler: Hiroshima.

Mr. Lane: Hiroshima. And got a chance to look at it. I didn't want to get anywhere near it.

Mr. Metzler: No. What did it look like?

Mr. Lane: I was up on a mountain, looking down on that area down there. I've seen pictures that looked like they were shot from right where I was standing.

Mr. Metzler: Really! So it looked just like the pictures?

Mr. Lane: There was nothing. Everything was flat. I mean, everything was blown flat except for some buildings that had just pieces of the building standing up.

Mr. Metzler: Made out of reinforced concrete or something.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. The rest of it was just flat, level. You couldn't see a highway or a street or anything. It was just a whole area of trash.

Mr. Metzler: And when you were in Tokyo, did you see what Tokyo looked like?

Mr. Lane: Yeah, Tokyo. It's funny. Tokyo is sort of like Las Vegas. In a sense, I guess you'd say. The Japanese were very quick to get cabarets and things for the GIs. And for the Japanese for that matter. So when I got there, it looked like a city of lights. (chuckle) And I had just left a place where it was nothing but trash.

Mr. Metzler: And that was Hiroshima. Or Osaka.

Mr. Lane: Osaka.

Mr. Metzler: So the entrepreneurs were quick to rebuild there in Tokyo?

Mr. Lane: Oh yes. They got the money back in a hurry.

Mr. Metzler: Well, so tell me about going home then. How did that feel?

Mr. Lane: Well, it was fine except for one thing. It was in December when I was, right before Christmas, that they told me I could go home. And they said, "Get your barracks bag and your pack and go out there in that field out there and stand and wait and there'll be a truck pick you up in a few minutes. Anybody

that believed that, is crazy as hell. It didn't come by for a long time and I stood out there in snow that deep for about two hours. And by the time I got in the bus, I mean in the truck, and started to the, where the boats come in, the pier, I was coughing. By the time I got on the ship, I had a bad case of—

Mr. Metzler: Bronchitis?

Mr. Lane: Bronchitis. No not bronchitis.

Mr. Metzler: Pneumonia?

Mr. Lane: No, that other one. It's in the lungs.

Mr. Metzler: Well anyhow. You had lung problems.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. You might say it was the first one you said.

Mr. Metzler: Bronchitis.

Mr. Lane: Bronchitis. That's what I was trying to think of. (laughter) I had bronchitis all the way to, nearly to Hawaii before I got well. They sent me into the hospital for, twice a day, for therapy. And finally, just before we got into Hawaii, well the reason we got into Hawaii was that the boat we were on, taking us back to, we were supposed to go into Seattle. But it was a convoy of about four boats taking men back home and, the right propeller on the boat I was on, broke. It only had one propeller working. And so they turned and went into Pearl Harbor and landed at a pier. And the pier, the sides of the pier rose up and the water rose and the boat came up and then we're sitting up there and the Hawaiian people, the young girls from Hawaii in grass skirts, came out on the pier every morning and did the hula hulas. And we had to sit out there for a week and a half before they got a new propeller on it and so on,

before we could go back by ourselves. They changed then. They took us to San Francisco, instead of Seattle. And, I got there to Seattle, and they took us down to. I mean we got there to San Francisco and they took us down to, what's that larger city down close to the bottom of California?

Mr. Metzler: San Diego?

Mr. Lane: San Diego. Went down to San Diego and boarded a train. And the train carried us to. All of us were, mostly Texas guys. The train took us to Tyler, Texas.

(Tape B) Speaking in progress.

Mr. Lane: I'm trying to think—

Mr. Metzler: Were you decommissioned?

Mr. Lane: Yeah, decommissioned.

Mr. Metzler: So, this was—

Mr. Lane: This was in—

Mr. Metzler: Right around Christmas time?

Mr. Lane: Well, by the time we, I got there to Tyler, it was in the first part of February. Because we lost some time there in Honolulu.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, you had to look at those grass skirts for ten days. (chuckle)

Mr. Lane: Yeah, it was Christmas time, but it was just as warm as it could be there. (chuckle)

Mr. Metzler: Well, that's the way it is in the islands.

Mr. Lane: The funny part of it all was, when I got to Tyler, to the releasing station, they put us all into an auditorium, and this colonel got up in front of us and said,

“Now we understand that you men are grown,” he used the word, done soldiers, “and I want to ask you, do any of you wish to go back and re-enlist now into the army?” There were 500,000 nothings.

Mr. Metzler: So not a whole lot of votes to go back into the army?

Mr. Lane: They didn’t say yes or no or nothing. They just sat there and stared at him.
(laughter)

Mr. Metzler: No reaction what so ever.

Mr. Lane: Nope. Nobody wanted to re-up.

Mr. Metzler: And you didn’t want to either, I take it.

Mr. Lane: No, I didn’t.

Mr. Metzler: Why not?

Mr. Lane: Well, I wanted to get my life going and I want to get back to the University of Texas and get my degree and—

Mr. Metzler: Get on with your life.

Mr. Lane: Get on with my life.

Mr. Metzler: When you look back on that period now, what is your most fond recollection of that whole period in the Pacific? Do you have any happy moments or funny moments?

Mr. Lane: Yeah, I have some happy moments. And strangely enough, it was in the Philippines. After we ran the Japs off the north end of it, we went back down to a little baguio they call them, a little town. What they do is they make these bamboo houses in a circle and in the center is a, sort of a grassy area. One day I was sitting in my tent there, and this Filipino girl came in and wanted to

know if she could be my washer, wash my clothes. And I said, “Well, sure!” I hated to wash clothes badly enough (laughter) and she took my clothes. Funny part of it was, it was early in the morning and I was lying on a fold-up cot and I had no clothes on because it was hot and she walked in and I grabbed an army blanket over myself right quick.

Mr. Metzler: Cover yourself up.

Mr. Lane: And she took my clothes and I dressed and walked down. There’s a river right down beside this little town, this little community. And what she did was, she took my army uniform, pants say, put them on a flat rock and she had a wooden paddle and she’d stick in the water and slap my pants, stick it in the water, slap my pants—

Mr. Metzler: Did she have any soap?

Mr. Lane: No soap.

Mr. Metzler: Just knocking the dirt out.

Mr. Lane: Just knocked the hell out of them. (laughter) You know, our uniforms were kind of khaki-colored. When I got them back, they were white.

Mr. Metzler: She knocked all the color out of them?

Mr. Lane: She not only knocked all the dirt out of them, she knocked all the color out of them! (laughter) So I told her, her name was Desora, I can’t remember her first name now, ‘cause she worked for me for the whole time I was there, until we went to Japan. I told her—

Mr. Metzler: What did you pay her?

Mr. Lane: “Don’t hit my pants as hard as you do with the paddle, you understand?”

“I understand, I understand.”

“Don’t hit my pants with that paddle.” (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: And what did she do?

Mr. Lane: She did the same thing.

Mr. Metzler: Kept hitting it. (laughter) That’s the only way she knew how to get it clean.

Mr. Lane: That’s the only way she knew.

Mr. Metzler: What was the most horrifying, or the most disturbing experience that you had?

Mr. Lane: I hate to tell you this. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: Well, tell me anyhow.

Mr. Lane: On Guadalcanal, we were fighting the Japs up towards the Tenaru River and, the colonel of the division called me in and said, “Sergeant Lane, I want you to go out and get me a Japanese prisoner. I want to interrogate him.” I said, “Sir, you know that they won’t do that, that they’ll kill themselves first.” He said, “Well, you bring one in.” I said, “All right.” I brought him in. I caught one finally and brought him in. Actually I had a couple other guys with me and, we brought him in and he took him back. We had a bunch of Hawaiian Japs that were Americans that were interpreters. So he took him back there where they had them stay and had them interrogate this guy. When they got through, we were sitting out there in front, thinking we did our job. He came out and said, “Okay, we’re through with him.” And I said, “What?” He said, “We’re through with him.” And I said, “Where is he?” He said, “He’s back there. Go get him and get him to hell out of here!” I said, “What do you want us to do with him?” He said, “I don’t give a god damn!” So we took him out,

and one other officer came along and said, "What are you doing with him?" I said, "You can talk to the Colonel in there. He wants us to take him out, he's through with him." He said, "Okay. Stand him up over there." I said, "Stand him up for what?" He said, "We're going to kill him. He said he didn't want him anymore."

Mr. Metzler: That is disturbing.

Mr. Lane: So I walked over there to him and lined him up in front of the wall there. While I was standing there, a marine. The marines were very great at this. They had marine corps men with cameras for everything the marines did. And sometimes, for the army people, they wanted to get. I turned around after I had sit the last of the three, I turned around and was getting ready to go back somewhere else and this marine corps guy shot a picture of me standing there with the three Japs. And on the other side, I didn't know it, on the other side, one of our GIs was standing there with a machete. What they had on that island, they had machetes. The kanakin natives used these machetes to cut the coconuts off the coconut trees. And he had one of those and was, and had just come around and cut this Japanese head completely off and it was falling down when he snapped the picture, so the head was forever and ever, hanging in the air right in front and the guy hadn't even fallen yet. You have to understand, this happened right after the Japanese, they collected all those Americans on Corregidor and they put on a (unintelligible) to take them back up to Manila and it was called the March of Death.

Mr. Metzler: Death March.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. And when that happened, and word got back down to us.

Mr. Metzler: Word got back, huh?

Mr. Lane: Yes. It did. The whole tenor of the war changed. Because we had been told, when we were back in the United States, that we always will do the Geneva Convention rules of war. That went out the gate, right there. When we got a hold of Japanese from then on, it was slaughter. And I wasn't happy about that but everybody was so upset at what the Japanese had done to the GIs up there, so it just changed the whole tenor of the war.

Mr. Metzler: And it stayed that way for the rest of the war?

Mr. Lane: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Have you ever seen that photograph that he took?

Mr. Lane: Yeah. (laughter) Reason I brought it up was, because when I came home from overseas, this marine gave me the picture, over there. And I stuck it down in my barracks bag. I didn't want to look at it. Forgot about it. Came home, got kicked out of the service, and my mother was out there in her car waiting for me and I got in it and she took me back home, from Tyler back up to Mount Pleasant. And we're sitting in the living room and Mother is saying, "All these things are dirty. They need to be cleaned!" And she was going through my barracks bag and I forgot all about that picture. Completely forgot about it. And she reached in there and got the picture out and looked at it, and almost had a conniption fit. And I thought, "Mother, mother, mother. Why did you have to open that thing up?" Why didn't I just tear it up to begin with?

Mr. Metzler: So what happened to it?

Mr. Lane: I tore it up. I didn't want anybody else to see it. I didn't do anything! I was just walking away—

Mr. Metzler: You were just caught there as part of the picture.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. And this other guy thought, "Well, it's time now." Fphit,phit (sound effects) And off with the head and rolled down in front. It finally hit the ground but he'd already snapped the picture about half way down. That was probably the most soul-wrenching thing that happened to me. Nothing in the war, that I did, matched how I felt about that.

Mr. Metzler: I guess another low point was, like you said before, the prisoners of war were coming out and thanking you profusely.

Mr. Lane: I just didn't expect it and, and then I felt like getting out the machete and hitting the American soldier with it. I was so tore by. I did not expect what was going to happen. And what happened just chilled me.

Mr. Metzler: Did you think about that after the war was over?

Mr. Lane: I finally got it out of my mind.

Mr. Metzler: How long did that take?

Mr. Lane: After my mother saw that picture. I tore it up.

Mr. Metzler: You never thought about it again?

Mr. Lane: I've thought about it, off and on, I've thought about it several times. It's something that comes back to you every once in a while. Sometimes it's when you're not even thinking about the war, or anything, you know. You have it suddenly just pop into your mind. You think, "Oh God! What am I

doing here?” That, and another thing, (laughter) I’ll tell you about. I don’t want it on that thing.

Mr. Metzler: Do you want it off?

Mr. Lane: No, that’s all right. You can take it off, if you don’t want it on there. We were on Guadalcanal. I didn’t think I’d put this in there but I will because it happened. President Roosevelt had polio, you know. And he was in a wheelchair like I am right now. Except he couldn’t move anything and I can. I can walk with a walker. We had already whipped the Japs so we were just waiting to hear where we were going to go next and there was a long, beach—

Mr. Metzler: This was on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Lane: Guadalcanal, yep. Beautiful beach. Sand, white sand. And we were told, and they told us, (laughter) that Mrs. Roosevelt was going to be coming to Guadalcanal on Wednesday. This was on Monday when they told us. And she’s going to go down the road that goes along, back of the beach. Up and down that part of Guadalcanal.

Mr. Metzler: Now this is FDR coming?

Mr. Lane: No, this is his wife.

Mr. Metzler: Eleanor.

Mr. Lane: Eleanor. He couldn’t come because these—

Mr. Metzler: Well, they could get him around.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, but it’s too much trouble. She said she would go do it. She would go look things over for him.

Mr. Metzler: Don’t get too far away.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. I get to moving my feet. The guys had, for some time because it was warm, had been going out on the beach and down in the water, naked. Because there wasn't any women on the island except black, kanakan, native women and they were nude anyway, so it didn't make any difference to them. So all the GIs normally went out there to swim. But we were told, "You will NOT go out and swim naked. If you go out there to swim, you must have something on."

Mr. Metzler: Not naked on Wednesday.

Mr. Lane: Yes. On Wednesday. (laughter) Wrong. GIs are funny people. They all said, you know, they're talking to themselves between Monday and Tuesday. All the things they'd had to do, and all the battles they'd had. So, that whole beach, from where it started to about two miles down there where it ended, was filled with GIs, all naked. As her car, entourage of about four or five cars, went by there. They were all standing there, facing her, stark naked. And as her car came even with them, they all turned around and bent over.

Mr. Metzler: And mooned her? (laughter) You're kidding me?!

Mr. Lane: I couldn't believe that. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: Now, were you part of that?

Mr. Lane: No, I had nothing to do with that.

Mr. Metzler: But you saw it? Or did you just hear about it?

Mr. Lane: I saw it! I saw it. I wanted to go see her. Not that I, you know, just to say, "Oh yes. I've seen Eleanor Roosevelt." Then when I looked out there and

saw those guys, and I thought, “They haven’t got any clothes on! What am I going to do?” By that time, the car came by. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: Well, I wonder if they screened her from that? Or did she get a good look?

Mr. Lane: I don’t have any idea because the car she was in, had those dark windows on it. And you couldn’t see, you could just see a shadow in there. You couldn’t tell what she was doing or saying. But you could see through there, through that glass, clearly.

Mr. Metzler: Well, you’re right. Those GIs are strange guys, aren’t they? (laughter)

Mr. Lane: Strange guys. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: It’s amazing what war will do to you.

Mr. Lane: All hell broke loose, about an hour later.

Mr. Metzler: What happened?

Mr. Lane: Oh, they had the general, I can’t think of his name now. Anyway, the commanding general of the whole island called all the GIs that were out there on that beach into a meeting. And he chewed their asses out good. (laughter) Which is what he should have done. They shouldn’t have done that in the first place.

Mr. Metzler: Were you in the meeting?

Mr. Lane: No, ‘cause I wasn’t out there. I was back behind the cars.

Mr. Metzler: You just heard about the meeting?

Mr. Lane: Well, I heard them talking. Those that were out there, had been out there swimming, naked. I heard them talking about, “We gotta go down here and

General so-and-so is going to talk to us.” You know, I got all that word. And I thought, I wasn’t out there swimming so I’m not going to that meeting.

Mr. Metzler: That would be a meeting to miss.

Mr. Lane: That’s not my meeting. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: Now you’ve mentioned in our discussions here several times, your buddy, Porter. I’m sorry, Tucker. Now whatever happened to him?

Mr. Lane: Well Tucker was a California boy and he was born and raised in California. And when the war ended, we came back. He went to his home in California and I went to mine. We mailed each other letters, two or three times a year for about five or six years and then it just phased away.

Mr. Metzler: Just kind of got separated.

Mr. Lane: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So you don’t know if he’s still alive?

Mr. Lane: I don’t know if he’s still alive.

Mr. Metzler: Where was he in California, do you remember?

Mr. Lane: Visalia.

Mr. Metzler: Well, how do you feel the time in the Pacific changed you as a person, or did it?

Mr. Lane: It changed me a lot. I was a little old northeast Texas boy. (laughter) And I have to admit that the eight football games as a freshman there in Texas changed me some. It made me a little more. I begin to understand a lot more things than I did when I was a kid growing up.

Mr. Metzler: Now this was before you went to war?

Mr. Lane: Yeah. And then when the fifteen of us went to the Federal Building in Dallas and I didn't get in the marine corps like I thought I would. I thought, "Well, only thing I can do is, go in the army because I don't want to go in the navy." So out of all of that, and what I had to do in the army and the things that I saw and the things that I saw happen, that I never in this world would have thought would happen to human beings. And I'm not trying to sound like a crybaby but, even Japanese, shooting them is shooting a human being and I thought about all the Japanese we shot at and those that I had shot at and those that I shot and maybe missed, hopefully. Or not badly wounded. But it still didn't, the thing was, the thing that did the biggest thing in the war was that walk of Death, it changed the whole frame of the war.

Mr. Metzler: The Death March of Bataan and Corregidor.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. And so, with it, it didn't matter how I felt about Japanese.

Mr. Metzler: How do you feel about the Japanese today?

Mr. Lane: I don't like their cars. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: You're not driving a Toyota, huh?

Mr. Lane: No, I wouldn't drive a Japanese car.

Mr. Metzler: But what about the people?

Mr. Lane: I don't have anything particular against Japanese here in the United States. I've had several meetings with them, not meetings but you know how you—

Mr. Metzler: Interactions.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, interactions. And I see them now. Much like you would seeing, just seeing another person. I don't have any real, I don't like the Japanese, I'll put

it that way, in Japan. Because of all the troubles they caused in the Pacific, out there. But the ones I meet here in the United States, they're usually Japanese that have, what do you call it, transformed to this country? What am I trying to say?

Mr. Metzler: They've immigrated here.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, what you said. Most of them try to apologize to me.

Mr. Metzler: Do they?

Mr. Lane: Yeah, a lot of them do. About the war.

Mr. Metzler: How do you feel about that?

Mr. Lane: (chuckle) It's hard to say. I say, "Well, that's war for you. That's the way it has to be." Something like that. But they act like they want to tell you something, they WANT to tell you something. I'm really sorry what we did. I said, "Well, we dropped the bomb on you." (chuckle) That didn't always make it better.

Mr. Metzler: Well, anything else you want to say while we're here together?

Mr. Lane: Let me see my pamphlet there a minute.

Mr. Metzler: You want to look at your cheat sheet here?

Mr. Lane: See if there's anything toward the end there that I might have forgotten.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, you did mention one R&R back to Brisbane, in Australia. So you went back to Australia a second time.

Mr. Lane: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: Anything exciting happen there?

Mr. Lane: No. It was just one, it was just two day, two weeks of sitting around in a tent. Afterwards we were sent to the bivouac near the small village, in the center of Luzon.

(doorbell – someone comes in and the tape is stopped)

Mr. Lane: I think that's pretty much it. I don't see anything there—

Mr. Metzler: I tell you what. You've covered a lot of territory here today.

Mr. Lane: I covered a lot of territory in the south Pacific, all the way up to Japan.

Mr. Metzler: You sure did. I mean you, all the way from Guadalcanal all the way up to the occupation. I mean that's almost from A to Z.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. I think the best thing I got was, in getting there to New Caledonia and getting in the Americal Division which was the division formed there in New Caledonia. Because that was my first time in combat with the Americal Division and we all learned a lot of things there in a very quick time. And I think that helped me more in all the other places where battles were involved.

Mr. Metzler: Well, I want to thank you for spending the time with me.

Mr. Lane: Well, I hope I helped you some.

Mr. Metzler: Well, you've definitely added some good information and some interesting stories.

Mr. Lane: Some of that, you probably don't want to use. (chuckle)

Mr. Metzler: Well, I mean. We've got you on tape now, Bill.

Mr. Lane: I know. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: But I want to thank you again.

Mr. Lane: You're welcome. I appreciate your doing this for the veterans of World War II.

Mr. Metzler: We don't want these stories to get away from us.

Mr. Lane: Yeah, that's true. Are you going to produce a book or anything like that?

Mr. Metzler: Yes, let me tell you about that. I'll turn off the recorder.

(end of tape **B**)

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