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Interview With

JOHN L. BATES, Jr.

September 21, 2003

Place of Interview: Fredericksburg, Texas

Interviewer: William J. Alexander

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Mr. Alexander: This is Bill Alexander interviewing Mr. John L. Bates, Jr., for the University of North Texas Oral History Program. The interview is taking place on September 21, 2003, in Fredericksburg, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Bates in order to get his experiences while he served as a member of the Counter Intelligence Corps in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II.

Mr. Bates, where and when were you born?

Bates: I was born in Gatesville, Texas, on September 20, 1921. Yesterday was my birthday.

Alexander: Well, happy birthday. Let's see...that is how many now?

Bates: That is eighty-two. I was reared in Mexia, Texas. My father went to Mexia when I was about three months old for the oil boom.

Alexander: Do you have sisters or brothers?

Bates: I had a brother, but he died young.

Alexander: So, it was just basically you?

Bates: I was reared as an only child.

Alexander: At Mexia, how long was you there? Did you go through school there?

Bates: I went through high school.

Alexander: You went all the way through high school?

Bates: Then I attended Baylor [University] from there.

Alexander: What year would that be that you attended Baylor?

Bates: I started in 1938.

Alexander: Did you continue for four years at Baylor?

Bates: Well, I really was in a combined-type course where I took a bachelor of arts

degree and also a bachelor of law degree. They now call it a JD degree. But, anyway, it was a combined situation, which would be a five-year program, and I was up to a point of lacking about three months when I joined the Army Reserve at Baylor.

All of a sudden, the government decided they needed my efforts to take care of the war [facetious comment].

Alexander: To go out there and get that thing done.

Bates: So, I received an invitation to take an all-expenses-paid trip around the world.

Alexander: You sure did! What year was that?

Bates: I entered the Reserve in August, 1942, and I was called to active duty in April, 1943.

Alexander: Okay. So, what were you doing when Pearl Harbor came along?

Bates: I was running an air hammer for Crawford Austin, making Army cots at the time. That occurred while I was in Baylor.

Alexander: On that Sunday?

Bates: Yes. I was running an air hammer.

Alexander: We all know where we were on that day, don't we?

Bates: In fact, the foreman came down the line. We had an assembly line, and I had to hit my spot every time with a cot leg. He came down the line and said, "Bates, you'd better make that cot good, because they have just bombed Pearl Harbor." Well, that didn't mean a thing to me. I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was.

Alexander: No, and most people really didn't.

Bates: But, anyhow, he was wrong in one respect--I don't think I ever saw one of those cots during the war (chuckle).

Alexander: Okay, then you went into active duty in 1943?

Bates: Yes, at Camp Roberts, California.

Alexander: In what month? Do you remember?

Bates: I believe it was May 2.

Alexander: Okay, that is fine. It was in 1943. What did you do when you went there?

Bates: I was sent to Camp Roberts, California, in the infantry--to go through basic training. At the end of the basic training, apparently they decided that I was so good that they kept me as part of the so-called

permanent cadre. I never did serve as a private first class. I skipped from private to corporal. I kidded some of them that that was the biggest promotion that I ever made. I finally got promoted to colonel before all was said and done, but, as far as promotion and perks and so forth, I got to be a member of the NCO [non-commissioned officers'] Club. I had a permanent pass and so forth and so on, and I was enjoying that war out there. I had a girlfriend in San Francisco, and I was doing just fine.

I got promoted finally to staff sergeant, and then they decided that they needed to make an officer out of me.

Alexander: And they did?

Bates: They sent me to Fort Benning, Georgia, and I graduated at Fort Benning on November 8, 1944.

Alexander: What was the "wonderful thing" that was going to happen to you next?

Bates: They sent me to Camp Fannin, [in Tyler] Texas, only ninety miles from home. I

thought I had this war made.

All of a sudden, apparently I had been mixed up in the Counter Intelligence Corps for some time. I didn't know anything about it, but what had happened was that a fellow had come along at Camp Roberts, California, one day when I was a corporal, and he got me in there and interviewed me and so forth. He handed me a stack of envelopes and some postcards of two or three different varieties with material printed on there. If I saw anything of any sort of a questionable nature, I was to use one of those cards. If nothing was happening, I used another card. I very religiously sent him a report every week to this address in San Francisco. Well, this was really part of the Counter Intelligence Corps, but I didn't know it at the time. But, apparently, I had somewhat been selected with Counter Intelligence Corps.

Alexander: Without knowing it!

Bates: After about three months at Camp Fannin, all of a sudden they decided that they

would bring me out of the closet, so to speak, and I got orders. I was out running a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle] range, and here comes a Jeep and a cloud of dust.

Alexander: When you say that you were doing that teaching...

Bates: I was in charge of a class. Anyhow, they ordered me back to the regimental headquarters. The adjutant came around and shook hands with me, and I knew I was in bad trouble then. He told me I was to report to "the hill," which was headquarters. I went up there, and they had secret orders on me, and I wasn't even cleared for secret. But I finally got the orders, and all the orders did was tell me to report to a certain room in War Department Headquarters.

Alexander: Where was that?

Bates: Washington, D.C. I left there, and they gave me a ten-day delay en route before I had to report. I reported to the War Department Headquarters in Washington.

Alexander: How did you get there?

Bates: By train. I took a train to Washington. I thought that, with all these secret orders, they would have a brass band out for me. The sergeant barely looked up when I walked in, and he handed me a set of orders and said, "You are going to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, Lieutenant, and don't discuss your mission with anyone." I said, "You don't need to worry about that, Sergeant. I don't have any earthly idea what my mission is." Anyhow, Indiantown Gap wasn't too far away.

Alexander: Were they sealed?

Bates: No, I didn't have sealed orders, just open orders--just travel orders to go to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. Well, I got there, and they put me over in a two-story wooden barrack.

Alexander: They were waiting for you?

Bates: Yes. I looked around, and there were four or five other fellows sitting there. For a little while, we didn't really get acquainted, but as it went on, we found out that [this] fellow was a policeman or

[this] fellow was a detective. All of us were someway related to law.

Sure enough, after three or four days, here came a major. He processed us out in nothing flat--I think there were eleven of us--and shipped us out to New York. He let us out for an overnight leave, and I hit New York with, I think, about \$130 or \$140 in my pocket. Of course, in those days that was a pretty good bit of money.

Alexander: A whole lot of money!

Bates: At the end of my overnight stay in New York, I got on the plane. They kind of poured me on the plane to leave the next morning at about 5:00 a.m., and I assessed my situation. I had \$3.50 left. I had an awful good time, but I don't remember all of it (chuckle).

Anyway, I was on a plane. They handed me secret orders when I got on the plane. I was not to open those orders until we were airborne. Of course, my orders were the same as all of the other eleven. We were to report to the replacement depot in

Karachi, India [now in Pakistan]. We got there...

Alexander: How did you get there?

Bates: By air.

Alexander: What were you flying in?

Bates: A C-54 [Douglas Skymaster transport plane].

Alexander: The whole time?

Bates: Oh, yes. We landed in Bermuda, the Azores, Casablanca [French Morocco], and Cairo [Egypt]. We had a little bit of a delay in Cairo, so we checked and found we had a few hours' delay before the next flight was going to take off. We did change planes at Cairo, and we hired a taxicab to give us a midnight ride around the pyramids and so forth.

Alexander: And they allowed you to do that?

Bates: Oh, yes! Anyhow, this was strictly British territory then at that point. We ate breakfast the next morning and...oh, what was the name of that place in Iran where the big refinery is? I will recall it in a minute. [Editor's note: It is the Abadan refinery.] From there on we landed in

Karachi that afternoon at the replacement depot, and not a soul knew anything about us. We finally got situated over in a hostel, as they called it--all eleven of us--and we were just having a fine time for several days there. We got a partial pay. We wrangled a partial pay, so we had a little money. We were going to the Officers' Club downtown and having a big time. We did start suspecting that we were supposed to be at the Killarney Hotel, which was a British operation, but our orders didn't say that; and, being good soldiers, we didn't believe in volunteering for anything. So, we waited until they came to get us.

After about maybe two weeks, right in the middle of the war--we had a fine leave--and here comes this major. Oh! He was as mad as a wet hornet! He was a British major. We were supposed to be down there in classes, and we were behind already, and, I'll tell you this, he made us pay for it. The rest of the students

would get out at tea time--about 5:00 p.m. We came back after tea time and put in about three more hours catching up (chuckle).

But, anyhow, I went through a British Intelligence School to learn how to be a special agent in the Counter Intelligence Corps. It was about a six-week course, and from there I went to New Delhi, and from New Delhi...

Alexander: Were you by yourself in this case?

Bates: No, we were going together. All eleven of us stayed together there at that point. Now, from New Delhi we separated off a little bit, but not very much. I was ordered first to go to Myitkyina [Burma, now Myanmar] to serve as a CIC agent there, and then they cancelled that order before I even took off, really.

It turned out that they had had a problem in Kunming [China] with the 14th Air Force. We were all brand-new, so nobody knew us. We were furnished uniforms. I became a sergeant in the Air Force in the

A-3 [operations] section, and we went into Kunming, assigned with the Air Force.

Alexander: Were you guys still together?

Bates: All eleven of us still were assigned there, but in different places.

Alexander: But did they also have different uniforms?

Bates: It was all Air Force. The uniforms were the same in those days.

Alexander: Well, that is right.

Bates: I was a sergeant. We had various and sundry deals and different departments.

What had happened was that they had a leak out of the Air Force headquarters, probably. We later determined that it was out of the A-3 section. We caught the guy. He was a lieutenant colonel, and he had turned up with an ol' gal who was a Japanese agent as his mistress. She was just keeping up real well with everything we were doing. In other words, our planes would take off from anywhere--not only Kunming, but maybe some other airfields around there--and here come the Japs to meet them. It had become pretty obvious

that the Japs had some sort of foreknowledge on this thing. But we caught this lieutenant colonel pretty shortly. I don't guess we were there two or three weeks.

Alexander: Tell me about the colonel. What did you know about him after that?

Bates: We didn't know anything. He was shipped out, and I don't know what happened to him.

Alexander: You never heard anything about him?

Bates: Never heard a thing about him. In other words, he was yanked out of that department, and from then on it was not any of our responsibility, so I don't know what happened to him.

At that point, we went back on an open basis. I was assigned along with a partner, a new partner, a fellow who had been there for a good while. He had been down in Burma. His name was Bob Edris, and Bob Edris and I were assigned to Kweiyang [China] to set up a headquarters for the CIC there. It seems they had had someone there previously, but for some reason or

other, they didn't have a CIC agent there.

When we landed there, it was a pretty good drive down from Kunming to Kweiyang-- probably 500 miles, something like that. Anyhow, we drove down and landed there on Sunday afternoon. Edris knew some of the OSS [Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency] boys, and we went over and visited with them overnight and spent the night with them.

We reported in on Monday morning, and it seems that some agent had come through there and made an inspection of the general's headquarters prior to our arriving and had found red-bordered [indicating secret-level classified] stuff out under a paper weight on his desk and things of that sort. This guy had sent messages through the message center that would curl your hair, and nothing happened.

Alexander: You mean nothing happened to him?

Bates: Well, he knew what he was doing, but this caused the general to decide he wanted some

more CIC agents down there.

Alexander: That is how you got there.

Bates: But by the time we got there, you talk about security being tight! Boy! It was tight, and he had corrected all of that. Well, we made several inspections and so forth, and we did have a little problem. There was a fire, and we spent a good deal of time investigating that. But mainly we got to drinking scotch, you might say, with the Chinese 94th Army G-2 [deputy chief of staff for intelligence], and we convinced him that we ought to have a Sino-American team with the forward elements. The Japanese forward elements were not too far away from Kweiyang at that point. They were withdrawing in face of our troops, but they had almost reached Kweiyang at one point before I got there.

Alexander: When you got there, you said "they" moved there somewhere. I don't know who "they" were.

Bates: Well, it was the Japanese. The Japanese were probably a hundred miles from

Kweiyang. Now, to give you some idea of this, let's say right [here] is Luchow, [here] is Kweiyang, [here] is Kunming, [here] is Kweilin, which will figure in my conversation a little bit more and then up [here] is Hengyang, Changsha, and Hankow; and way over [here] is Shanghai. Now, we are talking about relatively speaking like Dallas to Chicago here.

Alexander: Oh, okay, that is fine.

Bates: In other words, let's say...

Alexander: About 1,200 miles?

Bates: Something like that. Let me put one more identification on this matter. At [this] point, the railroad corridor branched off and went in [that] direction, and it went down to Canton and Hong Kong. That gives you the relative situation on my story.

Alexander: That is terrific.

Bates: Anyhow, we put together a team of two Chinese officers--a lieutenant colonel and a colonel--Bob Edris and myself, a Nisei [second-generation Japanese American] interpreter, a Chinese interpreter, and a

radio operator. We knew that our boss back in Kunming disapproved of what we were getting ready to do. He considered that CIC people ought to be strictly security-type people, that's all. We weren't supposed to do positive intelligence or anything else like that. What we were doing was that we were putting together a deal, really somewhat in competition with OSS. We were going to have special operations. We were going to have everything--you name it.

Alexander: Can I ask you a question here?

Bates: Sure.

Alexander: Who were you directly under--your group? Was it the general?

Bates: We were directly under our boss back in Kunming, but we furnished a report. Every report we made, we made in triplicate. One went to our boss in Kunming. The second one went to the theater headquarters in Chungking, and the third one was the "catcher." The "catcher" kept us in trouble and out of trouble, and was sent to

the War Department in Washington, DC.

Alexander: Oh, you sent the same thing there?

Bates: Every report, we were ordered to send those in triplicate.

Alexander: How did you get that type of data back to the States?

Bates: They were mailed.

Alexander: Just by regular mail?

Bates: We sent it by just regular mail, but the reports did go to the War Department.

Incidentally, to back up a minute, what had happened is that when this agent had gone through the headquarters of the American forces, they were part of the Chinese 94th Army, but their American headquarters was commanded by a brigadier general. That report had gone back to the War Department, telling about red-bordered stuff out on the table in the general's office and so forth. Well, from what I understand--and that was where we came finally in--the War Department reached down with a long arm and literally blistered that general for his lack of security, and

that is the reason his security was so good when we got there. I'll tell you this--we had a personally-conducted tour by the general of his headquarters, telling us just what he had done.

I had this funny thing...I belong to...oh, what is the name of it? It is an organization of CIC agents. Presently, I am a life member of it. In one of the deals that came out a year or two ago, it was telling about a guy named Spencer, who was the special agent in charge in Kweiyang. Well, I wrote them up there, and I said, "I don't know who this guy is. I was the special agent in charge in Kweiyang." Well, it turns out that he had been there previously, but we had a little fun with that.

Alexander: I'll bet you did.

Bates: I will tell you another little side deal on this. I am getting ahead of my story a little. Just recently, I got a book--*The Secret Army*, I believe it was called--which was on the Counter Intelligence Corps in

World War II, and it told a little bit about the Chinese situation with the Counter Intelligence Corps. It told about how, going into Kweilin with the forward elements of the Chinese, there was a seven-man team of Counter Intelligence Corps that went in there. It didn't give any names. I read that. In fact, my wife was reading it with me. I said, "That's a bunch of bunk! There wasn't any other team going in there with us. I was the only one." Then I got to counting. I never had particularly counted, but there was Bob Edris and myself, two Chinese officers, a radio operator, a Chinese interpreter, and a Nisei interpreter. Hell, that is seven people. They were talking about me!

Alexander: And you didn't know it!

Bates: But, anyhow, we joined the Chinese at that point some probably thirty or forty miles west of Luchow. We had a little interesting deal at that point when a captain and I were sitting out on the side of a hill there. We had been hung up with

some Japs on the other side of the valley, and here comes a colonel out of G-2 headquarters in Chungking, wheeling up in his Jeep with a Chinese colonel and a driver with him. He informed us that the Japanese had already withdrawn from Luchow according to their information, and why were we sitting there. "Colonel, the Japanese haven't withdrawn from Luchow altogether. They may have withdrawn some, but right across the valley over there, we've been watching the Japanese." He said, "Oh, no! Come on! We're going on into Luchow." I said, "Colonel, I'm not going into Luchow with you." I wore "U.S." on the collar, and I could thumb my nose at him. We didn't go by any rank over there in the Counter Intelligence Corps, anyhow.

This captain I was sitting with got into the Jeep with him, and they got about two-thirds across the valley when a machine gun opened up on them. They made it to the ditch. The Chinese colonel was killed immediately, and the driver was killed, but

the captain and the American colonel made it to the ditch. Sure enough, we just had to sit there and watch them get captured because the Chinese on our side couldn't get there fast enough to do anything about it. They got captured.

Some weeks later, we got on into Luchow, and, sure enough, one morning here came that colonel walking in, and he had the damndest story you've ever heard in your life about how he had gotten loose with the guerrillas. I interviewed him some months later. I went back to track what happened to this captain. The captain never did get loose; the colonel left him there.

Alexander: How did the colonel get out of there?

Bates: He claimed he needed to go to the restroom, and then he broke free. Well, that woke everybody up, and the captain got left tied to a post. The guerrillas did take care of him.

But the story wasn't quite correct, the way he put it on how he got loose. He

wanted to go to the restroom, and he broke out loose and managed to make it to...if he had just stayed put, the guerrillas would have gotten both of them released. They were getting ready to release both of them, but he blew the whole thing.

Alexander: Especially away from the other guys.

Bates: I will get back to him a little later, if you want. I went back hunting him some months later. But we finally, inch-by-inch, so to speak, mile-by-mile, followed the Japs from Luchow in kind of a circle route around.

Alexander: The Japs were moving...

Bates: They had extended their supply lines farther than they could stand. They were about to starve to death, to tell you the truth. We captured a few of the Japs, and they were in a heck of a shape, to tell you the truth. In fact, we got one or two air drops, and some of the biggest battles we had were over the air drop material coming down between the Japs, bandits, guerrillas, Americans, and the Chinese as to who was

going to get that air drop (chuckle).

Alexander: That is just incredible! I had never heard of something like that.

Bates: Oh, yes! We had some pretty good scrapes.

Alexander: I bet, when it comes over food.

Bates: Well, this was food, ammunition, whatever, you know. I saw one ol' boy who went out and tried to catch a case of ammunition that was coming down, and it had just sheared the front of his head off.

Alexander: Boy, I am sure of it.

Bates: We finally made it on into Kweilin. Like I said, I was with the forward elements with my team going into Kweilin. I was in a half-blown-out school setup when I kept hearing something over the radio about some kind of a bomb. Our radio reception was very poor. It was pouring-down rain, and I was more worried, to tell you the truth, about whether the river was going to get out of the banks where we were than that bomb that was dropped.

Alexander: But you didn't know exactly what it was?

Bates: I had no idea what an atomic bomb was. By

the time the second one dropped, we really didn't know what it was. As a matter of fact, the Japs didn't have as good communications as we did, and it took another week or two after the second bomb was dropped before we could get them to give up and quit.

Alexander: That is pretty interesting, because anything that you would have told them, they would have said that it wasn't possible. So, they didn't give up?

Bates: Not immediately. They finally got the word, but they wouldn't believe us.

Alexander: Well, I don't blame them. Would you?

Bates: No.

Alexander: What ensued between those times?

Bates: Oh, we had two or three little scrapes-- nothing to amount to anything. Not serious, but they still were really just outside of the city, and we had taken Kweilin. Now, this is a major city with probably a million population. In fact, today most of your--as I call them-- "carpetbagger tours" go to Kweilin. At one

time, it was called "the Paris of South China." It was a beautiful city before we bombed it out.

Anyhow, I flew back from Kweilin to Kunming. I was in Kunming for a couple of weeks, maybe. I can tell you exactly. I flew into Nanking on the day of the surrender, which, I think, was September 2, 1945.

Alexander: Yes, it was.

Bates: I went along with some others. We flew in to set up a little headquarters, and we were present for a big banquet that night celebrating.

Alexander: When you say "we," who were you?

Bates: About seven of us in the CIC group were celebrating.

Alexander: So, it was just a small group.

Bates: Yes. We first were at the American headquarters, but the policy of the Counter Intelligence Corps was...for the reason that the people that we dealt with, a lot of them, didn't want to come to the American headquarters. So, we usually

tried to have some sort of a headquarters away from the American headquarters.

Sure enough, one of our first deals was to go out and interview some of the foreign nationals who had been in Nanking all during the war. We interviewed the Italian consul, and we found out that, literally, he was about to starve to death--he and his group. Italy had been out of the war for about a year by that time. They couldn't get any money or anything, and they were selling off pieces of furniture from the embassy to stay alive. Anyhow, we made a deal.

Alexander: We never hear anything like that, do we?

Bates: We made a deal with him. He and his wife would run the place for us. We took over the Italian embassy. I have pictures of that. A friend of mine, who is retired now down at Fort Hood, in that area, has a picture of me smoking a cigar, wearing shorts, and using a old push lawnmower, mowing the grass at the Italian embassy. But I only lasted about a month there, or

less.

Alexander: Which would be about the end of September?

Bates: Yes, the end of September. I got a radiogram to come to Chungking. It seems that I had made some war crimes reports, so they wanted to interview me. So, I went out and caught a ride on a CNAC [China National Aviation Corporation] plane that flew into Chungking. The upshot of it was that, by the time I got through, as a fellow said, I got hired by War Crimes, and they transferred me over from Counter Intelligence Corps to work for War Crimes.

Alexander: What was the difference here now?

Bates: Well, I went from the Army Counter Intelligence Corps as a reporting situation. I don't remember how they handled it, whether I was detailed or what, but, anyhow, I know that it plagued me for a number of years after the war. I had at that point an MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] number of 9301, which was a special agent in CIC. I was in the branch of infantry, and my job specification was

Assistant Theater Judge Advocate (chuckle).
When I finally got into the National Guard
in 1947, I liked to never got through
explaining to people that I was infantry,
basically. They were about to make me go
back to school to learn how to be an
infantryman. But that was my situation
when I went under War Crimes.

Alexander: When you went there to the War Crimes, you
just went from one place to another?

Bates: I went from one office to another. That's
all it amounted to.

Alexander: What was it that you had said in your data,
which caused them to do that?

Bates: Well, I had sent a number of reports back
before the war ended on various and sundry
things--what we called War Crimes.

Alexander: Okay, like what?

Bates: Oh, executions of people and things of that
sort--all sorts of things.

Alexander: Of our people or their people?

Bates: Chinese and so forth. The Japs were great
about making a fellow dig a pit, get down
in it, and then start putting dirt in

there. As that dirt kept coming in there the guy would ultimately suffocate, and they would nick him with swords all along. Now, that ain't very nice, and this was done.

Alexander: There were a number of those crimes to our people...

Bates: Now, these were Japanese atrocities that I was talking about. Anyhow, because of that, they put me to work. The first job they gave me was to go down to Hankow to investigate a report of three Doolittle pilots, as we called them. I have had a lot of arguments about that as to who they were, and that is why I have been trying to talk to [Richard E.] Cole. I have some pictures of the guys that were executed, and I would like to see if he could identify them. [Editor's note: 2nd Lieutenant Richard E. Cole was the co-pilot of Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle's plane during the bombing raid on Tokyo of April 18, 1942. His interview is housed in the UNT Oral History Program as OH1401.]

Alexander: I am sure he can.

Bates: They gave me some newspaper clippings--very little--but I was supposed to go and investigate this. They informed me: "As soon as you make your arrest, we will have moved our headquarters to Shanghai, so bring your prisoners into Shanghai."

Well, I went out and caught a ride on C-54 going into Kunming. There was a flight that was made about twice a week from Kunming to Hankow to take care of some people that had already gone in there. I had a right funny thing on that. At that point, you had to have parachute on if you were going over the Himalayas.

[Tape 1, Side 2]

Bates: Anyhow, I went out trying to catch a ride. There was a C-54 getting ready to go Kunming, but it didn't have an extra parachute. I went all over that airfield trying to find an extra parachute. At that point, everybody was going home and going back over the "Hump" [the air route over the Himalayas between Assam, India, and

Kunming]. I think they literally had to fly planeloads of parachutes back over to get them over the "Hump." Anyhow, I still had "U.S." on my collar. I said, "Look, Captain. I'm an officer. I can sign a release for you or whatever, but I need to get to Kunming this afternoon, and I'm willing to go without a parachute." He said, "All right, but this plane hasn't been in for its hundred-hour checkup, and there's no telling what the situation will be. The war is over with, and if we run into any trouble, we're going to bail out, and we're going to walk out of there and let you have that plane." Well, I was pretty blasé about the situation at that point and said, "Okay."

We got out about fifteen, maybe thirty, minutes, and we are in the darndest rainstorm that you have ever seen in your life. Lightning was hitting all around us, and that plane jumping up and down like it was on a yo-yo string. He came back and said, "Bates, have you ever flown a plane

before?" I said, "I've flown a Piper Cub a little bit," and he said, "You'd better come up here and let me give you a little instruction. If this gets any worse, I'm going to take my crew, and we're going to bail out." Well, I wasn't going to argue with him at that point. I couldn't even see out of that windshield.

We got up there, and he started talking about all of these gadgets. I said, "You don't need to tell me about all of those gadgets. The oil pressure is not going to bother me." He showed me how to aim this thing toward Luchow. I had been down there, and I knew that area pretty well. I thought that maybe if I couldn't set it down on the airfield, I could sit it down in the river. He showed me how to bank it over and get aim toward Luchow, and I was beginning to feel all right: "Just go ahead and jump, you son-of-a-bitch!"

Anyhow, about that time, he laughed and took over. He said, "I'll take over. We're over Kunming." We went over to the

Officers' Club, and he told everybody in China about that, I think--about how I turned white and everything else.

The next day I flew into Hankow. Well, it turned out there was an OSS team there that had already thoroughly investigated this situation, but there was really not much investigation to it. It had been a big publicity stunt on the part of the Japs. They had marched these people through the streets. I have pictures of these guys as they were marched through the streets where they were throwing rocks and everything else.

Alexander: It looks like it's in Shanghai.

Bates: No, this was in Hankow. These guys were about half-naked, wearing shorts, I think, two or three of them. Anyhow, they marched them through the streets and out to a crematorium. I couldn't prove that they were cremated alive, but I never could find any evidence of anybody shooting them or whatever. But, anyhow, they were cremated. The Japs were pretty good about

this. They had fixed up a box for each one with their ashes and had their dog tags in there. So, we had a clear identification on them.

Well, after I spent maybe three or four days there--not very long--here comes a C-47 in to bring some supplies from Shanghai. I asked the pilot, "Can you haul eighteen Japs back in?" He said, "Sure!" So, I got the OSS boys to help me, and we went out, and we rounded up General Nakamura, the equivalent of a major general, and a whole bunch of colonels down to, I think, one private in the bunch. He was the driver of the truck, was the connection he really had, and he ultimately was acquitted in the trials. I carried not only the ashes in, but also the eighteen Japs.

Alexander: How many of those urns did you have?

Bates: Three. I had three little boxes that they had put the ashes in. Anyhow, when we were a short distance from Shanghai, I had the pilot radio in for some MPs to meet me.

Nobody showed up. By that time it was pretty good dusky-dark. I lined up a Japanese major general and a bunch of colonels in a column of twos and marched them over to Operations. I commandeered a two-and-one-half-ton truck and put my interpreter up in front with the driver to direct him, and I was in the back with all of my prisoners. We went in to see where the American headquarters was.

It was the New Development building--a beautiful multi-story, about a twenty-story, building that we had taken over. But the problem was we didn't have any JAG [Judge Advocate General] people there yet. I had gotten ahead of them. I had my interpreter go up to the door. There was a lone MP on the door, and he didn't know anything from nothing.

I saw a policeman down the street, and I told my interpreter to go down there and ask the policeman where a Chinese jail was. Fortunately, it was only about a block away. We carried our eighteen Japs back,

and I put all eighteen of them in one cell in the Chinese jail for the night until we could get all of this straightened out.

By the next morning, I did have some personnel, and I fortunately was able to turn that problem over to somebody else. I was in Shanghai for a week or two.

Then this captain, who I was sitting on the side of the hill with, had never showed up. They sent me back on two deals: first, to look for the captain and to see what I could find about what had happened to him; second, there was a report of a pilot that had been shot down over Hengyang, and the report was that he had been kicked to death by the Japs. He unfortunately landed in the middle of a Japanese compound, and they played human football with him.

Anyhow, I flew back, and I had a little unfortunate experience on that. Just before I left, I thought that day I had better get my shots brought up-to-date. Later, it turned out that I was real happy

I did, because I went through a cholera epidemic. Anyhow, I got all of my shots brought up to date. At this point, I was probably well over a year off on them. This fellow said, "We got a new shot, if you'd like to have it. It is a flu shot that keeps you from getting the flu." I said, "Oh, well, why not?" He shot me with that thing, and I want you to know that by the time I got to Luchow, China, I don't even recall getting there. They had to pour me off the airplane, so to speak. I later saw that pilot some months later, and he told me, "You argued like the dickens not to be carried back. I wanted to carry you on back, as sick as you were, but you said no, that you would get on a cot." And, sure enough, I laid on a cot for about three days out cold.

But I finally came to, and I was able to make a deal with a Catholic chaplain who wanted to go back to Hankow. I was looking at a map when I got to Hengyang, and I was about halfway there to Hankow. So, I made

a deal with him to act as my interpreter and go with me and help guide and everything else. I also managed to commandeer him a Jeep that he could keep. We were giving away the equipment by that time. You know, they weren't carrying those Jeeps back home, so I managed to get him a right good Jeep. Also, I promised to give him my Jeep when we got to Hankow, so he would have two Jeeps.

We took off, and we worked Kweilin thoroughly. I am firmly convinced that this captain was cremated on a pile of debris that the Japanese fired up when clearing their headquarters before the end of the war when we were about to come in. That is the closest that I could ever come to whatever happened to him. But, I finally went on into Hengyang, and I picked up the remains of this pilot. He had been buried in an open grave, so he was pretty well mummified at that point. I got a box and put him in the box, and we took off going on to Changsha and on into Hankow.

The only problem was that the farther we went, the more northern it got, and it was cold as hell. We were in open Jeeps, and from Changsha on we ran into a snowstorm. On one of those of nights, I'll tell you this little interesting thing. One night we spent the night in a village where there was a Catholic church. We spent several nights that way on the way. This was up above, I believe, Changsha when we did that.

Two or three days later, I got into Hankow, and I was able to get hold of an American newspaper. I was surprised to read that in that same little village--I can't recall the name of it now--I slept through a major battle. Well, what it amounted to was that overnight the Chinese became communists; there wasn't any battle at all (chuckle). But according to the newspaper written by the Chinese...

Alexander: There wasn't a battle, or there was?

Bates: There was no battle whatsoever.

Alexander: There was in some others.

Bates: Oh, yes, we had some pretty good fights at various times. A lot of this time, I was in communist territory. I was carrying with me a Thompson submachine gun, a carbine, and a .38-caliber revolver. Frequently at night, when we would camp out somewhere, I would pick out a tree, bush, or something, and I would fire a burst at that. If we were out in the country, we would gather a bunch of people. They came to look at us, and we didn't know what they were--whether they were bandits, communists, or whatever. I would fire a burst at that bush and inform them through my interpreter, the chaplain, that if anybody that came around that camp that night, that was what was going to happen to them (chuckle). We got through in pretty good shape.

Anyhow, I get on into Hankow. Wusong was the city across the river. It was a different city. The chaplain had his school in Wusong. I believe it is across Yangtze River from Hankow. I spent the

night there, and then I went over to the Hankow side. This was, by this time, the day before Christmas Eve, or it may have been Christmas Eve.

Alexander: This was 1949? [Editor's note: The U.S. ceased its attempts to mediate between the Nationalists and Communists and withdrew its military forces from China on January 29, 1947. By 1949, almost all of China was controlled by Communist forces.]

Bates: No, 1945. A plane had come in there to bring a little bit of Christmas stuff for a little detachment we fortunately still had at the airfield. I tried to get the pilot...at this point I hadn't bathed or shaved in about a month or two. It was cold as hell, and it wasn't too pleasant to clean up. Anyhow, I tried to get that pilot to let me go clean up a little bit, but he wanted to go to Shanghai. The weather was bad, and he wanted to get in there before dark.

So, we took off. I was carrying a musette bag with everything I owned. I was

wearing a Chinese quilted coat, but I still had khakis on. See, I had started off in warm weather, not anticipating being gone as long as I was. I might say that during the time that all of this was happening, I had failed to get hold of my clothes that I had stored back in Kunming, and those scalawags had listed me as missing in action and sent my clothes to a depot in Kansas City. So, I had nothing.

Alexander: They were trying to get all the stuff out of there.

Bates: Oh, they were closing down. Anyhow, I flew on into Shanghai. By that time we had taken over the Cathay Mansion, a plush hotel for that day and time; in fact, it is still in business, called the Jiang Jing Hotel. We had taken over Cathay Mansion in the French Quarter as our officers' quarters.

I got out and got two coolies to carry my box with the pilot in it into the inside, and a sergeant was on the desk. I said, "Sergeant!" I don't think he really

believed I was part of the Army, with the way I looked. He finally assigned me to a suite of rooms with Major Jack Senior as my roommate. I turned around and said, "Sergeant, is there any place I can put this box until after Christmas?" He said, "Well, Sir, what is in that box?" I said, "I got the body of a pilot in there." He said, "Oh, no! I don't have any place for that." I said, "Oh, hell! Come on!"

I got my two coolies, and we caught the elevator and went up to about the twentieth floor or wherever it was. I went in with all of this, and this Major Jack Senior was just walking out, all dressed up in his dress uniform, and we went through about the same routine. That was the last I saw of Jack Senior until after the holidays were over with (chuckle). He didn't come back.

They had a houseboy on each floor. I got hold of the houseboy, and I gave him my khakis and everything I had on and told him to go launder them and press them dry and

to be back in an hour. I went in to take a bath and clean up.

They had a roof garden-type dining room up there. There were women all over the place, having Christmas Eve or Christmas parties or whatever. I believe it was Christmas Eve. Anyhow, as I was walking down the way going to a buffet-type deal, I was going down to get my plate and so forth, and I could hear them whisper as I went by: "There he goes! He's the one that has the body in the room!" (chuckle)

Alexander: Everybody knew?

Bates: Well, I was wearing khakis, so I was completely out of uniform. Anyhow, I got that all worked out. Christmas came and went, and I went down and bought me some more clothes at the PX. Fortunately, they had a pretty good selection. I was in Shanghai for about two weeks.

Alexander: You went in to get some more clothes. Did you have the money to pay for them?

Bates: Oh, yes.

Alexander: You had plenty of money?

Bates: Well, I was drawing \$6.00 per day per diem all the time in addition to pay. In other words, when I was away from my headquarters, I drew a \$6.00 a day per diem. For that day and time, I had a pretty good bit of money.

Alexander: You sure did!

Bates: I will tell you this. I didn't mention this earlier. When I first started in Kunming, they issued me \$500 in confidential funds money. This was to buy information or whatever that might be needed. Now, I theoretically had to account for it. The official exchange rate at that point was about 30 to 1, and the unofficial exchange rate was 4,000 to 1. Well, I went out on the black market and exchanged my \$500 at 4,000 to 1. I accounted to the government at 30 to 1 (chuckle). I'll tell you this: we lived well on that difference!

Alexander: You're not kidding! I would think you might.

Bates: We lived well on that difference. Back to

that exchange rate on money, I went overseas weighing 165 pounds. When I finally got to the point after Christmas when I could weigh myself, I weighed a little over 200 pounds. I have a little difficulty convincing people about my privations in combat. I was at the point where I couldn't button my pants real well. But, anyhow, I was in Shanghai for two or three weeks--not very long.

I was assigned to go to Formosa [now Taiwan] to open a deal on war crimes in Formosa. I also had a Captain Gibbons, a British captain, assigned to me; a British sergeant; and two or three non-coms assigned to our group to go over there.

During that two or three weeks I was in our own headquarters, I got me a big deal--I had to piece it together--on the wall, and I had about 200 or 300 statements of POWs who had been interviewed after the war; and they sent those statements back over for the war crimes trials in China. I would read those things, and I had across

the top the name of the Jap and down on the side the name of the American. As I would read along, I would make a notation in their particular column of something we would need to look into. When I got to Formosa, I carried my big chart along and put it on the wall, and I already knew who I wanted to arrest. It was sort of like the deal back in Hankow when arresting those people where we had all kinds of publicity. I already had all the information.

Well, JAG had had one officer go over there, and he got ordered off the island by the American officer that was in charge. His attitude was that they had all the troubles they needed with the Japanese. At that point they had probably close to 200,000 Japs on Formosa still under arms. They were in control of the island, you might say. We had about 4,000 poorly-trained Chinese there, and that was it. We had about thirty Americans there, and that was it. The Americans were under [General

Douglas A.] MacArthur's headquarters, not under China. Now, Formosa had been given back to China under the treaty, but the American personnel got their orders from MacArthur's headquarters. So, it was kind of a screwed-up mess.

Alexander: What about those 200,000 Japanese in there?

Bates: Well, we were repatriating them back to Japan at that point, and some of them were not too happy about going.

Alexander: Well, I am sure about that.

Bates: Not only the soldiers, but we were sending civilians, too. See, this had been a Japanese possession for forty-eight years, and these people were not very happy about it. At points we were in danger of a revolution there.

Anyhow, I had gotten orders by way of radio from MacArthur's headquarters ordering me, or giving me license, you might say, to go to Formosa. We went over there, and the Americans weren't very happy to see us.

We had an interesting situation. I

went over to General Ando's headquarters. He was the senior commander equivalent of our four-star general.

Alexander: He was Chinese. Is that right?

Bates: No, Ando was Japanese. [Editor's note: General Ando Rikichi was commander-in-chief of all military forces and chief of the civil administration on Formosa. He insisted upon a peaceful capitulation when Emperor Hirohito announced that Japan would surrender, and the majority of his officers accepted the imperial decision.] I went to the Japanese general, and he rolled out the red carpet. He spoke English fluently. He had been a Japanese military attaché to Great Britain at one point and loved to tell about it. We visited and had a good time. I made a deal with him to give me a *Kempei-tai* [Japanese secret police] guard room or a jail, and some *Kempi-tai* personnel to take care of my prisoners, and I would furnish him out of my chart on Monday morning a list of people that I wanted in by Friday morning. I would get a

plane over on Friday and send them to Shanghai. I will tell you this--it worked like a charm for about 400 Japs.

Alexander: That is interesting that you had the names of the people that you wanted to find.

Bates: Oh, yes! I had all kinds of identification. See, we had six POW camps there. We had a POW camp at Heito, down at the southern end of the island. We had one over on the eastern side, but I don't recall the name of it. On the other side of the mountains...see, on Formosa you got plains toward China, and then there are mountains that go on to the eastern side of Formosa. This one was kind of remote over there. It was a port-type situation where a lot of the people first came in at Formosa. [Editor's note: This was probably the Karenko POW camp, near the city of Hualien.] It was kind of a pass-through deal. The other one that was a bad one was Kinkaseki, which was an underground copper mine that they worked the POWs in. They died like flies in that place, and they

died like flies on the southern end working in the sugar mills.

But now on the other hand, we had some other POW camps, like I say, in Taihoku. This was their show place for the Red Cross. These guys did everything but have passes to go to town. They treated them much better.

Alexander: Better than any other prisoner in the whole world, probably.

Bates: They were well-treated there, but the others suffered badly. It was a peculiar-type situation. A lot of the situations on brutality depended on the camp commander. And another thing that it depended on was whether any of the guards were educated in the United States. The most vicious in every POW camp were those who had been educated in the United States.

Alexander: I had not heard that before.

Bates: That is right.

Alexander: Why would that be?

Bates: I was talking to somebody just this weekend, and he agreed with me. He was a

POW. In other words, it was a matter of showing off, so to speak. They were the most vicious. They didn't want the other guards thinking that, because they spoke English, they were treating the prisoners well, so they treated them worse. I can't prove this, but I am reasonably certain that it was so. Also, along those lines, I think that General Ando became aware that we were trying this thing on a chain of command theory and that, ultimately, I was going to arrest him, you know.

Alexander: Of course.

Bates: Several things happened. One day I was riding along, and a bullet knocked out the windshield of my Jeep. I think that was just a warning.

Then what really blew things apart was that I was supposed to go out and meet with a Chinese or Formosan magistrate out in the hills, going east out of Taihoku, and it turned out I had some other deal to go to, like I needed to go up Kaohsiung on the port side on the other end of the island.

Anyhow, I got this British captain to go in my place. He went by and picked up a British attaché out of the consulate, and they went barreling along in my Jeep. For about fifty miles out, there was a nice macadam road, and then they finally started climbing up in the mountains. They got up on a pretty good hairpin turn--chuckholes and so forth--and they didn't make it past that turn. When we brought the Jeep back in and checked it, somebody had sawed the tie rods in two, almost.

Alexander: Oh, brother! And it was your Jeep!

Bates: In my Jeep. They were aiming at me. Well, it broke both legs on the captain, and the British attaché sheared his head down pretty good and laid his nose over to one side. He went through the windshield. But both of them were still alive. We got them in, and I was mad as hell.

I got a hold of some OSS people and some of my team and these British sergeants, and we made a raid on the Japanese headquarters, Ando's headquarters.

I had already radioed to get a plane over there the first thing in the morning, and we made a raid on Ando's headquarters. I didn't give a damn what the American commander had to say. We hauled Ando out in his pajamas and put him on a plane, and we took him to Shanghai along with my wounded.

I will guarantee you that he did not have any poison on him when he got there. I examined him thoroughly; and when I say thoroughly, I mean in every way to see that he didn't have any poison secreted anywhere on his body. We stripped him and put him in new clothes. Somehow or another, though, within about two or three weeks, he managed to get poison in there and committed *hara-kiri* [ritual suicide]. As a result, we were unable to get any real penalty out of anybody. All they had to do was to say General Ando ordered it.

Alexander: Of course!

Bates: For everybody that was a standard deal: "General Ando ordered it." That blew

pretty well all the Formosa deal. We got minor sentences, but that was about all it amounted to. As a matter of fact, on the fellows in Hankow who were originally responsible for the deaths of the Doolittle people, we gave five death penalties in various and sundry terms down. MacArthur commuted them, and they were never carried out.

Alexander: Now, when you say this, you are talking about the fellows who came into China from the Doolittle Raid. Tell me about that.

Bates: We tried the people who executed those pilots in a war crimes trial.

Alexander: Who executed them? The Japanese?

Bates: Yes! That is what I was investigating--the Japanese parading them through the streets. I don't know whether I covered this, but we later had a war crimes trial, and we gave five death penalties to the people who were primarily responsible and various and sundry terms down to...there was one acquittal--a truck driver was acquitted. But the death penalties were never carried

out because, as I commented, MacArthur was kissing and making up with the Japs by that time, and he commuted those death penalties down to lesser sentences.

That is about it. After I carried my wounded back that day, I was notified that I had enough points to go home, so I never went back to Formosa.

Alexander: So, where did you go?

Bates: I caught a ship and came home--twenty-one days on a ship.

Alexander: That was a lot of fun, wasn't it?

Bates: It really was. I had an interesting situation. I hadn't much more than gotten on the ship to come home, and over the foghorn, or whatever they have on a ship, they wanted Captain Bates. I went down there, and an American colonel was the commander on the ship for the Army people. He said, "We need a mess officer, and I see your 626-1 shows that you are a mess officer." I said, "Oh, hell, Colonel! All I did was go to a deal in addition to other duties. I went to a one-day deal to learn

how they clean the pots and pans. I don't know anything about running a mess." He said, "You're the mess officer."

I went down to the galley. Boy! That turned out to be the sweetest deal in the world! The bosun's mate, or whatever he was, said, "Well, Sir, your quarters are in [here]." I had a nice private room. All the rest of these guys were stacked up in bunks, and I had a private room in there. I set up a running bridge game over twenty-one days coming home.

Alexander: But you had the mess hall?

Bates: That made no difference whatsoever. There was one thing that I learned real quickly-- that if that bosun's mate wanted to run that, he could run it.

Alexander: Of course. He knew exactly how to run it.

Bates: He knew how to run it, and I left him alone. In the morning, when everybody else had SOS ["shit on a shingle," a Navy euphemism for chipped beef served in cream gravy over toast], I had two eggs over easy with sausage and so forth (chuckle).

Alexander: No wonder you got up to 200 pounds! I want to go a little bit further. Did you actually get out of the service, or did you "re-up" [re-enlist]? What did you do?

Bates: I came out of the service as part of a Military Intelligence Reserve, and I remained in the Reserve. Well, along the line we had no unit. I was just under VIII Corps Headquarters in Austin. There were five of us who were Counter Intelligence agents in the area around Waco, and I think we met two or three times--just socially, you might say, out at a beer joint out there. We would drink fishbowls and tell war stories, and that was about it.

Along the line here came several friends of mine who was part of the 36th [Infantry] Division. It was reorganizing, and they offered me a deal as a company commander to come in. So, that is where I ran into trouble with all that business of my differences on MOS 9301 and so forth. They were about to send me back to infantry school, but I finally talked them out of

it. In 1947, I took over a company-- Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion--and I remained until they reorganized the Army.

As I say, in order to get me promoted, they finally reorganized the Army. This was a table of organization-type unit, the 36th Division, so unless I could get a vacancy, I couldn't get promoted. I remained a captain until 1961. I finally got promoted to major in 1961 in the 2nd Battle Group.

Alexander: And you are in the active...

Bates: I was very active all that time. I was going two weeks active duty and forty-eight paid drills a year and so forth all that time. I got promoted to major in the 2nd Battle Group of the 143rd Infantry.

In 1962 I had a little business problem that I was having to work out, and I was pretty well blocked on promotion again. Hell, none of these guys were about to retire, and we were all about the same age, so it looked like I was going to retire as a major.

So, I decided I would go over to the

Reserve, and they had a deal where after [so many] years you could get promoted for certain educational qualifications and so forth. I went to the Reserve and started teaching a class and a career course in infantry. I became a schoolteacher. We had all been down on the farm, and all the nice folks were going over to Fort Benning, Georgia, and staying in air-conditioned quarters and playing golf. I learned how to live. I would teach one eight-hour stretch or two eight-hour stretches out of two weeks, and that was all. They couldn't run me off then.

Alexander: Boy! I bet not!

Bates: I thoroughly enjoyed that. I finished up at the Command and General Staff School. I taught at the Command and General Staff, and ultimately I got promoted to lieutenant colonel, and then to full colonel. I even found out that there were still two places around where they would let me mount the platform, and that was in the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and also, the

Logistic Management Course. [Tape abruptly
ends.]