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Interview with

JOHN BUMGARDNER

March 18, 1995

Place of Interview: San Antonio, Texas

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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and
University of North Texas Oral History Collection
Dr. John R. Bumgarner

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald Marcello

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Dr. Marcello: This Ron Marcello interviewing Dr. John Bumgarner for the University of North Texas Oral History Program and the Nimitz Museum. The interview is taking place on March 18, 1995, in San Antonio, Texas. I'm interviewing Dr. Bumgarner in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was a prisoner of war of the Japanese during World War II. More specifically, Dr. Bumgarner was captured in the Philippines early in the war and subsequently spent the rest of the war in various Japanese POW camps throughout Asia.

Dr. Bumgarner, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. Let's start by you telling me when you were born and where you were born.

Dr. Bumgarner: I was born on January 30, 1912, at Lansing, North Carolina.

Dr. Marcello: Tell me a little bit about your education.

Bumgarner: Well, I attended Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee for three years, and then I transferred to North Carolina State University in order to get added credits needed to get in medical school. I graduated from the Medical College of Virginia in 1939. I was out three years working. Those were bad days.

Marcello: Bad days in the sense that that was during the Depression period.

Bumgarner: That was right. It was still the Depression.

Marcello: Now, somewhere along the line, here am I correct in assuming that you went into the Army Reserves?

Bumgarner: The night I graduated from medical school, I was handed a certificate saying I was a first lieutenant, Medical Corps, U.S. Army Reserve. Most of the men in my class signed up for it, but there were a few of them who were smart enough to wait awhile.

Marcello: So you actually signed up for this?

Bumgarner: Well, there was an Army colonel, a medical officer, who recruited us aggressively, saying, "The likelihood of your being called on active duty is remote, but these certificates will look awfully fine and patriotic on your office wall when you go into private practice."

Marcello: So you took the bait, in other words?

Bumgarner: I rose to the bait like a catfish (chuckle).

Marcello: Describe the process, then, by which you eventually

got into the United States Army and in essence were on active duty.

Bumgarner: Well, I took a rotating internship at Baroness Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I was there. I started a residency in pediatrics. But I began to see in the JAMA [Journal of the American Medical Association] that a lot of my classmates were being called to active duty. So at the invitation of a doctor in North Wilkesboro [North Carolina], I went home and practiced with him from September until December. My father and my mother lived at Miller's Creek, just a few miles out of North Wilkesboro, and they were getting my mail. I went to visit them on Sunday morning. It was the 8th of December when I went to visit them. My dad said, "You've got some mail here. It's from the War Department, but I don't think it really means anything." I opened it, and it was a summons to active duty at Fort Knox.

When I got to Fort Knox [Kentucky], I was two days late. The old colonel said, "Where in the hell have you been, lieutenant?" Just like that. I tried to give him some excuses, but he said, "Oh, shut up. There's the 5th Medical Battalion here. You won't be doing anything but treating sick trucks here."
(chuckle)

We moved to Fort Custer in about three weeks, at

Battle Creek, Michigan. I got so tired of the tedium of doing nothing and not seeing patients that when the colonel called us to a meeting one morning and said he wanted a first lieutenant in the Medical Corps Reserve, unmarried, to go to the Philippines, like a fool I held up my hand.

Marcello: Why?

Bumgarner: Why? Well, I was so used to being busy, and I was doing nothing but watching the bulletin board. The only time we ever did anything was when a staff sergeant took a bunch of us doctors who were not in very good shape out on a five-mile hike and nearly killed us. That was the only thing that was ever done at Fort Custer, except for my volunteering. There is where I learned never to volunteer.

Marcello: Was it not true that duty in the Philippines was considered pretty good duty during that period?

Bumgarner: Well, it was. I arrived in the Philippines on the old USAT [United States Army Transport] Grant. The odd thing about that was that all the dependents were going with us at that time in February and late January of 1941. They were on the USAT Grant. A lot of these people--I'd say eight out of ten of the officers--had their families with them. Then this was the same group that had to turn around in May and be brought back home. I arrived at Manila on the Grant

on February 20.

But before that, we had a breakdown of one of the motors on the Grant. On the Grant one of the engines broke down, and they had to stop there in Honolulu for five days. After that, the next stop was Guam, where there were only seventy-five Marines and a little Navy hospital. The little bay there was so shallow that we had to take lighters in to shore. I don't believe you want to hear about what I saw next.

Marcello: What was that?

Bumgarner: Well, I saw lined up along the shore a big bunch of cubicle-like things, about five or ten. As we were coming in on the lighter, there was a Regular Army officer, Medical Corps, and I asked him what this was. I said, "Is that a souvenir shop?" He said, "Yes, the guys that are going in there, they'll get souvenirs that require three weeks of sulfanilamide." (chuckle) That was not much of a place then. The Marines there didn't have anything to do, and I think they spent most of their time at the bar.

Marcello: So what you're saying, in effect, is these places that you saw were brothels?

Bumgarner: Right.

Marcello: And sulfanilamide was one of the cures for VD [venereal disease] at that time.

Bumgarner: That's the only thing they had.

Marcello: Okay, let's assume now that you've gotten to the Philippines, and you probably land at Manila.

Bumgarner: That's right.

Marcello: Where's your first duty assignment?

Bumgarner: Sternberg General Hospital.

Marcello: Tell me a little bit about Sternberg.

Bumgarner: Well, it's a little hard to describe Sternberg. It was in several separate buildings, beautifully landscaped. It was a wonderful tropical assignment. I was assigned to a medical ward. They picked on me since I was a first lieutenant. They put me on duty in three wards: the dependent's ward, where I took care of dependent children, the tuberculosis ward, and the BVA [Bureau of Veteran's Administration] ward, where the old "sunshiners" were treated. Some of those guys had really had stories to tell.

Marcello: Just for the record, Sternberg Hospital was the only military general hospital in the Philippines. Is that correct?

Bumgarner: It was one of the six or eight Army general hospitals anywhere. There were station hospitals on Corregidor, at Fort McKinley, Clark Field, and Fort Statsenburg.

I'll tell you, what happened was this. I had felt that I had been cheated by being called on active duty so early. So when I was still in San Francisco waiting for the boat to leave, I wanted to

be assigned to a hospital. I was naive enough to write to the Surgeon General as if I were writing a letter to my brother. I wrote him a letter--a "Dear Sir" letter--saying that since I had been called on active duty and hadn't been allowed to finish my training, I would like to be assigned to Sternberg General Hospital. Later, the surgeon's adjutant told me, when he ran into me at a party, "You know, Colonel Cooper, when he got your letter, he turned livid, and I thought he was going to have a stroke. He was just about to send you to the 'boondocks,' and then he just started laughing. He said, 'Hell, nobody's ever had that much brass before. Let him have it.'"

Marcello: One of the things that I noticed in the printout that I have is that there was no emergency room at Sternberg. How did that come about and tell me about it.

Bumgarner: Emergency rooms in those days...this was a sort of a first aid room. Usually, in Manila what we did, if somebody came in with, say, a collapsed lung or a wound, we'd take them over to surgery, and they would be worked on there. But as far as the emergency room, it was not prepared to take care of a lot of casualties. In other words, it was a sort of a band aid thing. You follow me?

Marcello: I certainly do.

Bumgarner: They had good general surgeons there, good internal medicine people, but we were not prepared to take care of mass casualties at all. I remember when the war started. I'm skipping several months here, but you asked a question.

Marcello: Well, let me ask this question because I think that on the basis of what you said, it provides me with a transition. As one gets closer and closer to the coming of war with Japan, could you detect any changes occurring in the hospital's routine or in the stockpiling of supplies and medical equipment or anything of that nature?

Bumgarner: No. Amazingly enough, we knew that the dependents were sent home in May on the Washington, and we did know that at the last of August they called all the officers together and told us that from now on, instead of going home at noon and playing golf, the officers...I think that I was the only one that had to work nine hours a day (chuckle) and take double OD duty. But they announced to everyone that they had to stay the fulltime.

Marcello: So for most of the medical personnel, yourself excluded, they were working the so called "tropical hours?"

Bumgarner: Right. Golf, the Army-Navy Club,

Marcello: It was a pretty good life.

Bumgarner: Well, yes, it was. Of course, I was single, and I was so anxious to get on with my career. I didn't mind working. In fact, I was a willing subject. They had an excellent...Major Gillespie, who later became a major general with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was chief of medicine there. He was a very bright man, and he taught me a lot.

Marcello: How about in terms of stockpiling equipment and supplies and so on? Did that change any as one gets closer and closer to the coming of the war?

Bumgarner: I saw no evidence whatever of it.

Marcello: Did you as a member of the hospital staff participate in any of the maneuvers or anything of that nature that might have occurred in those weeks and months prior to the coming of the actual coming of the war?

Bumgarner: Absolutely not. The only thing that happened was that Major North--we called him "Uncle Billy"--decided that all reserve officers--he didn't decide it; this was from Washington--had to take the Regular Army correspondence courses about how to dig Army regulation privies and things like that, how to read maps. I really loved that.

Marcello: Being facetious, of course

Bumgarner: (Chuckle) He said, "Well,"--I kind of protested--"that came down from Washington. I don't have a thing to do with it."

Marcello: Okay, war comes. In the Philippines it would be December 8, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. What were you doing and what was your reaction when you found out about the coming of war?

Bumgarner: I was living in an apartment with three other medical officers. On the morning that Pearl Harbor was bombed, Lieutenant Hibbs came. He was with the 31st Infantry. He came in and shook me. It was Sunday morning. He came in and shook my shoulder and said, "John, wake up! Pearl Harbor's being bombed!" I said, "What the hell, Hibbs?" Ralph his name was. "What the hell! This isn't April Fool's Day!" But he said, "You'd better wake up! It's for real!" My reaction was to report immediately to the hospital.

Marcello: Now I guess it was in the next twenty-four hours that the Japanese then, of course, turned their attention to the Philippines, and, of course, there were air raids at Clark Field...

Bumgarner: Cavite Navy Yard.

Marcello: ...and Cavite Navy Yard and some of the other places. So casualties were coming in, I would assume, pretty fast.

Bumgarner: Yes, that's right. They bombed the bay area and all the docks and things like that. They hit the quartermaster steam laundry. We got in a big bunch of badly scalded Chinese, who were working there. As

time went on, we began to get people sent in from northern Luzon who had been casualties.

Marcello: In general, what kind of casualties were you receiving?

Bumgarner: Well, until we went into Bataan, that was a time that the troops were retreating. Actually, outside of these terrible casualties from Cavite Navy Yard, we weren't getting many of those wounded. Now, we got some of those because that place was just bombed out. We got a bunch of those. The problem was that there were so many of them. Would you believe that in that whole hospital, there were no oxygen outlets on the walls of the rooms. There was one oxygen tent, ice-cooled, in the whole place. We had to lay these badly injured people in hallways and like that. I remember one young lieutenant commander--I can't remember his name--who was lying on the floor in the hallway, and he had a gaping wound in his chest. He was obviously dying, and there was not a darn thing I could do for him except to talk to him. I went down the hall to see another patient and then came back. The guy was gone. I mean, not to repeat it over and over, but we just weren't prepared for such things.

Marcello: To follow up on the statement you just made, am I to assume, therefore, that Sternberg was ill-equipped to handle this sudden influx of so many casualties?

Bumgarner: Sternberg General Hospital was a very lovely place to work, where we got patients suffering from malaria, dengue [fever], dysentery, and, of course, the old BVA ward, where they had everything from tapeworm on down or on up (chuckle). On the children dependent's ward, Philippine dependent's ward, they had every type of pediatric problem. For taking care of these problems it was a disaster. For a peacetime hospital, it was just great. But for war, for taking care of a lot of casualties, we just weren't prepared.

Marcello: As a layman, I usually think of the size of a hospital in terms of the number of beds. Could you estimate how many beds this hospital possibly had?

Bumgarner: Well, in peacetime I bet we had 325. But after the war started, it was expanded to a couple of large warehouse-like things down near the Passig River. It was considerably more than the 325.

Marcello: You mentioned something awhile ago that I would like to pick up on. Once more, I am speaking as a layman. You had this influx of casualties.

Bumgarner: Yes.

Marcello: And there are some of them that you obviously know are going to die. You have to make a choice, that is, which ones are you're going to treat and the ones that you simply, I guess, set aside and kind of let them die. Is that a real hard decision to make, or how do

you do that?

Bumgarner: Well, you're asking me a question that's very difficult. But when you have an influx of people like that, of badly injured people, there are going to be some of them who die before you can do anything. But like this young Navy lieutenant commander, who was lying on the floor in the hallway, I remember--I don't know why you remember some people so much better than you do others--this guy had so much courage, and he was trying to reassure me, actually. I said, "Is there anything I can do for you?" He said, "No, nothing." I wish I had his name, but I don't.

Marcello: How did that initially affect you as a young physician at that time?

Bumgarner: Well, the day all those Chinese came in, and we had to lay them out on the grass in front of surgery, we didn't have anyplace to put them. Just like a lot of the others, I was sort of...I hate to admit this, but it put me in a sort of a dazed state because we were just overwhelmed, in a sense. A doctor doesn't like to admit this, but just to see so much that needed doing that you couldn't do, that's not good.

[Tape 1, Side 2]

Marcello: Okay, let me pick up on another thought that I wanted to follow through with. How long did you remain at Sternberg once the attack had started, that is, once

the war had started?

Bumgarner: Well, we went across the bay. The personnel of Sternberg General Hospital crossed the bay on Christmas Eve. I remember that very well. We gathered in front of the hospital. There was a huge bird--it seemed like a crippled bird--that lit on the eaves in front of the headquarters building. We didn't know whether it was...we tried to scare this bird of evil omen away, but it wouldn't go. It just languidly flapped its wings and wouldn't go away. It was a sort of depressing thing.

Finally, the trucks came and took us to...there weren't many ships in Manila Bay that weren't sunk. The nurses and doctors, corpsmen and everything, including some of the supplies, were loaded on one of the few remaining boats to cross the bay. We had to lie down on deck. There wasn't much room for anybody. We had to pick our way through all these sunken ships. The bay just looked like a nautical graveyard. Sometimes the boat would have to stop, and the only thing you could hear...part of the time you could hear the engine, and at other times the only thing you could hear was the lapping of the water against the hull of the boat.

Finally, at sunrise the next morning, we got to Limay. First thing, the nurses were sent on to the

hospital. Part of them went to Hospital Number One, part to Hospital Number Two. We were told that we had to unload the boat. We had a lot of equipment there, like, beds and supplies, for General Hospital Number Two. Colonel Craig was the one in charge.

As we were unloading the boat, three Japanese bombers came over very leisurely. They didn't have any opposition at that time. I don't know whether they were playing with us or not, but they dropped about five bombs in our area. They made me slightly nervous. None of them hit the boat, but they made a big splash. We finally got the boat unloaded.

Marcello: A couple of questions come to mind at this point. Am I to assume that Sternberg was not hit in any way by bombs and so on?

Bumgarner: No. They put out huge crosses to indicate that it was a hospital. Then we did the foolhardy thing of digging trenches across that beautiful quadrangle. Of course, a lot of people, after the blackout, stumbled into that thing. We finally got so that when the alarm went off...if you were busy, of course, and taking care of sick people, you couldn't jump in a trench.

Marcello: When the hospital was evacuated, I'm assuming the entire hospital was evacuated, patients and all.

Bumgarner: Those that were capable of being returned to active

duty were taken by ambulance overland to General Hospital Number One or General Hospital Number Two. Those that were deemed impossible to return to duty stayed behind, and they and Colonel Carroll and nine Filipino nurses and one American nurse--you'll have to get that name somewhere; it doesn't come immediately to mind--were able to dredge up the old Macatan, which was a horrible boat but was the only thing they had. They tried to get clearance through some intermediary that the boat would get safe passage, but they never got that. So they took off, anyway. That was the boat that arrived in Australia with all those people, those patients.

Marcello: Help me with my geography. Was Limay located over on the Bataan Peninsula?

Bumgarner: Limay was located about on the east side of the Bataan Peninsula and about ten miles from Mariveles. That would be the tip of the island, eight to ten miles, anyway. It was a little pier there. That's all it was.

Marcello: This General Hospital Number Two, which is where I assume you were assigned, was this a mobile-type hospital, a field-type hospital?

Bumgarner: The only thing that was undercover was the operating room and a couple of operating wards. The hospital was intended to take care of a thousand patients at

maximum. My ward was intended to take care of a hundred. We had two nurses, and one doctor. Lieutenant Sarwold was with me--his name was Al--and Lieutenant Mary Oberst. She's still alive, but she's had a big stroke. She's a beautiful person, great nurse, wonderful nurse.

Marcello: Let's assume that by this time the battle for Bataan has started.

Bumgarner: Well, in the first few days, what we were taking care of mostly was patients who had come overland from Manila--they could be returned to duty--and certain people who developed dysentery, and we began to receive clinical cases of malaria. It was only after the retreat of the troops in Bataan and the fighting began that we started getting a lot of casualties, surgical.

Marcello: Let me ask you this question, and the reason I am doing it is because I want to go back and talk about this later on. You mentioned that at this point some of the patients you were getting were dysentery patients. At that time, while you had supplies, how did you treat dysentery?

Bumgarner: We had almost nothing, is the truth.

Marcello: You didn't have anything at that time (chuckle)?

Bumgarner: Well, there were certain preparations, which weren't much beyond nostrums.

Marcello: Folk medicines.

Bumgarner: Yes, folk medicines almost. We did early on have some quinine but not nearly enough.

Marcello: But the quinine would have been for the malaria patients.

Bumgarner: That's right. That's true. I don't know what you wanted to ask me about that.

Marcello: You mentioned that these were the kinds of patients that you were getting in. You obviously did have some quinine at that time to treat the malaria patients.

Bumgarner: We did. But even from the very beginning, there was not enough quinine to treat people preventively or prophylactically and to treat the active cases of malaria. So after the first few days, you had to confine it to treating the active cases of malaria.

Marcello: Now, I also know that in addition to the military personnel that eventually retreated, or withdrew, into the Bataan Peninsula, there were also a good many civilians, who were down in the Bataan Peninsula.

Bumgarner: There were several thousands. The supplies, the food, the medicine, and everything was intended just for the Philippine Army, the 31st Infantry, and the medical personnel, and the Philippine Scouts. I don't know exactly how many thousands [of people], but I would say it was less than 20,000, perhaps 23,000. The original intention did not cover all of the Philippine

Army. They weren't prepared to take care of all this recently developed Philippine Army, MacArthur's army, that he hastily assembled a few months before Pearl Harbor. We didn't have supplies. It wound up that there were about between 90,000 and a 100,000 personnel in there who were being taken care of by supplies intended for only a third that number.

Marcello: My understanding, also, is that the Japanese deliberately forced civilians down into the Bataan Peninsula, knowing, of course, that this would have drawn down further on American supplies, whether it is food, medicine, whatever the case may be.

Bumgarner: A lot of them came of their own volition, too, just to get away from the Japanese.

Marcello: Sure.

Bumgarner: They thought that when they got on Bataan, they would be secure and safe and all that kind of business.

Marcello: Now, how do you substitute as time goes on? You're on the Bataan Peninsula, casualties are coming in, supplies are being drawn down. How do you improvise or how do you make do?

Bumgarner: Well, as our hospital became overwhelmed with people coming in, in my ward, which was intended to take care of a hundred, we started taking the blankets off the beds and putting them on the ground, then finally we put patients on the ground itself. It was rather a

chaotic situation. We were so low on supplies that we were treating only those in the direst need of, say, quinine for malaria, people who were having chills.

The first day we landed at Limay and had our Christmas dinner, we were told, "Enjoy this because from now on you're on half-rations." And that was true. There was a gradual diminishing of the number of calories that we got and the protein that we got. Of course, there were no fresh fruits or anything like that. I remember on Easter Sunday, I think, they wanted to improve the morale. That was just a few days before the surrender, and they told us we were going to have steaks. They slaughtered all of the 26th Cavalry remounts, and we had very good steaks. But that was the last steaks we saw for a long time.

Marcello: Once you get to that point, like you mention, your rations are obviously cut. What might a typical meal consist of, let's say, two or three weeks before the end?

Bumgarner: Rice and sometimes there would be a bit of salmon. But there were no fresh fruit, no fresh vegetables. Generally speaking, it was rice, and occasionally there would be some servings of salmon. That ran out finally, except for what they kept for the critically ill patients.

Marcello: Do you find that in a situation like that that

everybody is pretty much doing their own part? In other words, is military discipline and so on being maintained at this point yet?

Bumgarner: Well, discipline within the hospital, I mean, there was no problem about that. The big problem was taking care of several times as many patients as you were supposed to. Finally, we had to...the people with dysentery, there were so many of them that couldn't make it to the pits [latrines] that a shovel was the best tool that you had on the ward. If a patient had dysentery and couldn't make it to the toilets, you had to put them on the ground because there was no way...once a mattress had been unloaded on, they were of no use anymore. We had no sheets on the ward. The surgical ward was the only place where they had sheets.

Marcello: Did you have means to keep your instruments and so on sterile? How were sterile procedures?

Bumgarner: Well, this would concern surgery. Mine was a medical ward.

Marcello: So you were getting mainly, like you say, dysentery patients, malaria patients, those that had other kinds of tropical diseases?

Bumgarner: That's right. A lot of the Filipino Army had every type of intestinal parasite nameable.

Marcello: What was your reaction and those of your fellow

medical personnel when you heard that MacArthur was evacuating?

Bumgarner: Well, I never did feel that I was going to miss him much. He came to Bataan one time and took a short stroll, but I never saw him. I think that we realized that it was the end, as far as Bataan was concerned and Corregidor was concerned, so that it didn't make much difference whether MacArthur was there or not.

Marcello: When did the realization hit you, and what was your reaction, when you decided that you weren't going to get out of the Philippines and that you were going to become a prisoner of war?

Bumgarner: You mean out of Bataan?

Marcello: Yes.

Bumgarner: Well, the night that Colonel Gillespie, who was the chief of the hospital...the night before the day of surrender, he got a call from General [Edward P.] King that they were going to have to surrender the next day.

My job was to round up the nurses, which was not a very easy job because some of them were out telling their boyfriends goodbye. It took quite awhile to find them. Of course, some of them were on duty, and they were rather easy to find. But I rounded them up and put them on some old Batangas buses. They started to the docks. After the nurses were rounded up, they

started to the dock, and it took them several hours to get there because they were blowing up ammunition dumps, and there was retreating troops and stalled vehicles. It took several hours for them to get there.

Marcello: So what you're saying is that there was pretty much mass confusion by this time.

Bumgarner: That's right. Outside the hospital there was mass confusion.

Marcello: What were your own thoughts at that time about becoming a prisoner of war? What thoughts were going through your mind?

Bumgarner: Well, the thought that came to my mind...I'll say a few words that may help explain the night we were left alone there. They were rounding up the combat troops. The north-south highway was just right along the beach, and the Japanese swung completely around us. They knew where we were and what we were. They swept on by.

They didn't come into the hospital until the night of the surrender--a contingent of Japanese. Colonel Gillespie called all the officers to headquarters. He wanted them to be present to whatever happened. The Japanese--it was a lieutenant that took the surrender--laid down a bunch of conditions of surrender of the hospital, about ten of

them. After each one he said, "Any violation of this rule, and you will be shot." Just like that. Like looting our own supplies, we would be "shot" (chuckle); bathing in the Real River, we would be "shot"; going off of the hospital compound, we would be "shot." Those were the principal ones.

After the surrender my very good friend that I was with at Sternberg and General Hospital Number Two and then at Cabanatuan for two years, Jack Comstock--I mentioned him a hundred times in my book--called me over, and he said, "John, I have this magnum of Dom Perignon here that I was saving for our triumphant return to Manila." (laughter) We called in a couple more people and drank to the future (chuckle).

Marcello: Describe your first actual contact with the Japanese here.

Bumgarner: Well, my first actual contact was when they came to headquarters.

Marcello: When they came to headquarters.

Bumgarner: That's right. That was my first actual contact, yes.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens next?

Bumgarner: Well, Colonel Gillespie wanted to move all of the patients and all the personnel to a different place because where the Japanese were firing at Corregidor, their guns were ringed all around the hospital. Colonel Gillespie begged the ranking Japanese Officer

there--he was a medical officer--to please move everybody to a more secure place. He said, "No, you will not be moved until Corregidor surrenders." The guns were all the way around. Corregidor was firing. I think they knew where we were, but some of the shells landed in the hospital and killed a bunch of people. One salvo hit the receiving ward and killed several people. One landed in the kitchen and killed the cook and several other people with him. The Japanese firing back were firing over the hospital. So it was night and day. I don't know whether you've ever heard this, but these shells had something that would make them screech as they went over. So we heard a lot of screeching.

The only thing that they brought in during this time to us was just moldy rice with rat feces in it. We didn't have anything to eat.

Marcello: Getting back to those Japanese artillery emplacements, it's obvious that they had set up those guns there deliberately, knowing full well that they might possibly be safe from counterfire from Corregidor.

Bumgarner: Well, that was the thought. But there was no question that their artillery was all around the hospital.

Marcello: So very quickly after the Japanese take over the hospital, then, you are dependent on them for your supplies, particularly food.

Bumgarner: That's right. That's true from then on in. It was rice, rice, rice.

Marcello: During this period of time that you remained there at Mobile Hospital Number Two, after the Japanese take over, were you physically harassed in any way?

Bumgarner: No, but there was the presence. The Japanese had free access to the hospital. Just out of curiosity, a lot of officers came through with their cameras, and enlisted men came through, too. They had a peculiar habit of not seeking some proper spot to relieve themselves.

They relieved themselves wherever they were. What few little medical supplies there were--we were still reserving a few items such as canned milk and fruit juice for the very, very ill--the Japanese looted that and took that. Colonel Gillespie protested, and the Japanese officer said, "Well, you cannot refuse a Japanese soldier if he requests it." He protested further, and they put up signs around the hospital saying that the Japanese soldiers weren't to loot. But every single ring, every single watch, every single everything disappeared. That's the kind of harassment. Of course, you didn't dare protest.

I remember there was a civilian woman who came into the hospital. She was very much pregnant. We couldn't turn her away. They delivered her in the

operating room just before the surrender. We couldn't send her away. We tried to hide her. But the baby's cries gave her away, and she was raped repeatedly, just masses of them coming and going into her ward.

[Tape 2, Side 1]

Marcello: Okay, before I put on the new tape we were talking about some of the harassing that the Japanese performed during this period. I want to go back and pick up on something. You mentioned that the Japanese, when they would come through the ward, might possibly urinate or maybe even defecate right in the ward. Do you think this was a part of their national psyche or character, if I may use that word, or was this simply another one of those deliberate attempts to humiliate you?

Bumgarner: To me, at that time and much later, the Japanese were inscrutable. I'd say I think so many of their soldiers were just like our own soldiers, just a common, peasant-type who perhaps didn't know any better. It was a very bad thing to do, and there was nothing we could do about it. What their intentions were, I have no way of knowing.

Marcello: Let me come at this from another angle. Could you detect, at that time, that they held the Americans in contempt, utter contempt, because you had surrendered?

Bumgarner: Yes, that's right. Colonel Gillespie was a man of

great courage. But this Japanese doctor who came there to supervise things told him, when he'd protest, he said, "Don't bother me. Don't bother me anymore. Leave me alone." But Colonel Gillespie kept coming back and coming back and coming back. He displayed a lot of courage. He protested a lot of things. Of course, he didn't gain a lot by doing it. I don't think they had any respect for us at all.

Marcello: How long did you remain here at General Hospital Number Two before you left?

Bumgarner: Well, after Corregidor surrendered, they took us to some old, abandoned quartermaster depot that was not far from General Hospital Number One, and we stayed there a few days. Then they took us to Bilibid Prison.

Marcello: At this stage, however, how much time has elapsed from the time you were captured until the surrender came down and until you went to Bilibid? Approximately how much time?

Bumgarner: Let's see. Well, let me get this time frame right. Let me think just a minute. The surrender was May 6 at Corregidor. We were moved over to this quartermaster thing, and we stayed there about ten days. We went to Bilibid, and we were taken to Cabanatuan from Bilibid about June 1.

Marcello: Okay, so you were actually captured when? When were

you actually captured?

Bumgarner: April 9.

Marcello: So we're talking about approximately a month, a little over a month, from the time you're captured until you go to Bilibid.

Bumgarner: Well, yes, because there was that time between Corregidor's surrender.

Marcello: Okay, here's my question, then. Are you learning, during this period of about a month-and-a-half, how to act, how to perform as a prisoner of war? Are you learning what is expected of you as a prisoner of war?

Bumgarner: Well, I knew that it was expected of me that every order that the Japanese gave, you obeyed it, or you were in trouble.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were in trouble. Let's be more specific. Suppose they gave an order. You didn't obey it, or you didn't understand it, so, therefore, you didn't obey it. What might possibly happen to you?

Bumgarner: Well, you might get knocked down with...

Marcello: You might get knocked down with anything that was handy.

Bumgarner: Anything, a rifle or anything that was handy. Of course, it wasn't until at Cabanatuan that I was threatened with bayonets.

Marcello: Are you learning early on, during this first month-

and-a-half, that the best policy is to stay as far away from them as you can?

Bumgarner: Oh, yes, absolutely--just try to retreat in the woodwork.

Marcello: How about the military etiquette? Was there any kind of military etiquette that was expected of you when you encountered a Japanese, whether it was saluting or bowing or anything of that nature?

Bumgarner: Oh, yes--bow, bow [to the Japanese captors].

Marcello: How did you feel about doing this in the beginning?

Bumgarner: Well, I didn't like it. I mean, it was embarrassing, humiliating, all that sort of thing. But you did it.

Marcello: You had to do this to the lowest enlisted man. Isn't that correct?

Bumgarner: That's true. If you didn't, you might get cuffed behind the ear.

Marcello: Did you observe that corporal punishment was a way of life in the Japanese Army?

Bumgarner: They had a cadre in the prisoner of war camp at Cabanatuan. They would just run these poor soldiers into the ground. If they didn't obey orders, they got treated rough.

Marcello: I understand that a sergeant in the Japanese Army had a tremendous amount of power, much more than a sergeant in the American Army.

Bumgarner: Well, that was obvious, just about. I wouldn't say he

had a life and death control, but he had the ability to give corporal punishment. Life and death is probably too strongly worded.

Marcello: How important is it, even at this early stage--we're still talking about that month or month-and-a-half--to learn some of the Japanese language?

Bumgarner: Well, you see, all of us were so filled with hatred that learning the Japanese language was not one of our intents. I think I learned a dozen words, and that's all I cared to learn.

Marcello: It could have saved you some grief, though.

Bumgarner: Had I learned it?

Marcello: Yes.

Bumgarner: Well, we were so concerned with other things, like, survival, that...in fact, a man who was in the prisoner-of-war camp at Cabanatuan, who was one of the main interpreters--the main interpreter, I think--lost his life on account of the fact that he did know the language.

Marcello: By the time that you leave the quartermaster warehouse and go to Bilibid Prison, what personal possessions did you have at that time?

Bumgarner: I had my musette bag, an extra shirt, an extra pair of khaki trousers, a razor, and a toothbrush.

Marcello: What did you do for eating utensils? Did you have a mess kit?

Bumgarner: I had a mess kit. I carved all the events [dates] on the back of that mess kit, and somebody stole it at Chitose Airfield (chuckle).

Marcello: Just out of curiosity, why had you done that? I know what you're talking about because I've seen it before. Those were the aluminum mess kits, mess utensils, and you could very easily etch in there. Why did you decide to do that?

Bumgarner: Well, I was wondering if I could remember all the dates and places. I had documented them well. I was able to carry one little book with me. Have you ever heard of Dr. Davidson down at Duke?

Marcello: Yes.

Bumgarner: He had given me a personal copy of his little Complete Pediatrician and had signed it. In the interleaf of that book, in the places where I could write, I also documented...it was just a tiny book. It didn't take up much space. I wrote all these things down, and after the war Dean Davidson said he'd like to have that book to put in the archives. I gave it to him. I'd really love to have that thing back now.

Marcello: So, it's in the Duke University Archives now?

Bumgarner: That's right.

Marcello: What other personal possessions did you have? For instance, did you have any money, any jewelry, or anything like that, or had all that been taken

already?

Bumgarner: I didn't have a ring. The only thing I had was a watch that I gave to Lucy Wilson--was then Lucy Wilson, Lucy Joplin now. I gave it to her, and she took it with her, and she lost it. I didn't have anything. Of course, the Japanese went through my luggage, but there just wasn't anything for them to take.

Marcello: Okay, you get to Bilibid. What happens there?

Bumgarner: Well, when we got to Bilibid, at our arrival there, the Japanese, as they always did, there was a lot of shouting and pushing and shoving. They counted our group about five times before they were satisfied. All the time they were pushing and shoving and yelling. It was their mode of intimidation.

Marcello: Also, was there a civilian audience around to watch this?

Bumgarner: No, because it was on the inside of Bilibid.

Marcello: I see.

Bumgarner: It was on the inside of Bilibid.

Marcello: How about when you went from that warehouse to Bilibid? Did they commit acts along the way to further humiliate you in front of the Filipinos or anything like that.

Bumgarner: There weren't many Filipinos. You see, the medical personnel were the last ones taken out because we

weren't combatants and we were harmless. The Filipinos had learned along the way, while they were taking the combat troops out, that if they tried to do anything for anybody, they would have a rough time. Anything might happen to them.

Marcello: Okay, so you get to Bilibid. How long are you there, and what do you do?

Bumgarner: Well, at Bilibid we slept on the concrete floor. We didn't even have a way of hanging our mosquito nets. We did have a mosquito net to begin with. You had to sort of drape it over you. There were no windows in the place. The Japanese soldiers came through with their flashlights, going through your luggage, frisking you, looking for anything they could take. In their own language they were telling us what they thought of us.

Marcello: Were you housed in regular prison cells here?

Bumgarner: No, because we had to sleep as a group in a very large room just with a concrete floor and open, not really windows, just open, no glass or any enclosure. I know my good friend Jack Comstock, after that first night on that concrete floor with only the blanket underneath him, could barely walk the next day. It was awfully hard.

Marcello: Was Comstock a physician, also?

Bumgarner: Yes, he was.

Marcello: How long did you remain there?

Bumgarner: We remained there until the 1st of June.

Marcello: So you weren't there very long?

Bumgarner: No, no. We assembled a day or two before the 1st of June. We were told that we were going to be taken-- Colonel Gillespie was told--that we were going to be taken somewhere. The Japanese never told you what they were going to do. I don't know why they were so secretive about things like that. They said that we were going somewhere to set up a hospital full of good supplies and food and medicine and everything. We would be taking care of our own people.

They put us on cattle cars. Actually, there was straw on the floor. Those were little tiny cars. They put ninety of us in a car or more, and it had straw, and there it was cattle manure or horse manure on the floor. There wasn't room to sit down. We had to stand up. We got off at the camp at Cabanatuan.

Marcello: But at least there were [ventilation] slats or whatever in these cars. They weren't enclosed boxcars, were they?

Bumgarner: Yes, they were enclosed boxcars.

Marcello: Oh, they were enclosed boxcars where they could actually close the doors.

Bumgarner: Absolutely.

Marcello: Did they do that? Did they close the doors?

Bumgarner: They did; they did.

Marcello: What were conditions like inside those cars? Describe that.

Bumgarner: As I told you, the floor was covered with straw--they had been transporting animals in it--and horse manure.

Marcello: What was the heat like in there?

Bumgarner: It was kind of suffocating. You couldn't lie down, and you couldn't sit down.

Marcello: What was your own medical condition like at that time?

Bumgarner: Well, I had malaria, and I had dysentery. My weight at the end of...I weighed 116 pounds.

Marcello: At the end of...?

Bumgarner: There was some scales at this quartermaster place, and I weighed there 116 pounds.

Marcello: Okay, now that's before you actually went to Bilibid or before you went off to Cabanatuan?

Bumgarner: That's right.

Marcello: And what was your normal weight.

Bumgarner: I was brought into the Army at the weight of 138 pounds. I had to sign a waiver, but I got down to 116 pounds.

Marcello: Under those circumstances dysentery, must be humiliating.

Bumgarner: It is. Comstock called it the "shizzlin' drits" (chuckle). I had it in the worst way. But Comstock was such a good friend that he helped take care of me.

I stayed on my feet, and I wasn't really hospitalized. My malaria was only treated when I had chills because there wasn't any quinine for anything like that when I had the ague.

Marcello: All right, I have to ask you this, and I think we need to get graphic. Almost anybody who will listen to this tape or read this transcript probably has had a bout with common diarrhea, something along those lines. Compare or contrast dysentery with diarrhea.

Bumgarner: Well, at that time, we didn't realize it, but there was a lot of amoebic dysentery among us, and then there was a bacillary dysentery. Due to some unsanitary conditions, it was passed around. You might pass blood in your stools, and you might have a terrible lot of cramps and then, too, fever.

Marcello: The point I'm making is, there's really no comparison between diarrhea and dysentery.

Bumgarner: No.

Marcello: And you may have to defecate, if that is a good word to use, how many times in the course of a day?

Bumgarner: Well, for some people it was twenty times.

Marcello: They'd plant themselves at the slit trench or wherever, I guess, under these circumstances.

Bumgarner: That's right, or not make it to the slit trenches.

Marcello: How long does this train trip take?

Bumgarner: Well, the train trip only took one day. Then when we

got off at Cabanatuan, there was a schoolhouse or some elementary school with a fence around it. Apparently, several groups of prisoners of one kind or another had passed through there. There was just a trench over in the corner where everybody had to go. It rained while we were there. Comstock and I got under the school building, but first we had to rake out all the...the chickens had been under there, and the dogs had been under there.

In the middle of the night, there was one fellow, who I had taken care of and had known before at Sternberg as one of the corpsmen, who had been with the Republican Army in Spain. He was half-nuts, anyway. But he went crazy that night, and he kept yelling, "There is no war! There is no war!" He was trying to deny to himself, I think, the possibility that there was a war. He'd been through so much terrible stuff in Spain. I had to get up and go quiet the guy because I thought maybe the Japanese would do something to him. That was the conditions. The ground was littered with...

Marcello: Dog manure and chicken manure.

Bumgarner: And some human manure, yes.

Marcello: I want to pick up on something else. You mentioned Comstock time and again in this interview. How important would it become for survival to build these

support systems where two or three or four individuals might band together, share food, take care of one another, things of that sort?

Bumgarner: Well, it was one of the essentials of survival because, if you had a good friend, it was tremendously important. For instance, of course, this comes on later, but Jack Comstock was a very resourceful individual. Sometime after we arrived at Cabanatuan, he got to trading through the fence. He had a fine watch that his sister had given him and that he was able to conceal from the Japanese. He got to Cabanatuan with it. He traded it through the fence for forty pesos. That way he was able to get a little quinine. There were safe places through the fence, relatively safe. Nothing was safe. You had to deal, sort of, through an agent.

Marcello: But then my point is, he would, I assume, share his booty with those who were in his support group.

Bumgarner: Well, that's true. Our support group...Jack and I were that good of friends that we were sort of our own support group.

Marcello: But at least there were two of you in this support group.

Bumgarner: That's right. Jack was fortunate in that he didn't get malaria, that he didn't have dysentery. After we first got to Cabanatuan, the prisoner-of-war camp

itself, I had chills and fever, and he was able to get a little quinine, just enough to get rid of the chills and fever.

Marcello: Okay, let's assume now that you get to Cabanatuan. Describe what health conditions were like at Cabanatuan when you get there.

Bumgarner: Well, we were put in old Filipino army barracks. It had been raining. It was very early in the rainy season. The ground was solid mud. Rice was what we got, nothing else. The conditions were just lamentable. Our hospital group arrived the day before that the people started coming in from other places like Camp O'Donnell. I never can forget that on the second or third day of June, those people from O'Donnell walked from the railyards.

Marcello: At San Fernando, wasn't it?

Bumgarner: At the little town of Cabanatuan. It was not the same thing as the camp. They were walking. When those people came in, they were specters. They weren't soldiers; they were ghosts of men. Of course, they had lost 1,500 men at O'Donnell. I remember some of them had nothing around them except a burlap sack. They were in dreadful condition. That's why we lost 1,500 people in the first month, from lack of food and medication.

Marcello: Now am I assuming that as soon as this influx comes

in, the medical personnel immediately try to set up some semblance of a medical facility?

Bumgarner: That's right. There were twenty-nine wards. I had ward twenty-nine. We're set up to put these people in wards. We tried soon after to make dysentery wards and set them up. But you remember the description of these wards? They were two-tiered and intended for one person in a bay [sleeping area], but they put four in a bay. You slept that far from the next person [measures distance with his hands].

Marcello: About an inch from the next person?

Bumgarner: That's right. We were told to sleep head-foot, head-foot--alternate head-foot. We tried to put the people who had severe dysentery on the bottom tier. But if some person developed a severe dysentery attack during the night and the person below was...the bamboo strips that they slept on were about that far apart [measures distance with hand].

Marcello: About an inch-and-a-half apart.

Bumgarner: That's right, and if you were below and happened to get unloaded on, it was bad.

Marcello: So actually, what you're saying is that in these wards there would probably be a center aisle, and then on each side of the aisle you would have these two-tiered platforms, for want of a better word.

Bumgarner: That's right. They were two-tiered platforms

separated into bays, and each bay was supposed to hold one person. Actually, this place was only intended for a fourth [of the people they had there], but sometimes they would put ninety to a hundred people in those.

Marcello: Had this hospital area been a medical facility when it was a Philippine Army camp?

Bumgarner: Oh, absolutely not.

Marcello: Okay, so you had actually built this from scratch.

Bumgarner: That's right, from scratch. The whole camp was divided into what was called "hospital" and "non-hospital." On the hospital side we had as many as...

[Tape 2, Side 2]

Marcello: Pick up the story relative to the hospital area.

Bumgarner: Well, the hospital area was simply just a bunch of Philippine Army barracks filled with soldiers that you tried to take care of with all these. In addition to malaria and dysentery, from the time they'd gone into Bataan and the time of being captured, they had the beginning of a protein deficiency, vitamin deficiency. We began early, by the 1st of July, to see people with edema of their feet and ankles, which could have been due either to protein deficiency or wet beriberi. Actually, there was no pure deficiency disease. In a place where there was a deficiency of everything, you

couldn't say, "This man has pure beriberi. This man has pure pellagra. This man has pure scurvy." They had a little of everything. Of course, it takes a long time for scurvy to develop, quite awhile, but it did develop later.

Marcello: But it probably started with a lot of these guys back during the fighting on Bataan.

Bumgarner: Oh, absolutely. A lot of times the rations didn't get to the front, and these people were, as far as their diet was concerned, miserable.

Marcello: Approximately how many medical personnel administered at this hospital? By medical personnel, I'm referring now strictly to physicians. You may have to estimate this.

Bumgarner: Well, I would say 200.

Marcello: Who was in charge? Who was the chief physician?

Bumgarner: In the beginning it was Colonel Gillespie. But then he was a full colonel, so they shipped out all these later. About the 1st of August, they shipped all these people off--full colonels and above. After Colonel Gillespie left, the ranking officer was Colonel Craig, "Rhiney" Craig.

Marcello: Now what was your specific job there at the medical facility?

Bumgarner: Well, I was a ward physician.

Marcello: Which was probably what almost everybody else was, I

guess.

Bumgarner: Except a little later, when we saw the futility of treating some of these. They were down to just "pre-dead." We put them in what we called the "Zero Ward." Again, we come back to Comstock, who was in charge of that ward. They called it the "Zero Ward." It was zero medicine, almost zero food, and absolutely zero hope because they were put there to die, and they died. In the beginning there was only a tap out in front of two or three wards, so they couldn't properly bathe these people. But when it would rain or anything like that, they'd take them out and strip them down. It was impossible to bathe them adequately. These men had to lie in filth because just about as soon as you cleaned up one person, it was...I visited Jack a lot on this ward, and it was right next to the diphtheria ward, and Captain Schultz ran that. There was a little triangle there--the "Zero Ward," the diphtheria ward, and the morgue. That was one place where the Japanese never went.

Marcello: I gather most of the prisoners didn't want to be around that "Zero Ward" either, under any circumstances.

Bumgarner: Well, the conditions in the hospital were such that even when people over in what they called the "main camp" were sick--they knew about the death rate over

there--they would stay where they were until they had to go.

Marcello: What kind of medical supplies are the Japanese providing?

Bumgarner: They gave us a lot of mineral oil.

Marcello: Tell me about the mineral oil.

Bumgarner: Well, there was some ingenious guy in that camp who learned how to make rice pancakes using mineral oil. Of course, in a place like that, who in the hell needed mineral oil?

Marcello: Constipation was not a problem (chuckle).

Bumgarner: There was just a huge supply of gallon jars, and nobody was standing guard over it. So he set up shop with rice pancakes. Somebody had an old meat grinder that they could grind the rice and make pancakes. There was no difficulty in telling who had been eating the rice pancakes because they had the stigma right on the seat of their pants. It would vary from this size right on up to this size [making measurement with his hands].

Marcello: You're talking about a large, round, brown spot.

Bumgarner: A large, round, greasy spot, yes. It looked like a target.

Marcello: How about the rice ration? What kind of rice ration was the hospital receiving?

Bumgarner: I would say it amounted to 1,500 to 1,800 calories,

just the rice itself, and weed soup. Once in a while they would slaughter a carabao. You'd see them drag that one carabao for 2,600 people. They'd slaughter it, and they'd drag it in. It had to be eaten within a short period of time. They saved everything. We had carabao blood soup. You talk about a difficulty in ingesting any kind of food! Now, carabao blood soup would not be my...they mixed that with some weeds or greens. Later on, they had talinum. You know what talinum is?

Marcello: No, I don't.

Bumgarner: Well, that was a sort of green. Our main diet was rice, some kind of a green, weeds in the beginning and then talinum, and they made soup out of that. They put this carabao blood in that. They didn't slaughter a carabao every day, not be any means. It was just once in a while.

Marcello: Getting back to the rice again, how many times would you be fed a day?

Bumgarner: For the early morning, we'd get lugao, which was rice gruel. For the middle of the day, you'd get a serving of rice and then one later on in the day. The hospital got a certain amount. Anyway, they divided it, and after that it was up to them.

Marcello: In other words, the Japanese would give you an allocation of rice, and then, like you say, it was up

to you to make sure that it lasted as long as it was supposed to last.

Bumgarner: Yes.

Marcello: What was the quality of the rice like?

Bumgarner: Well, it looked as if it had been on the floor of a warehouse in Manila for years. There was a lot of rat manure in it and worms and just all kinds of things. It looked as if it had been mixed with the sweepings of the floor.

Marcello: Did you try to pick out all those impurities, or after a while do you just give up and shovel it down.

Bumgarner: Well, I know Comstock was always picking the worms and the bugs out of his rice, and he finally said, "To hell with it!" He says, "John, that's the only protein we're getting, so let's eat it."

Marcello: In terms of quantity--and again trying to put this in a layman's language rather than talking about calories--in terms of quantity, how much rice might you get for the noon meal and the evening meal?

Bumgarner: You know, of course, about the mess kit. I'd say about half-full.

Marcello: About half a mess kit, okay. I think that would give someone a good idea as to how much food you would get. I understand that everybody was always looking for something with which to flavor that rice, anything to add some flavor to it.

Bumgarner: Well, any dog or cat that wandered through that camp was fair game. Dogs and cats and rats wound up...just below my ward--I remember this very vividly--I saw this guy with a club sitting at a hole, and I asked, "What you doing there?" And he said, "There's a rat down there, and when he comes up, I'm gonna have him."

I know they threw some soup bones out of the kitchen onto the ground. Later, of course, they learned to break these and take the marrow out of it and everything. I've seen guys out picking up pieces of bone off the ground and sucking them. A lot of those people, a lot of the soldiers, the older soldiers had...somehow or another the younger group, weren't as careful about things. I learned it was better to eat nothing than something that was unpalatable or unsafe. Better to go hungry than to...

Marcello: Let me pick up on this then. What measures were taken to sterilize those mess kits?

Bumgarner: The only thing in the world you could do was that after you had eaten, go to this one tap and wash it out. There was no hot water. We shaved with cold water; we washed our mess kits with cold water. There was no other way.

Marcello: I was surprised that there was not a continual barrel of boiling water or something over at the cook shack.

Bumgarner: No, I'll tell you, if we go as far as my tour in Japan, I can tell you about some improvisation.

Marcello: Okay, we'll pick up on that later. Let's get back to the hospital again. Here you have all these afflictions. You have no medicine. What do you do for dysentery? How do you improvise?

Bumgarner: Well, I think there was some bismuth preparations that they had there, but they didn't have anything that we would think of using now. Later on, when they found out that people had amoebic dysentery, there was no way to treat it because...emetine...a lot of people died of amoebic dysentery because there was no way to treat it.

Marcello: I've heard it said on occasion that one of the remedies would be to use charcoal.

Bumgarner: Charcoal, no.

Marcello: Eat pieces of charcoal or possibly the burnt rice crusts. Have you ever heard of that?

Bumgarner: Well, I've heard of that, but that was a random thing, just like as if someone had heard something somewhere and tried it individually. But on the wards it was just a matter of having just practically nothing to treat with.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that basically what you're trying to do is keep these patients as comfortable as you can?

Bumgarner: That's true.

Marcello: What do you do for bandages, things of that nature?

Bumgarner: Well, of course, we weren't dealing with wounds there. We were dealing with dreadfully starved, emaciated people who were afflicted with all these various illnesses.

Marcello: Tell me about sick call. What was the policy?

Bumgarner: We handled sick call. If somebody was having chills, we'd try to find...there was a little quinine coming in through the fence. We got a little issue of quinine once in a while, later on, but at first we had almost nothing. A number of the people had a personal supply of quinine that they got through the fence, but we didn't have anything like that. Jack had a few pills of quinine--I don't know how many--that he would let me have when I'd start having chills. I wouldn't take it for very long, just to get over the chills.

Marcello: Who determined whether a person was sick enough to go on light duty or go into the hospital? Was that done by the medical personnel here, or did the Japanese have a hand in it?

Bumgarner: Later on, they determined that so many people had to be returned to duty. You would be assigned a quota of people that you had to return to duty. It would be sometimes with a great deal of reluctance that you would send them back to duty.

Marcello: In other words, if they needed so many people for work

quotas and so on, and they couldn't get enough people out of the barracks, they would come to the hospital.

Bumgarner: Well, if anyone was able to work and was in reasonably good condition, they wanted them sent back over to the main camp.

Marcello: Tell me about the burial details. Did you ever participate in any of those? If so, how was the burying procedures carried out?

Bumgarner: Well, Johnny--we called him Johnny--Lieutenant Johnson--was in charge of the morgue and the burial detail. It was his job when somebody had been sent to the morgue. They took their clothes and gave them to somebody who needed them and whatever. The only thing they were left with was a dog tag that they put in their mouth. Then every morning there would be a parade of the dead, which we'd stand and watch. They took the shutters off the side of the barracks and made litters out of them to carry the dead. Some days they would be ten or twelve, and then other days there'd be sixty to seventy. On really bad days, I don't know how it happened that there was so many. I don't know what compelled me to do it, but I always stood and watched those people go by.

Marcello: I would assume that the graves would be a mass grave.

Bumgarner: Oh, a mass grave. They dug the grave the night before. During the rainy season, they were half-full

of water. Especially at the beginning, the Japanese would not let any rites or observances be held at the graveside. These men were just thrown in and some dirt thrown on them. If the grave were not full, they would save it for the next day.

Marcello: I gather that dogs could be a problem and things like that.

Bumgarner: They could be. I was not a witness to anything like that.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that the depth of these graves would depend upon the patience of the guards on many occasions. At times, after a rain, you could find arms or legs sticking out and so on.

Bumgarner: That's right. Now there was one chaplain, Chaplain Taylor.

Marcello: We mentioned him last evening [at the Admiral Nimitz Museum Symposium], Robert Preston Taylor.

Bumgarner: Robert Preston Taylor, who had tremendous courage. Later on, he went out with the burial detail itself. The Japanese didn't want to be close while all this was happening, while they were dumping these, because the smell wasn't very good. But Chaplain Taylor would kneel right down by them and give last rites, say a prayer or something like that. The man had guts. Of course, what happened to him later is another story.

Marcello: As a physician, I'm sure that you observed prisoners

who had simply lost the will to live.

Bumgarner: Oh, yes.

Marcello: How could you tell when they were in that state and had that state of mind?

Bumgarner: Well, I remember in particular one sergeant that died, that I had on one of my wards at Sternberg. The poor devil had malaria and dysentery, and he was a tremendously weak condition, kind of emaciated. We tried to encourage him. I tried to get everything I could for him, but he finally just gave up and died. The will to live, the will to survive, and the support system were tremendously important--tremendously important!

Marcello: I would assume that if you have that will to live, among other things, you're going to go that extra effort to steal food, barter, trade, make sure that your utensils are clean. All those kinds of things are involved in this will to live, are they not?

Bumgarner: That's right. Of course, there was some stealing going on, but amazingly little because very few people had any money when they went there. Some of them could buy a few things, like, a few bananas and a few peanuts, through the fence. But this was not often. The Filipinos, you could see them out there, and they had a lot of things that they wanted to sell or give to us, but the Japanese wouldn't let them come within

300 yards of the fence. So it was always a night exchange or on the wood detail.

Marcello: How long were you at Cabanatuan altogether? Estimate this. Maybe you know exactly.

Bumgarner: Two years. I know exactly.

Marcello: Okay, you were there two years. Now, a couple of questions come to mind at this point. During this two-year period, do you receive Red Cross parcels?

Bumgarner: We did. I remember that late in November and December, we received a Red Cross package.

Marcello: What did that mean in terms of survival?

Bumgarner: Well, it improved. A lot of the edema disappeared. There was a feeling of well-being, more of a feeling of well-being. Of course, I believe that was a nine- or eleven-pound package of canned goods. But if they had known exactly the situation that we were in, I think they would have planned it much differently. I have one little story you might be interested in.

Marcello: It's your story.

Bumgarner: About the last of October or the first of November--I don't remember--they brought in three Japanese doctors from Manila to inspect the hospital and presumably to determine the state of the prisoners or war there, the health status. I was assigned to follow one of those Japanese doctors as he peeked and peered his way around. He didn't go near the "Zero Ward." He was

always scribbling something in a little notebook pad. After he had gone, Colonel Craig told me that these Japanese doctors said it was of their opinion that everything that had happened to us since we got to Cabanatuan was due to our being on Bataan or on Corregidor--that nothing that happened thereafter was the fault of the Japanese. That was their conclusion from this master bit of research that they did [facetious remark].

Marcello: What were some of the items in the Red Cross package? You said that if people had known the condition of prisoners, they would have planned it a little bit better. What were some of the items in there?

Bumgarner: There was coffee, a bar of some chocolate, a can or two of some kind of meat, and there was some cheese in there.

Marcello: Was there not some Klim, milk spelled backwards--powdered milk?

Bumgarner: That's right. In some of the packages there was some Spam. But I think that I could have planned it a lot better than they did.

Marcello: There was another item in there that I don't think you mentioned, unless I wasn't listening--cigarettes.

Bumgarner: Well, what happened was that those supplies that came, the Japanese put them all in a warehouse, and on some of those cigarettes there were some war slogans. The

Japanese took unkindly to that, and they removed the cigarettes. There were some old newspapers that had been put in there to wrap that stuff, and it showed something like the Battle of Midway. The Japanese removed all of those. So they removed all the reading material, including the cigarettes, with the war slogans on it. Of course, they looted freely.

Marcello: Would you receive a complete Red Cross package per person, or was there one package for so many prisoners?

Bumgarner: I recall in the two years there, in the two years at Cabanatuan, having received a total of, personally, two packages, sometimes a half-package, sometimes an entire package.

Marcello: It's hard for me to believe--but I'm sure you've seen it many times--that men would actually trade food for extra cigarettes.

Bumgarner: When the Japanese had a token compliance with the Geneva Convention, they issued these horrible cigarettes. I didn't smoke. You could trade a cigarette for a book to read; you could trade a cigarette for a banana. You could trade a cigarette for extra rice. I gave all my cigarettes to Jack, who smoked. Of course, Jack went blind after the war, and he was losing his eyesight even then. I think it was those cigarettes. I wouldn't want Jack to read this

part of it. I think it was those bloody Japanese cigarettes because a number of the people went blind in the camp.

Marcello: Didn't some of that occur because of vitamin deficiencies again, too?

Bumgarner: Well, it was Vitamin A and B1. There was one...I'm trying to think of his name, too. I have it in my book. One doctor there, an eye surgeon from San Francisco, documented all of this illness, but he had absolutely nothing to treat these eye conditions. From Vitamin A deficiency they would get so that the opacity and the cornea and the perforation of it...Vitamin B1 deficiency would attack the optic nerve, and they could go blind for many reasons. A great number of people did just that. They did go blind.

Marcello: I'm going to stop this tape and put on a new one.

Bumgarner: Okay.

[Tape 3, Side 1]

Marcello: One last question relative to Cabanatuan, and then we can move on to some of your other experiences. After a while, do you see the death rate kind of taper off somewhat?

Bumgarner: Well, the people who had come in there in dreadful condition, they died. There comes a time when survivorship sets in. People who are going to

survive, they survive.

Marcello: Okay, this is going to be my question. Do you see the Darwinian laws come into effect after a time?

Bumgarner: Well, to an extent, yes. But I want to say I never did see, except in the case of Ted Lewin, who ran the big...I've forgotten the name of his big nightclub in Manila. He was a civilian. But he was put in with us. He had retreated to Bataan, I believe, or Corregidor. He had a group that they called the "Forty Thieves." They were always with his operatives from Manila. He was always able to get everything he wanted. Relative to everyone else, he lived like a king, and he took care of the people around him. But I saw no evidence at any time of one American military person taking advantage of another or stealing from another.

Marcello: But, once again, those who had the strong will to live, those who are clever, they're going to be your survivors.

Bumgarner: That's right.

Marcello: Assuming that they had no bad luck--they got sunk on a ship--or anything else which they had no control over.

Bumgarner: Well, there were a couple of regiments of the National Guard from New Mexico, for instance. They were made up of just ordinary soldiers. The attrition among those people was terrible because they didn't know how

to take care of themselves, and they didn't take care of themselves.

Marcello: I also know that in many cases--I think Cabanatuan was an example of this--the Japanese just threw everybody in together, that is, the enlisted men.

Bumgarner: That's right

Marcello: So all military organization and discipline had broken down, in a sense.

Bumgarner: Well, in the hospital, no.

Marcello: But how about out in the general area where all the barracks areas were?

Bumgarner: Well, there was no particular discipline. Actually, the behavior of the hospital population in general was exemplary. Of course, they were sharing deprivation of medicine, food. Of course, if a fellow got hold of a few pesos and could get some bananas and peanuts through the fence, he would do that. But I knew of no instance in which one man stole from another.

Marcello: I could imagine that that could be just a terrific stigma, to have been caught stealing from a fellow prisoner.

Bumgarner: Oh, yes. Now we had some prisoners during my stay in Japan who were just marvelous thieves. They contributed to my survival.

Marcello: But, again, they're stealing from the Japanese, as opposed to from fellow prisoners.

Bumgarner: Absolutely. That's different.

Marcello: Okay, describe the process by which you leave Cabanatuan.

Bumgarner: Well, in February, 1944...would you like to know about the mail?

Marcello: Sure, absolutely.

Bumgarner: Sometime in mid-October or late September, they announced that there would be a mail distribution. It was all put in one place. Now there was tons and tons of letters over in Japanese headquarters which they had not distributed. They said that they were slow in going through these things and censoring them. I knew there must be a lot of mail for me and all the others, like, people wanting to know about their wife, who had been expecting a baby or something like that, or they wanted to know about their sick mother. I know I received one piece of mail. It was a letter sending me a bill from my Chinese tailor in Manila. Cyrus DeLong, a dentist from Florida, got a letter--I don't know whether this was deliberate on the part of the Japanese or not, but it seemed that way--that his mother had died, and he fainted right there. Most of us got just the kind of trash mail just like I did.

Marcello: Were you ever allowed to send any mail? The preprinted postcards, for instance?

Bumgarner: That was later on. You could put ten words on it. I

sent out, I guess, a dozen of those. But as far as the mail was concerned, while we were waiting lined up along a fence between the hospital...there were 200 medical personnel selected to take this trip to Japan. They told us we were going to set up hospitals there for the prisoners of war.

Marcello: This occurred in January of 1944?

Bumgarner: February.

Marcello: February of 1944.

Bumgarner: As I was standing there waiting, ready to go, they handed me two cards. One was from my mother and dad, and one was from my girlfriend, whom I later married. That was it.

Marcello: What'd they do for your morale?

Bumgarner: Well, it let me know that my mother and dad were doing well. Since he was a Methodist preacher, I knew he'd tell me the truth (chuckle). Then I got the card from my girlfriend.

Marcello: How many times did you read those letters?

Bumgarner: Well, you know, I've still got those cards--still got them.

Marcello: How did you feel about leaving Cabanatuan? After all, by this time you'd probably fallen into some sort of routine, and now you were facing the unknown again.

Bumgarner: Well, the feeling was that there was a terrible uncertainty, because we had gotten rumors back there

that some of the convoys leaving Manila had come on evil days. They had been sunk with the loss of a lot of lives, even with American prisoners of war. Those rumors didn't give you any comfort at all.

We stayed in Bilibid Prison for a few days before they put us on the boat. The conditions there were the same as they were before, except worse, as far as the food was concerned. But they did let us have a commissary there. We bought some peanuts and some fruit, not anything else. Most of what we got, besides the peanuts, was perishable and had to be eaten right away.

Marcello: This was in Bilibid that you received this?

Bumgarner: In Bilibid, yes.

Marcello: Where'd you get money? Where did you have money to buy fruit?

Bumgarner: Well, you see, by that time the Japanese were giving us some junk money.

Marcello: Occupation script?

Bumgarner: Occupation script. Twenty pesos a month with which you could buy a few bananas. You couldn't buy much with it. But I bought some peanuts and some bananas. Of course, I had to eat them in a hurry because they wouldn't last long. The peanuts lasted a few days.

Marcello: Okay, you go aboard this ship. What belongings and possessions do you take with you? What do you have by

this time?

Bumgarner: I have by this time some very frayed...I had one pair of khaki shorts, two khaki shirts, but they were in various states of bad condition. Of course, in the prisoner-of-war camp, we did not wear shoes. We had just hung the shoes up on the wall because they were no good whatever. But I put my shoes back on to wear on the boat.

This boat was an old Japanese freighter. By that time they were trying to get as many of their Japanese civilians out of the Philippines as possible. On our boat there were a lot of Japanese civilians in one part. We were down in the hold.

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

Bumgarner: Well, as we came across the gangway onto the boat, we saw a lot of peculiar-looking structures overhanging the water. That was the "you-know-what."

Marcello: That was the outhouse.

Bumgarner: That was the outhouse, and I thought, "My Lord, I would hate to be in one of those in a storm." You went down a ladder with about, I guess, thirty steps into the hold, and it was divided into bays somewhat like in the camp. There were 200 of us, and they put us into these bays, two to a bay.

There were two or three buckets on the floor where you were supposed to relieve yourself. If you

were in a hurry, you had to use the buckets. You couldn't get above board to go to that overhanging bench but once a day. If you had diarrhea, you had to use those buckets. It was a smelly place.

They lowered the rice pails and the soup, a green soup, in a bucket with a rope. You came around and were served at the bucket.

At night rats ran over us. One ran right over my face. But over your body you could see these rats. The blooming thing was just full of rats.

Marcello: Approximately how many men were down in this hold?

Bumgarner: Two hundred.

Marcello: How was the food distributed? You mentioned it was brought down to you. Certainly, some sort of discipline had to be assumed.

Bumgarner: We had the discipline that someone was assigned to the mess detail, and he'd scoop out so much rice and so much of that skinny soup.

Marcello: How about drinking water? Did you take it along with you?

Bumgarner: Well, we had canteens. They lowered water down, too.

Marcello: How much room did you have down there?

Bumgarner: Well, I was in one lower bay with Captain Tucker, from Louisiana. We shared that. I'd say that these bays were narrower than the bays at Cabanatuan. I'd say there was just room for you to lie down and sleep.

Marcello: Did you notice any acts of desperation taking place down there, particularly at night? For instance, I've heard that in some of these prison ships men would try to cut one another's veins and so on for the blood.

Bumgarner: Actually, this happened on our ship, the Inoura Maru, which was sunk nine months later with a loss of hundreds of lives.

Marcello: But do you remember that taking place one of those nights on this ship?

Bumgarner: Our convoy was attacked, and they closed down the hatch, turned off the lights. We were down there for what seemed like hours and hours with the feeling that if something hit this boat, if this hold is breeched, there was no way in the world we can get out.

Marcello: Now is this occurring on the high seas, or are you...

Bumgarner: On the high seas, yes.

Marcello: Is this an air attack?

Bumgarner: No, it was a submarine attack. Actually, when we had the chance to get up on the deck once a day, somebody, or several, counted the boats in our convoy. After this attack there was one of the convoy boats missing. So we were attacked, but our boat was not hit. We could hear all this firing, and we could hear the engines. The boat was still moving. It was a kind of scary situation, but we weren't hit.

Marcello: But getting back to this business with cutting one

another's veins and so on, they actually did it here, or you experienced that sort of thing?

Bumgarner: Well, no. The Inoura Maru and a couple of other ships later were sunk. Such things as this did happen on there, that people were just so crazed, but I did not personally experience it.

Marcello: How long did it take you to go to Japan?

Bumgarner: Right there toward the end of March. We went to the middle island through the Shimonoseki Strait. They took us by train to the strait between Hakodate and Honshu. They took us across the strait in a sort of a packet ship. That was the only means of transportation between islands. We were put on board this to cross the bay there.

Of course, by that time, as they went through Honshu, different groups were peeled off. By the time we got to Hokkaido, there were only seven officers, a couple of dentists, and about five doctors. They took us up to the main camp at Hakodate.

Then they split us up again there, and I was sent with three corpsmen to Kamiso. That's a little suburb of Hakodate. It's right on the bay, right on the bay, where the men worked in a cement factory.

Marcello: Okay, a couple of questions come to mind at this point. First of all, on your trip up to the northernmost island, which is Hokkaido, were you able

to view the countryside or anything of that nature, or were you forbidden from opening up the blinds on the windows?

Bumgarner: Oh, they were open. We could see everything. It was beautiful.

[Break, tape recorder turned off]

Marcello: When we took the break, we had you up at Kamiso on Hokkaido, so let's pick up the story at this point. You mentioned that the particular job that the prisoners were doing here was working in the cement factory. Now what were the nationality of these prisoners?

Bumgarner: I had three American corpsmen with me. But the men in this camp were British, Scots, and Irish, who had been caught at Singapore or on the Malay Peninsula. They had been in Changi Jail. Before they had been moved to Kamiso, they had had to help build an airfield at Muroran. But these guys were really, really survivors because so many of them had died in Changi Jail. The conditions there were horrible. Those people, as it was related, left so many of their friends behind. As I said before, their ranking soldier was a sergeant major and was black. He had been an expert horseman before the war, and he was part of the cavalry.

What they did to us when we got there, they had a little section in the camp there at Kamiso that they

designated as a hospital. But what they did, they put me and one English sergeant, Sergeant Sanderson, and Corporal Mathe, in what was the hospital. Each one of us was assigned a space about three feet wide and a little bit over the length of your body. Also, when I got there, there were two British soldiers who had pneumonia, and they were in there, too. So there was myself, Sanderson, Mathe, and the British sergeant major, who slept in the hospital.

Marcello: I guess we have to put hospital in quotes in this case, do we not?

Bumgarner: Yes, I mean, that's what the Japanese called it.

Marcello: How large a camp was this?

Bumgarner: It was only a 150 people. The one at Bibai was 450.

Marcello: How long were you at Kamiso?

Marcello: Well, you mentioned Bibai, which we haven't mentioned at all yet.

Bumgarner: I was at Kamiso for one year.

Marcello: Then did you go from there to...

Bumgarner: From there to Bibai.

Marcello: Okay, you're at Kamiso for about a year. Incidentally, you're going from the Philippines to the northernmost island of Japan. What provisions did the Japanese make concerning clothing?

Bumgarner: Well, it was in March. It was not extremely cold then. Later on, before the snows fell, there was a

big shipment of the uniforms, Chinese uniforms, of Chinese soldiers who had been killed. These uniforms were issued to us, so I got a real baggy uniform.

Marcello: Was it warm?

Bumgarner: Well, actually the temperature...the snow during the winter there at Kamiso got to be over six feet deep and covered up the eaves so that we had to dig the snow out to let the light in.

Marcello: What was the housing like here?

Bumgarner: Well, each of the men had a space, a tatami [mat], that wide [measures with hands].

Marcello: That was about four feet wide?

Bumgarner: I would say more like three feet.

Marcello: Three feet, okay.

Bumgarner: He had to put all of his belongings at his head. That was where they kept everything. I would say these gentlemen were neat, though. They took care of everything except for their mess gear. There was no way to take care of that until later.

Marcello: Were these wooden structures?

Bumgarner: Yes, they were wooden structures with...you know about plywood, of course.

Marcello: Yes.

Bumgarner: Plywood that thin [measures with fingers], the walls of it were, and the cracks would be that wide [gesture].

Marcello: About an inch wide.

Bumgarner: Well, no, not an inch but, say, anywhere from a quarter to third of an inch. This was closed by long strips of paper--I don't know how you'd describe this kind of paper--and you had this much [gesture] between you and sometimes forty degrees [below zero]. We had heat two hours a day.

Marcello: What did the heat consist of? I mean, what kind of heat was it?

Bumgarner: At each end of this barrack--if you want to call it that--was a little coal stove. The men chose to have their heat--the "generous" Japanese [facetious comment] let them have the heat--from the time they got home from work until bedtime. The other time they shivered.

Marcello: What kind of blankets did they provide you?

Bumgarner: Well, as I remember, we had an issue at the beginning of one blanket. Later, there may have been two blankets.

Marcello: I know in some places the prisoners would actually all sleep together and pool their blankets. Did that happen any here at this camp.

Bumgarner: No, I don't think so. The temperature got so low that some said it reached forty below. You see, Hokkaido is the same latitude as Siberia.

Marcello: Well, they held the winter Olympics there [at Sapporo]

in 1972, so that gives you some sort of an idea of how cold it gets and how much snow there is.

Bumgarner: We had to dig out the snow so they could get to the kitchen and the bath.

Marcello: Okay, that's something I was going to ask about. What sort of bathing facilities were there here?

Bumgarner: Well, this was a big, wooden vat. It was heated in a very ingenious way. See, here is the vat [gesture].

Marcello: You're drawing a square vat for me.

Bumgarner: All right, you had a piece of pipe...well, all it amounted to was a closed system so that the pipe outside was heated.

Marcello: And it would come in through the bottom of the tank or the vat.

Bumgarner: The heat rises, and the water circulated around. It was heated below.

Marcello: Okay, so the water was actually circulating through that pipe.

Bumgarner: That's right. But it had to be filled by hand, the whole tub.

Marcello: But the water in the pipe would be heating the water that was out in the tub.

Bumgarner: That's right. When those guys got home from that cement factory, they had a ton of cement on them. That bath would look like chalk water when they got through. But they never complained. I chose to go in

and take my bath before they got home.

[Tape 3, Side 2]

Marcello: How often could you take a bath?

Bumgarner: You could take a bath once a day, but I generally chose not to take a bath every day. But these poor devils from the cement factory, they had to get in there and rinse off every day when they came home from work.

Marcello: What was the food like here?

Bumgarner: Well, the first day I got there, they served rice that had some large red beans in it, and they had some daikon [radish] soup. You know what a daikon is? I thought that was marvelous because I hadn't seen any beans in a long time. But three days after I got there, they left the beans off. I don't know whether it was my arrival or what, but after that we had...and once in a while they would bring in dried fish, maybe once or twice a week. Have you ever seen fish out drying?

Marcello: Yes.

Bumgarner: Covered with flies?

Marcello: Yes.

Bumgarner: You'd sometimes have to scrape that maggots off. But, generally speaking, what they did, they took this dried fish, and they put it in and made a soup and mixed it with weeds. Sometimes we'd go out to the

mountainside and gather weeds, edible weeds. We had some daikons once in a while.

The sergeant major, Bancroft--that was his name--was a remarkable character. He was a most ingenious thief. He could pass by something, and it was gone, and no one knew where. They had little hooks inside their pants that they could hang things on. Maybe they'd steal a fish at the docks. The dock detail was a favorite one because once in a while there would be some fresh fish there or some item of food that they'd steal. The sergeant major, in his thievery, shared it with the rest of us in that hospital. The amazing thing, though, and the thing that impressed me was that it was a lesson to me. You see, I was raised in the South, and there are certain ingrained biases. But this fellow, we lived with him and shared with him, and after a few days I never even thought of him as being black. He had a wife and a little daughter.

Marcello: Where was he actually from? What was his nationality?

Bumgarner: He was British. He was an expert with horses. He could guide a horse with his knees. In the army he taught people how to ride, use correct carriage, and how to get the horse to move in one direction or the other just by the movement of his knees. His wife was a mixed-breed, and their little daughter was, of course, a further mix, a beautiful little child. He

had their pictures above his tatami.

Marcello: Time goes on. We're into 1944, and, of course, it's 1945, and you're still there in the early part of 1945. Can you detect that changes are occurring in the conduct of the war?

Bumgarner Now this cement factory was very old, and the equipment was very poor. These British, Scots, and Irish could close a machine down for a whole day. They were clever enough. But once in a while, they'd get caught, and they would be severely beaten. Toward the end, there was two of the fellows who got caught sabotaging one the main machines and closed it down. They were taken to a civilian--something like a magistrate--court. They had the hearings. The guy said, "Naughty, naughty! Don't let this happen again!" Then, too, they left the gates open. Of course, they knew that there wasn't anyplace we could go. I'd walk outside, and in the clouds there would be a great rumbling noise, and the Japanese would point up and say, "Biniji-ku! Biniji-ku!." Well, that was B-29s. Then a little bit later, you could hear a terrible pounding noise and you knew the Japanese weren't bombing themselves. They were bombing a steel mill nearby.

Marcello: What did that do for your morale?

Bumgarner: Well, it gave us an uplift, of course.

Marcello: What kind of guards did you have here? Were these military people or civilians?

Bumgarner: Well, here the difference between...in the Philippines the guards all carried guns. There were guard towers and if you got too close to the fence...do you mind if I go back a bit?

Marcello: No.

Bumgarner: Once at Cabanatuan we got tired of sleeping on the bare floor, and we'd go out and gather some cogon grass to put under our skinny butts. I went out one day to get some myself some cogon grass, and it was right near the fence. The guardhouse wasn't far from there, and they came boiling out of that thing. They thought I was trying to escape, I think. I had some this cogon grass in my hands. Two American officers, Major Maupin and Lieutenant Sechrest, came out of our headquarters and tried to explain to the Japanese that I was trying to make a bed for myself. But up to that time, until they came up, the Japanese were prodding me in the butt with the bayonet and taking me back to the guardhouse. Of course, some people, when they got too close to the fence, they were shot. But I wasn't shot. When we went back, Maupin said, "Bumgarner, you damn fool! Do you want to get yourself killed?"

But at Kamiso they had clubs, which they didn't mind to use. There was one Japanese guard...let's

see...there were three Japanese guards there. There was "Stumpy," there was "Dopey," and the other one was, the nice one, we called him...I'll think of his name after a while, but I can't right off now. He kept us advised about what was going on in the village.

One time there they gave us a little pig to raise, which, later on, we were supposed to eat when it got to be a grown pig. But when that pig got grown, the man from supply, who brought the pig in, decided, he said, "That pig is very sick." They killed it and took it out and buried it. But that night some of the men--Oakley was one of them--heard some noise outside and saw some lights, and they had dug up that pig. One of these guards told us later that the Japanese had a wonderful pig roast in the village. So we raised the pig. But Oakley, the one who was in charge of the pig, said that if we had killed that pig, he was so fond of it that he wouldn't have been able to eat it.

Marcello: When did you move from Kamiso down to Bibai?

Bumgarner: Well, it would be in March, 1945. The one thing that made me convinced that the war was nearly over--not from any improvement in the food, because it was worse, if anything--was that when we left Kimüso, Lieutenant Tendo, who seemed to be just an extra leg

there, he was the only...they had an interpreter there. But Lieutenant Tendo, when we're lined up ready to go, he took three steps forward and saluted me. I knew then that the end was near.

Marcello: Okay, so you get down to Bibai, and that's where the end comes. Is that correct?

Bumgarner: Well, we were six months at Bibai.

Marcello: Where is it located?

Bumgarner: It was up near Sapporo.

Marcello: Okay, so you're still on Hokkaido.

Bumgarner: I'm still on Hokkaido, and there were 450 there, a mixture of Dutch, English, Australians, Americans. When this lieutenant saluted me, I knew the war was over, essentially. Up at Bibai, these men worked in a coal mine. The shaft in the mine was so low that on the tram or the cart that they went in on, a motorized cart...no, they had to propel it themselves somehow or another. But they weren't able to stand up. When they got to the mine face, it was a little lower than the surrounding area, and they had to work in their bare feet in water. The sanitation was so poor. There was a designated area for them to relieve themselves, but the ventilation of the mine was so poor and the stench was so terrible that the guys would...they had to walk two miles to the mine and two miles back.

Marcello: If the war hadn't ended when it had, how long could these men have held out here?

Bumgarner: Well, I said before, even without discounting the fact that they might have killed all of us, I don't know. I mean, that's just conjecture, I think. The food was so terrible, and while there had been an improvement for a while in the condition of some of the men, it all came back--the edema, the burning feet, the beginning loss of vision. The food there was miserable. One time--I don't think there was any refrigeration anywhere--they brought in some crabs. Those things stank so bad that I wouldn't eat mine. But we saw dried fish a few times. When the war was over, it was a great thing.

Marcello: Describe how you found out the war was over. Describe the process.

Bumgarner: I was sitting in what we called the sickbay, trying to keep some records so they could be preserved. I was bent over this table, and I got a knock on the door and I said, "Come in." It was the first time, I think, a Japanese ever knocked on the door. Two Japanese came in, and they said they wanted to tell me that the war was over. They didn't say who'd won, but they said the war was over. Well, I knew who had won, of course. That was one of the few times that I wept, really.

Marcello: What seemed to be their attitude?

Bumgarner: Their attitude was such that they began to do everything they could to bring in different food items. The second day all of them, every one of them, cleared out and left us there just by ourselves.

Marcello: You had no instructions whatsoever?

Bumgarner: No, but in a few days--we were notified through the Red Cross--somebody came there and told us that there would be a food drop and that we should put out some crosses so that they would know where to drop the food. But there was one fellow...they dropped it. One big load of canned food didn't land on the drop zone, and it came right through the roof. One of the guys was too sick to come out and watch this, and it landed right beside him. He said he'd been praying for food for all that time, and he didn't think it'd ever be delivered in that fashion (chuckle).

Marcello: What was some of the food that was delivered?

Bumgarner: Well, all kinds of goodies--fruit juice, all kinds of canned meat, chocolate, even some candy. Those parachutes, as they were coming down, looked as if they were being wafted down so gently and everything. One of my corpsmen ran out, and it looked as if he was almost trying to embrace that thing. If it had hit him in the chest, it would have killed him, but it hit him in the thigh and broke his thigh.

Marcello: What kind of celebrations took place once you heard the war was over?

Bumgarner: Well, the men were very reserved. Now, I said the Japanese did stay there for a couple of days. But there was one guy who was always going around hitting people. I've forgotten what they called that rascal, but he would always, just at the least pretext, hit them with his fist. He came in the night of the surrender and tried to single out these people who he had hit, and he said, "I wish you would hit me real hard." He tried to get them to hit him, and not a single one did. They just turned their back on him and laughed at him.

Marcello: When did you have your first contact with American troops?

Bumgarner: I had my first contact...we went by train to Atsugi Airfield. That was a big Japanese air corps field. The first contact with the military was there. There were three young pilots next door to me who were going to fly us south to Okinawa. They told me they'd be flying us. They pointed to the plane out there. It was a B-26. I said, "When are we going out?" They said, "We haven't got our orders yet." But those guys played poker all night and were drinking. They were celebrating, too. I couldn't blame them. They asked me to join them in a game of poker, but I said, "I

haven't been paid in nearly four years." They didn't say anymore after that. But for three days they didn't even go near that plane, and that bothered me some. Then they were telling me that when twenty-six Dutch prisoners of war were being flown out, that somebody had accidentally opened the bomb bay and dropped them in the Pacific, and that didn't comfort me any. I said, "After all this!" But they flew us from Atsugi down to...the amazing thing is that the Japanese were--there were 400 or 500, and I could look out my window and see them--were still drilling by the "goose step." I thought the Germans were the only ones that had the "goose step," but they had the "goose step," too.

They separated me from my British, Dutch and Irish friends from camp, which I hated very much. They flew us down to Okinawa. We only spent one night there. That place was a morass of mud, tents on a hillside. Of course, I was so glad to be out that anything looked good to me. They flew us to Manila. There they put us in a detention camp, sorting us out, getting us ready to send us home.

Marcello: In the meantime, are you getting your weight and so on back?

Bumgarner: Oh, yes, I was eating like mad. I was gaining weight, and I was feeling good. I didn't have any diarrhea.

But the most unusual thing happened in that recovered Army personnel camp. There was one guy who had been sort of a camp "rat," an informer. They had some Japanese civilians working there to sort of clean up the camp and tidy up things around the camp. The man who ran the camp said this was the only time that it ever happened. "Mr. Rat"--and I could name his name, but I won't--saw these Japanese passing by, and he jumped on one of them and started beating him up. Nobody else did anything like that. That's paradoxical, isn't it?

Marcello: When did you get back to the United States?

Bumgarner: I got back to San Francisco--the boat trip took quite awhile--early in November. We had a pleasant crossing, good food and everything like that. We stopped off of Kwajalein for several hours to load and unload. We arrived in early November.

Marcello: When did you get out of the service?

Bumgarner: Well, that's another story. They discovered at the hospital there that I had tuberculosis. I spent three years in various hospitals. I had tuberculous-pneumonia, which was unusual. Most people don't survive that. It was a comedy of errors. They decided this place wasn't suitable for treatment of tuberculosis; they decided this place wasn't suitable for treating officers who had tuberculosis. It was

really a comedy. I went back and forth across the continent at least three times because they wanted to change my hospitalization.

Marcello: So when was it that you finally got out then?

Bumgarner: I got out in September of 1946. I was out of the hospital. I was at Fitzsimons [Army Hospital, Denver, Colorado] then. But my troubles weren't over then. They released me as being inactive, but I still had a number of hospitalizations after that.

Marcello: Had they discharged you yet from the service?

Bumgarner: They retired me for disability at Fitzsimons Hospital.

Marcello: And that was in what year?

Bumgarner: That was in September of 1946.

Marcello: I have one last question, Dr. Bumgarner. What lasting effect or effects has the prisoner-of-war experience had on you?

Bumgarner: Well, now even though I was hospitalized, to use a trite saying, when I got back I was not going to use being a prisoner of war as an excuse for being any different from anybody else. I was a doctor, and as soon as I got well, I was going to finish my training, and I was going to get on with it. My attitude has been that it was the first day of the rest of my life.

Marcello: Okay, well, I think that's a pretty good place to end this interview, and I want to apologize a little bit for going so fast over some of the latter parts of it.

Due to time constraints and the fact that I have another interview coming up in less than an hour, I want to thank you very much for taking time to talk with me. You've been most patient, and you have said a lot of very interesting and important things.

Bumgarner: Well, I'll tell you, I didn't talk about it for fifty years, until somebody persuaded me to write that blooming book there [reference to Bumgarner's book, Parade of the Dead]. It took me three years to do it.

Marcello: Okay, well, thank you very much.