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Interview with

J. L. SUMMERS

August 21, 1995

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Place of Interview:

Denton, Texas

Interviewer:

Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved:

J. L. Summers
(Signature)

Date:

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Oral History Collection

J. L. Summers

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

August 21, 1995

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing J. L. Summers for the University of North Texas Oral History Program. The interview is taking place on August 21, 1995, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Summers in order to get his reminiscences and experiences as a prisoner of war of the Japanese during World War II. More specifically, Mr. Summers was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, Texas National Guard. This unit was captured on Java in March of 1942 and subsequently spent the rest of the war in various prisoner-of-war camps throughout Asia.

Mr. Summers, to begin this interview, I need to get some biographical information. First of all, tell me when you were born and where you were born.

Mr. Summers: I was born on March 2, 1921, in Jack County, in a small town called Bryson.

Marcello: Tell me a little bit about you education.

Summers: I was there through my freshman year of high school. Then I moved to Chico, which is not too far from there. I finished high school there in 1939. In the fall of 1939 and the spring of 1940, I went to school at Decatur Baptist College.

At the end of that, orders had come out for conscription. I did not have enough money to go to school for 1941-1942, so I thought that was a good time for me to go into the Army and save a little money and continue my education. So I went in with the Decatur battery, which was Headquarters Battery of the 131st Field Artillery.

Marcello: When did that occur?

Summers: That was November 25, 1940.

Marcello: So you must have gone in around the time that the unit mobilized. Is that correct?

Summers: That's correct.

Marcello: In fact, I believe, from my records, that was the day the mobilization occurred.

Summers: Yes. I may be getting ahead of myself. I was talking about my education. Really, I joined the National Guard at Bowie, the 111th Combat Engineers, Company B.

Marcello: When did that occur?

Summers: That occurred when I was a junior in high school, so it was in the latter part of 1937 and the early part of

1939. Then when I moved to the Decatur battery of the artillery, that was shortly before we mobilized.

Marcello: Let me go back and fill in a couple of details. Why did you decide to join the National Guard in 1937?

Summers: Mainly for money. That was during the Depression, and I didn't have much. I was at the age that I liked to go out with girls. In my junior and senior years of high school, that's the main money that I had to spend.

Marcello: How much time did the National Guard take up for you at that time? Were there weekly or monthly meetings?

Summers: It was monthly to start with. We'd go once a year on a two-week trip. We went to Palacios one year, and we went to Camp Bullis one year. We went to Louisiana on maneuvers one year. Each time we went, that meant about a two-week payroll. That, too, meant a lot to me.

Marcello: So you enter the National Guard in 1937 with the 111th Combat Engineers. Then, later on, you go to Decatur Baptist College in Decatur. I'm assuming, then, that you transferred into Headquarters Battery. Is that correct?

Summers: That's true. I did not get a discharge. I just transferred.

Marcello: Why did you decide to transfer into Headquarters Battery?

Summers: I did that for two reasons. One, it was close to where

I was going to school at Decatur Baptist.

Marcello: It made it easier to attend those meetings, I suspect.

Summers: That's right. And then I had a lot of friends in the neighborhood, that I knew, that were already in that battery. So I moved over there.

Marcello: Do you recall how much you made a month at that time?

Summers: No, not exactly. When they mobilized in 1940, I was a corporal, and I made \$54 a month. When I became a sergeant, I jumped up to \$60 a month. Later, I made staff sergeant, which was \$72. I didn't know when I was promoted to staff sergeant. That was done while I was a prisoner, because I was supply sergeant at that time, and their records show that all supply sergeants would be staff sergeants. That was different than when I went in. So they gave me a promotion while I was a prisoner of war, and then one more promotion after I got out. I ended up as a tech sergeant.

Marcello: If I heard correctly, I believe you've answered my next question. I was going to ask you what your function was within Headquarters Battery. I think you told me you were a supply sergeant.

Summers: That's right. When I first became a sergeant, though, I had a gun under my control. We were to be an anti-tank fighting unit. We had 37-millimeter cannons, and they were pulled behind our Jeeps. But about that time, they decided they needed someone in the mess

hall, so I became the mess sergeant. I was the mess sergeant for approximately a year while we were at Camp Bowie, and then I became supply sergeant.

Marcello: I would assume that, as an enlisted man, you had considerably more education than most of your comrades.

Summers: That's true.

Marcello: Who was the commander of Headquarters Battery when you joined?

Summers: Captain Roberts, and he did not go overseas with us. But I understand he did retire in Decatur eventually.

Marcello: As I mentioned a moment ago, the National Guard was mobilized on November 25, 1940. In essence, the Texas National Guard became part of the Regular Army as the 36th Division.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: Tell me a little bit about mobilization. What took place?

Summers: First, we had to be issued all of our equipment and clothing. It was not a matter of a weekend army. It became full-time. So we became mobilized. We started practicing every day. First, we started with learning to march. Most of us had some experience, but we had some people who came in for the first time. Some of the selectees, I believe, were drawing \$21 a month. So we became a marching unit. Each week, they would have work for us to do in the field. We'd go out and learn

to operate our equipment, whether it was trucks or telephones. In a headquarters battery, a lot of it is communications. So we practiced that and learned to be proficient in climbing pine trees in Louisiana. We were stringing telephone lines. In fact, we did string telephone lines for firing down there, simulated firing.

Marcello: Let me back a minute, because I don't think my question was very clear. When you mobilized, what took place there in Decatur? Let's start with how you reacted there in Decatur.

Summers: We moved into the armory, which was located in the eastern part of Decatur, along the railroad tracks. We slept in cots and were issued two blankets and our pack and all of our clothing. We were there for about a month. It was quite awhile to be around that way. We also did marching and so forth there, but we weren't in the field, and we couldn't do the things that we did in Louisiana.

Marcello: Sometime in either December, 1940, or January, 1941, you moved to Camp Bowie in Brownwood.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: How did you get from Decatur to Camp Bowie?

Summers: In trucks. Headquarters Battery had a lot of trucks. As a matter of fact, there were very few people in some of the trucks. It was just a matter of a driver. But

we weren't at full strength until after we got to Camp Bowie, so we had more trucks than we really needed.

Marcello: Describe the physical state of Camp Bowie when you arrived there.

Summers: It was a very new camp. It was incomplete. Some of the streets hadn't been paved yet. The marching areas that we performed some of our drills in, and where we had musters in the streets, were very muddy. One of the main things we were doing when we first got there was to straighten it up and get it where we could walk around and keep from getting our feet too muddy.

Marcello: So you actually helped to complete the building of the camp.

Summers: That's true.

Marcello: What kind of military activity took place here at Camp Bowie once you got established?

Summers: We had maneuvers there. We'd go out on road marches with our trucks. We also had places where we could fire our guns, which we didn't do very often. We had a firing range. We'd go out and fire our weapons, mainly in the artillery. We had pistols, both .45's and automatics. At one time, we all had .45 revolvers. Later on, it was just automatics. I don't know which I liked best. We didn't have rifles at that time. I had had a rifle when I was in the engineers, and I enjoyed firing it. I had made expert marksmanship at Camp

Bullis my first time out on the range, so I felt real good about that.

Marcello: I'm assuming you were using the old Springfield '03 [Model 1903], the bolt action.

Summers: That's what we were using when I was in the engineers.

Marcello: By the time you get to Camp Bowie, you've been part of the Regular Army for a month or a month and a half. Of course, the training continues at Camp Bowie. How seriously is this being taken by you and your colleagues?

Summers: I doubt if many of us realized how serious it really was. Most everyone wanted to go home every weekend to see their girlfriend. That's one thing that I missed because I had a job that required that I work weekends. That was one reason why I requested to be transferred to another department instead of the mess hall, because they didn't have to have clothing in the middle of the weekend, but they did have to eat.

Marcello: In the summer of 1941, you go on maneuvers in Louisiana. Tell me a little bit about those maneuvers.

Summers: I was the mess sergeant at that time. I had a six-by-six Dodge truck with a driver assigned to me. We had a complete field kitchen in the back of it, with the big units that buckled down to the front of the truck. We carried everything that we needed. The only thing that I'd do was to get the KPs [Kitchen Police] when we

stopped to bivouac, wherever we were, so that we could keep meals on time and keep places for the men to sanitize their eating utensils before they ate. It was a busy time for me. Some of the others would work hard while we were actually simulating a battle, but when we went into bivouac between battles, they would be free, and we still had to eat. So I was still busy.

Marcello: What was the weather like on those maneuvers?

Summers: I think I got the maneuvers mixed up a little bit. The first time we were there was in 1940, and it rained a lot. We had several inches of rain. I'm going to say we had between ten and fifteen inches of rain, and we had water running into the huts and the tents that we were trying to sleep in. The second time there, we did have some rain, but it wasn't too bad. It was hot and muggy, but, otherwise, it was all right.

Marcello: The second time you were there, in the summer of 1941, was when those large scale maneuvers were taking place. The entire 3rd Army was there, I believe.

Summers: That's true.

Marcello: The maneuvers are over. You return to Camp Bowie. I think it's also about that time that the U.S. Army decided to reorganize its National Guard divisions. The Army had done this previously. In other words, evidently the Army, as it was organized at that time, was built on the World War I model, where you needed a

whole lot of men for mass movement. But along come the Germans in Europe, and they stressed mobility and smaller units. Consequently, the Army reorganizes from the square divisions into the triangular divisions [so-named when divisions are reduced from a four-regiment to a three-regiment structure].

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: Of course, the 131st Field Artillery gets caught up in this. Let me ask you this. Do you know why it was that the 131st was selected as one of the units to be detached from the 36th Division?

Summers: Of course, I've heard rumors about that, and I'm not sure that they're true. We were told that it was because we had a good unit, and that we were being taken out and used in the cadre department to form a new division in the Philippines. We didn't hear that right away, but that's what we found out. At least we thought that was true. Then we didn't get to the Philippines.

Marcello: I just wanted to know what you had heard relative to why your particular unit was selected. Once that had occurred, and once the 131st had been detached, then there were also some additions and subtractions from the unit. Isn't that correct?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Can you tell me a little bit about that, how that was

organized or what happened?

Summers: Some of the men were fairly old to be going overseas. Others had other considerations. It wasn't too hard to get out of going, if you really pressed.

Marcello: I think if you were married and were an enlisted man you could have gotten out. I think the age limit was twenty-eight. It seems to me it might have been that high.

Summers: That sounds about right. We got some transfers from the 1st Battalion and from Brigade Headquarters. Several men did come in to replace some of those that were taken out for one reason or another.

Marcello: So you have Batteries D, E, and F, in the 131st...

Summers:2nd Battalion.

Marcello: Yes, 2nd Battalion. You were taking some people. Was it A, B, and C from the 1st Battalion, 131st?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: How did these personnel changes affect Headquarters Battery?

Summers: We had a few transfers with us, too. Some of the officers were transferred for various reasons. Captain Roberts, our commanding officer, was transferred.

Marcello: Who became the commanding officer?

Summers: Captain Fitzsimmons.

Marcello: That's Arch Fitzsimmons?

Summers: Right. Some of these officers either had personal

friends or at least people that they knew under their command that they brought with them, which worked all right because they understood one another well, and we knew what to expect of them. We had one or two that were added later, too. As we went overseas, they were supposedly the same group to form a new division in the Philippines. Since we didn't get there, they were put in with our unit.

Marcello: You're part of an operation known as PLUM. What was the word going around as to what PLUM meant?

Summers: I think that because of the uniforms that we were given, we were sure that we were going to a tropical climate. We all presumed that it was the Philippines soon after we got the word.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going to the Far East, whether it was the Philippines or some other place?

Summers: We thought that we had signed up for the Army for a year, and it was going to be a little more than a year, because the year was about up and here they were sending us overseas.

Marcello: Did you get any sort of a leave or a furlough before you boarded a train to the West Coast?

Summers: Most of the men did, but I did not. That was because we had to turn in all of our uniforms and get new khaki uniforms instead of the woolen. I was very busy

the last month or so.

Marcello: In November, 1941, you board a train, and you're, of course, bound for San Francisco, specifically Angel Island.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: As a supply sergeant, how were you affected by this move? What would your functions involve?

Summers: I was very, very busy getting ready for the move, but once we were on the road, I had very little to do. Everyone had what they needed, and we didn't have to do anything, really.

Marcello: How did you spend your time on the train trip?

Summers: I was given some of the other jobs that the sergeants normally got. I remember being sergeant of the guard a time or two, watching to be sure that people didn't get off when the train stopped.

Marcello: How did men behave on that train trip?

Summers: Like they were heading out on a voyage, and everyone seemed to be happy. Really, I don't remember anyone being blue about leaving. There were probably some, like, those who had girlfriends that they were about to marry. They felt they might not get back, and so they were worried about that a little bit.

Marcello: How long did that trip take? Where did you board the train, incidentally?

Summers: In Brownwood.

Marcello: You boarded in Brownwood, and how long did it take to go from Brownwood to San Francisco?

Summers: My memory is not that good, but I believe it was three days.

Marcello: What happened when you got to San Francisco?

Summers: They put us on the ferry and took us out to Angel Island. It was almost Thanksgiving. In fact, we had Thanksgiving dinner there on Angel Island before we sailed. Most everyone got a chance to go to town or leave for one day or a few hours. The bad part about that was that we had not been paid for nearly a month at that time. A lot of the people had no money. I happened to have a little bit, but not much, and I loaned several of my friends money. We didn't realize that was going to be our last leave for a considerable length of time. We had a good time, though.

Marcello: What did you do during that short stay there at Angel Island? Was it more or less just a transit station until transportation was available to take you to the Philippines?

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: I remember that the other people that I've talked to have commented about the huge mess hall on Angel Island.

Summers: Tremendous. That's the one thing that I remember more than anything else.

Marcello: Why is that?

Summers: Well, I had been mess sergeant, and I realized how many KPs they must have and how much trouble it was to get that much food ready for that number of men at one time. They all sat down at one time. They didn't serve a few at a time. We all went in and sat down.

Marcello: After a very, very short stay at Angel Island, you go aboard the USAT [United States Army Transport] Republic. Describe what conditions were like aboard the ship.

Summers: I'd never been aboard a ship like that before. It was tremendous in size, but the thing that I remember more than anything else is the way that the ground swells affected me--rolling and rolling--and I became very sick at my stomach. I vomited for two or three days, until we got out of sight of the land and got out of the land swells. It got a little bit better then. But I did spend one night up on deck. I just couldn't stay in the hold any longer.

Marcello: From what I gather, you were not alone.

Summers: No, there were several of us. Some weren't affected as much as I was.

Marcello: How crowded was that ship?

Summers: It looked full. We were in bunks that were three high, and I happened to be sleeping in the upper one. I think there was about 3,000 men on it.

Marcello: Obviously, there were more military personnel than simply the 131st Field Artillery.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Do you recall what other units were aboard the Republic?

Summers: There was an Air Corps unit.

Marcello: This is the 22nd Bombardment Group, I think.

Summers: I can't remember the number on that, but there were more of them than us, by far. I don't recall any other units.

Marcello: Another one that I have in my notes that was aboard the Republic was the 26th Brigade. In fact, some of those people eventually ended up with you in Java, did they not?

Summers: Yes, that's true. They were with us. Some of them were assigned to my unit. I've known several of them.

Marcello: After you got over your seasickness, how did you spend your time aboard the Republic?

Summers: Watching different fish, like, the flying fish, and we had boxing matches going on. They had a so-called swimming pool, but it was very small for that number of people. Just being at sea, and then later on, after war was declared--I'm getting ahead a little bit--we sat up on deck and looked out over the ocean and thought about what all we were leaving behind and what a long ways it was back.

Marcello: I gather that the Republic wasn't very fast, either.

Summers: No, we went very slow. I don't know what the top speed was. As I think back, it seems like it was around fifteen knots or so.

Marcello: Your first stop is Honolulu.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: I think you get in there around November 28, 1941.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: Did you get a chance to get any leave or liberty in Honolulu?

Summers: Yes, I went ashore there.

Marcello: What did you do?

Summers: Well, we still hadn't been paid anything, so we didn't have much money. We mainly walked the streets and looked at the people. That was about it.

Marcello: This is a couple of weeks before Pearl Harbor was hit.

Summers: It was one week before.

Marcello: One week. Could you detect any unusual military activity?

Summers: Not much at all.

Marcello: I suspect you really didn't have that on your mind, anyway.

Summers: No, we weren't planning on that (laughter).

Marcello: You get back on board the Republic. You leave and this time you're part of a convoy, as I recall, are you not?

Summers: Yes, I believe we had two escorts.

Marcello: The cruiser Pensacola, I believe, was one.

Summers: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, you were on the high seas when you received word about the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: Describe for me how you received word of the attack and what the reaction was of you and your buddies at that time.

Summers: That was a very sobering thought. When we heard that, we heard it over the loudspeaker. They piped it down. We just couldn't believe it. Then when night came, we were blacked out. We ran blackout the rest of the way to Australia.

Marcello: Did you, per chance, do anything with your artillery pieces aboard that ship? Did you man any of the ship's batteries or anything of that nature?

Summers: I didn't because I hadn't been doing that with that battery, but a lot of our firing batteries did. They were assigned guns on the ship, and they mounted some of the fieldpieces because the Republic had very little armament. They did mount these on the ship, but we didn't fire them at anytime, so I'm not sure whether they would have functioned properly or not.

Marcello: Were these the French artillery pieces that you had by this time?

Summers: They had a single-trail [reference to only having one

in-line support member to balance the piece and to absorb the recoil]. They didn't split [the support was not "V"-shaped] so that it made it even worse if they would have had to fire them.

Marcello: A couple of other questions come to mind relative to the Japanese hitting Pearl Harbor. How long did you think this war was going to last?

Summers: When we were taken prisoner, I thought...

Marcello: No, right there when you were on the Republic.

Summers: At that time, I thought it would be a short time until it was over with. I was really sold on the Americans being able to defend themselves and take it to the Japanese.

Marcello: What was your attitude toward the Japanese at that time? What did you think of the typical Japanese?

Summers: I really hadn't considered them very much.

Marcello: Physically, when you thought of a Japanese, what kind of a person did you usually conjure up in your mind?

Summers: Well, a person of small stature, with the slant eyes, just dumb, thick glasses.

Marcello: The usual stereotype or caricature of the Japanese.

Summers: That's the way I had them figured out.

Marcello: I also know, and, of course, you do, too, that one of your comrades aboard that ship was Japanese-American. I'm referring to Frank Fujita. Did you know Frank at that time?

Summers: At that time, I did not.

Marcello: I was going to ask you if he came in for any kind of good-natured kidding or anything of that nature as a result of his ancestry?

Summers: He was in E Battery, and they were separated from us about the time we got to Java. He was in Surabaya, while we were on the other end of the island. Then he was sent to Japan, and he was never with us in some of the camps that I was in in Burma and Thailand. I didn't see him, and I had never really known him until we got back.

Marcello: So you didn't know him on the ship at all.

Summers: Not at all. I knew there was a Japanese boy there, because someone told me that.

Marcello: You probably didn't know at the time, but you couldn't get to the Philippines. Obviously, the Japanese controlled the sea and the air around the islands.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Your first stop, however briefly, was at Suva in the Fiji Islands.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: I believe you simply took on fuel and got some fresh fruit and vegetables.

Summers: That's right. We spent one day there. The next day, we sailed.

Marcello: Did anybody get off the ship? Did you?

Summers: None of our men. There might have been an officer or two get off for one reason and another.

Marcello: Then, of course, you continue and you pull into Brisbane, Australia, on December 21, 1941.

Summers: Okay.

Marcello: What happens in Brisbane? What do you do there?

Summers: We didn't know what we were going to do. There was a lot of indecision. Some of the men were able to go to town and play around a little bit and visit. But we still did not receive pay of any kind. Money was very short. Some of the boys even sold buttons or emblems off their uniforms for ten cents or so to have enough money to pay the tram to go to town.

Christmas was coming on, and here we were, a long ways from home, not allowed to write anyone. Everyone was very blue [depressed]. Morale was pretty low, I would say. Even our parents and sweethearts didn't know where we were. We weren't allowed to contact them. We did send a postcard somewhere along in there that they mailed after we had left, but we didn't say where we were going or anything. I remember having mutton for Christmas dinner, which we didn't care too much for. We were not used to eating mutton, so it had a very peculiar taste. Probably our cooks didn't know how to cook it very well, either. They hadn't cooked it before.

Marcello: Where were you bivouacked at that time? Do you recall?

Summers: At the racetrack.

Marcello: I think it was called Ascot.

Summers: Ascot Racetrack, right.

Marcello: What kind of a reception did you receive from the Australians?

Summers: They were extremely nice to us, very nice--men and girls that we met on the street. They were all very courteous.

Marcello: What did you do during that approximately one-week stay there?

Summers: I went to town a time or two. As I say, I walked the streets and looked at the buildings, the rivers, and the trees and shrubbery. I was interested in shrubbery and trees. And I talked to the people. Some of them would invite you in for a drink, or they even offered to take you home with them for dinner. But I think I was too proud. I turned most of them down. I did maybe have a drink or two. At that time I didn't drink, so what I had was sarsaparilla or whatever.

Marcello: You're there about a week, and, as I recall, this is another transit stop. You're on your way someplace else. You got aboard a Dutch diesel motor vessel, the Bloemfontein.

Summers: That's true.

Marcello: Do you know where you're going at this point?

Summers: No. We figured that we were trying to get to the Philippines, that we were going to the Philippines. We knew that when we were in Australia, there was talk about them keeping us there and forming a unit to make arrangements for other GIs to come over. We would be kind of a reception center. That sounded real good to us. That rumor didn't last too long, and they put us on board ship. We got as far as the northern part of Australia.

Marcello: Port Darwin?

Summers: Yes, we were at Port Darwin for two or three days. We sat in port and still wondered where we were going. I think they were trying to determine whether we could get to the Philippines or not. But finally we set sail again. We ended up at Surabaya in the Netherlands East Indies.

Marcello: Did anything else eventful happen on that voyage between Brisbane and Surabaja?

Summers: I remember going through the straits by Bali. Of course, we'd always heard of the Balinese girls. We weren't close enough to see them very well. I don't know that it meant too much to me, but it was hot, muggy weather. I was sleeping out on deck. Some of the higher-ranking NCOs [non-commissioned officers] had their own cabin, but most of us slept on deck.

Marcello: I should have asked you this earlier. I'll ask it now,

because it also may come up later in the interview. Who were your closest two or three friends during this period?

Summers: My closest friend we called "Lum." His name was Thomas Buford Lumsden, and he was also a sergeant from my town of Chico. My brother was with me. Of course, he was a corporal. For that reason, we weren't bunking together, but we were very close.

Marcello: What was your brother's name?

Summers: Mark.

Marcello: Was he younger or older than you?

Summers: He's two years younger than I am. As a matter of fact, he could have stayed at home if he would have requested it. He was born in 1923. At that time, when the Japanese landed, he was just nineteen. He had been nineteen in January, and they landed in March. So he was only eighteen when he started on this trip.

Marcello: So T. B. Lumsden was your friend.

Summers: He was my closest friend. I had another close friend from my hometown named Ozro ("Ozzie") Davis, and I had a friend who was a sergeant from Bridgeport, named Ray Singleton. Ray lost a leg over there, but he did make it home, though. Another close friend was Max Upperman, and he was from Bridgeport. All of these men had been in the Headquarters Battery at Decatur when we went overseas. All of these men are now dead, except

my brother.

Marcello: Just for the record, did any of these that you've mentioned die as a POW, or did they come back?

Summers: Max Upperman died with dysentery at the 100 Kilo Camp [reference to one of several Japanese prisoner-of-war camps used to house slave labor that was building the "Death Railway" memorialized in the movie starring Sir Alec Guinness entitled "Bridge on the River Kwai." The railway criss-crossed the Kwae Noi River in several places along the Thai-Burmese border. The 100 Kilo Camp was 100 kilometers southeast of Thanbyuzayat, Burma].

Marcello: You land in Surabaja. What happens at that point?

Summers: Everyone was anticipating what would happen. We were put on a train to go up to the mountainous area there. I remember all the lush fruit: the bananas, the papayas, and everything. We looked down from the train, and there were women with very little clothing, or none, bathing in the streams right in the middle of town. The next one over would be washing her clothes. It was exciting in a way, you know, just anticipating what would come about.

Marcello: I understand a lot of the men were amazed at the large numbers of people they saw in this relatively small place...

Summers: That's true.

Marcello: ...and the fact that there seemed to be movement all night long, people moving around all night long.

Summers: That's right, and we were in blackout, too. So you could hear them coming, and you'd have to be very close to them to see them. There were people everywhere

Marcello: You land at Surabaja around January 11, 1942. Where do you go from there, and how do you get to where you were going?

Summers: They put us on a train. We went up to Malang.

Marcello: Yes, that's the city. Do you remember the name of the base?

Summers: I should.

Marcello: Camp Singosari.

Summers: Right, that's it. That was a Dutch barrack that we were in. We had just a board mounted in a metal frame. They were two deep, with four beds or bunks. We were given a sack, and we went out in the field and put hay in it for a mattress. That became home for a while.

Marcello: As a matter of fact, this was a Dutch airfield, was it not?

Summers: Right, yes.

Marcello: What kind of runways did it have in terms of their composition?

Summers: I couldn't tell you that. I was there on the runways on two different nights, loading bombs on planes to go out, but I don't remember what material it was. I

would say asphalt because they hadn't had any big planes at all in there up until then. When we had our first air raid, I was on the runways with a big truck, trying to pull the planes away from other burning planes. Those three times were the only times I was actually on the runways. We started having air raids after we'd been there a short time. It was still in January.

Marcello: We'll talk about that in a second. What kind of reception did you receive from the Dutch?

Summers: They were extremely nice. We had very little contact with the Dutch men, but when you would go to town, there were always girls around looking for the Yanks. We enjoyed their food. By that time, we had gotten partial payment, so people were spending money a little bit. But we enjoyed going to town and eating their steak. I believe it was terribly rare. It wasn't beef, but it tasted good. It had a different taste, more or less like elk. It tasted about like that.

Marcello: When you got there, was the 19th Bomb Group already there, or did they come after you got there? The 19th Bomb Group came out of the Philippines.

Summers: Yes, they were there when we got there. I understand they were making about two bombing raids a week when we got there. It was our men that started loading their planes with bombs at night. I went over there and

helped load ammunition for the machine guns. Some of our men replaced a lot of the people who were shot up on the planes. Yes, they were there, and I think they appreciated us. Our men, especially Headquarters Battery, had a lot of mechanics, and they did a lot of mechanical work on the planes to keep them flying.

Marcello: I'm assuming they had mainly B-17 bombers and probably some pursuit planes of some sort.

Summers: They had also the B-24, Liberators.

Marcello: What exactly was your function during most of this period? You mentioned that you did help load bombs from time to time, but, generally speaking, what were you doing here?

Summers: Actually, I did some supply work, but not too much, because we had a changing over. We started getting a few rifles and things like that. Mainly, most of my work had been done in Camp Bowie just before I left. All of the clothing was issued. Just the equipment was generally different. We didn't have any machine guns, but we took a few of the machine guns off of the planes that had been shot up. We mounted them, but they wouldn't fire very many times before they would jam. But they did mount them on the Jeeps.

Marcello: Was Singosari completely controlled by the Americans, or was there still a Dutch command here? Do you know?

Summers: I don't believe there was a Dutch command there.

Marcello: This was strictly an American base, so far as you know.

Summers: Yes. I'm sure they had contact at all time, but I didn't see any Dutch personnel there at all.

Marcello: My records indicate that the first air raid occurred on February 3, 1942. Give me some details about that first raid, if you have any.

Summers: All right. Because of my job, I was in camp when it hit.

[Tape 1, Side 2]

Summers: We had some air raid shelters that we had dug in the parade grounds.

Marcello: And these were the slit trenches that we were talking before the tape ran out?

Summers: Yes. I think air raid shelters would be more near what it was. It was approximately six feet wide and maybe twenty-five, thirty feet long, and about five feet deep maybe. When you stood up, you could see out, and you could get down pretty low when the time came.

Anyway, the Japanese came in with little fighter planes and were strafing. They were so close that several people fired at them with their .45-caliber hand guns, including an officer in our unit. I was on the parade ground in one of these air raid shelters. I remember a fellow by the name of Billy Joe Mallard, who was a staff sergeant at the time in Service Battery. There was a Lieutenant [Roy] Stensland, and Merrell

Gibbons, one of our cooks, was there. That's three that I can remember for sure that were with me. Anyway, Lieutenant Stensland said, "They're burning all of our planes on the ground. Let's take this six-by-six truck and go over there and see what we can do." Even though they were still strafing, we did get in the truck and go over there, and they didn't fire on us. They kept trying to hit the planes. We took the cable from the truck and put it on to the back of the B-17, and it was very hard to pull. We probably didn't know where all the brakes were on it, but we tried to pull those planes out away from the other planes that were burning. Whether we moved them far enough to save them or not, I don't know, but they didn't burn. They might not have burned, anyway.

That was all pretty exciting, because they were still strafing. The only thing I had was a .45 pistol, and I wasn't shooting at them. I was trying to do what I could to help.

Marcello: You mentioned Lieutenant Roy Stensland and somebody else who helped you. Who was the second person that you mentioned?

Summers: Mallard was his name, and Merrell Gibbons, who was a cook in Headquarters Battery. I had been his sergeant, so I knew him real well.

Marcello: What kind of emotions did you have while all this was

going on?

Summers: I was frightened. I wasn't frightened enough to try and get up and run, but I was hugging the ground pretty good when they were right over me.

Marcello: And not too frightened to follow Lieutenant Stensland and try to tow that plane out.

Summers: That's true. I was excited about it.

Marcello: Do you become less frightened when you're doing something like that, as opposed to being down in a hole and having that helpless feeling?

Summers: I believe so, right. You felt like you were doing something about it.

Marcello: You brought up a name, and I want to see what you can tell me about him. Lieutenant Roy Stensland was not a member of the 131st Field Artillery.

Summers: That's correct.

Marcello: What do you know about Lieutenant Stensland?

Summers: He was a fellow that would get drunk, come in and shoot craps with the boys, and thumb his nose at everybody. He was certainly a brave person. I admired many of his assets. Some of the things rubbed me the wrong way, but I admired his bravery.

Marcello: We'll probably talk more about him later on when we get you up into the POW camps in Burma. My understanding also is that he actually came out of the Philippines.

Summers: That's what I've heard.

Marcello: Supposedly, he came out of the Philippines with a great deal of money.

Summers: Yes, I heard that he had money, but, you know, you can hear most anything if you listen.

Marcello: My understanding was that he came out of the Philippines with that money to try and get shipping and transportation, because they were still trying to get you guys back to the Philippines if they possibly could.

Summers: Yes, I've heard that, too, but I never knew whether it was true or not.

Marcello: Was Stensland attached to Headquarters Battery, or was he more or less simply free lancing?

Summers: He was attached to Headquarters Battery, I believe, at that time, because Headquarters had quite a few officers, including some that I didn't know what their duties were.

Marcello: Stensland, I assume, was Regular Army.

Summers: I think so.

Marcello: How much warning did you have before that air raid came down upon you?

Summers: Maybe five minutes. By the time that we got to the shelter, they were overhead.

Marcello: I'm assuming that the base did not put up much resistance.

Summers: That's right, none. There were a few shots fired on

the ground, but we weren't ready for them.

Marcello: So what did the base look like after the Japanese had done their job?

Summers: I believe there were five of the big bombers destroyed. There were lots of places where they'd shot up things. It broke the tile on the roof a little bit. No bombs hit in our camp. They hit over on the runways.

Marcello: I gather that was their primary mission, that is, to destroy the bombers and the runway facilities.

Summers: That's what they went for when they got there.

Marcello: So what do you do in the aftermath of the attack?

Summers: We started getting ready, or trying to. Certainly, everyone became more alert. We took the old fieldpieces that we had...

Marcello: French 75's [75-millimeter] is what they were.

Summers: We dug in the trails. This was a split-trail, so you could fire at several angles and still be safe. We dug in so that we could fire at a much better angle, a little higher. We did fire those things, but we heard from the Japanese girls that talked in English for propaganda that we had a new antiaircraft gun. That's what our men came up with. Whether that was true or not, I don't know.

Marcello: This is something that you heard on Japanese radio or something along those lines?

Summers: Yes. Now, we did mount more of their machine guns on

our Jeeps, and they fired those when the Japs came in with their planes. It certainly kept the planes up higher. We only had three or four raids where they got down close to us after that.

Marcello: Approximately how many raids did you have altogether?

Summers: I'd have to guess, but four or five maybe. We had other raids where the alarm sounded, and we'd see planes, but they wouldn't bomb us. Usually, there were fighter planes at that time. We did have a few fighter planes that came out of some other field. I don't know where they were, but I believe they were P-40s. I think I saw P-38s, with the split tail or [twin] fuselage, a few times.

Marcello: Split tail, yes.

Summers: We didn't have enough.

Marcello: You mentioned that this first raid was conducted mainly by strafing fighter planes. How about the other raids? Did you get some actual bombing by high-level bombers?

Summers: Yes, we did, and they were not flying at too great an altitude, maybe 20,000 feet. Maybe not that much. You could see the planes well.

Marcello: In general, what kind of damage did they do to the field?

Summers: Mainly, they just damaged the runways.

Marcello: How long would these raids last?

Summers: Time was something I couldn't account for very well,

but probably no more than half an hour.

Marcello: By this time, I'm assuming that you and your buddies have sobered up quite a bit to the fact that you are now in a real war.

Summers: Yes, we had.

Marcello: What did you talk about among yourselves in the aftermath of these raids?

Summers: What we could do, what people were doing back home, how long this war was going to last, why we didn't have more fighting force there. But we all thought it would take just a little time for them to get over here, that the war wouldn't be too long in getting over.

Marcello: I should have asked you this awhile ago, but I'll ask it, now. Perhaps it will come up later on in the interview. What sort of special responsibility did you assume, so far as the safety of your younger brother was concerned? You were the older brother.

Summers: That's one thing that I felt very bad about, that I didn't do more for him. Of course, there was very little that I could actually do. He had his duties, which were completely separate from mine. We weren't together when he was in the most danger. He was an observer for the artillery, and he was up much farther on the line than I was. I felt bad that I couldn't do more, but I don't know what I could have done, really.

Marcello: Was he in Headquarters Battery?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: The Japanese land on February 28, 1942. I believe it's a night landing. Describe what happens at that point.

Summers: For a few days before, a couple of days maybe, they were moving us from Malang to the western end of Java. It seems as though we would move in the daytime to the west, and at night we'd move back to the east. In the daytime, we'd move back to the west. We were told later on that that was to give the Japanese the idea that there were more people there than there really were, to encourage them to land with a bigger force. They did not come down and strafe our column, but we did see them observing us with observation planes above. We expected them to strafe us at any time, but they didn't.

Marcello: In the meantime, the 19th Bomb Group evacuated.

Summers: That's true.

Marcello: What was your reaction when you learned that they were getting out, and you were still there?

Summers: My reaction was that the person making the rules was someone that knows more about it than I do. They were deciding what to do, and if it will save them for the time being, then they'll come back stronger in a short time, knowing where everything is and bomb it. Some of our men had become replacement gunners and went out with them--a couple that I knew. I can't recall their

names right now on the spur of the moment. But I was glad to see them go out. I was just hoping they'd soon be back.

Marcello: Were you giving any thoughts at this time yet to the possibility of becoming a prisoner of war?

Summers: Not at that time. I soon found out, though. I believe it was the 8th of March that the colonel called us together and told us that the Dutch had capitulated, that they had asked us to come in with them and give up, and that we should go the race course there. The Japanese would not guarantee our lives if we didn't. We were free to try and escape if we wanted to. As a matter of fact, there was one sergeant and I who did try to get freedom--tried to get to Australia.

Marcello: Who was this person?

Summers: Sergeant Edwin E. Shaw, also from Decatur.

Marcello: Jack Shaw.

Summers: Yes. He was a master sergeant, the highest-ranking enlisted man we had with us. We were bivouacked in an area that was a rubber plantation. When the colonel made the talk and told us what to do, and the column was getting ready to leave, he requested that Sergeant Shaw and I stay behind and do what we could to sabotage the trucks that we were leaving. Then we were to follow them, come and join them. He told us where to go.

Marcello: Let me ask you a few questions at this point. Pardon me for interrupting. You get the word that the island has capitulated, and this is relayed to you, I'm assuming, by Colonel Tharp, who was the commanding officer.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: What was your immediate reaction when you heard the island had capitulated?

Summers: I tried to get away.

Marcello: Why did you not want to become a prisoner?

Summers: I didn't know what would happen to you, but the first thing was that I wanted to fight. I wanted to get out. I sure didn't want to be a prisoner.

Marcello: Had you heard anything about Japanese conduct in places like China?

Summers: No, I hadn't. Maybe if I had, I'd forgotten it. About that time, there was a Dutch man and woman that came by. I would say that they were elderly people, about sixty, seventy, maybe eighty years old. They gave us some fresh fruit and talked to us a little bit and asked us what we were going to do. We told them that we were going to try to get away, Sergeant Shaw and I. They invited us to their home. We did go with them after we finished with the trucks. We put some sugar in the gasoline, threw away distributor caps and wires, and did small things. I think now that I could have

done a better job than that, but we were in a hurry to get away before we were caught by the Japanese. We were afraid they would come in on us.

Anyway, we went to the home of the Dutch people. It just happened that they had two lovely daughters, who were in their twenties. Both of them were married. Their husbands were in the army, and they hadn't seen or heard from them in a few days. I think our eyes were getting bigger, and we were kind of smiling at these girls. They decided that they would scout around and see what their friends and people that they knew in town knew about trying to get us out to Australia.

Marcello: In other words, you and Sergeant Shaw were on your own at this point.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: The unit has left you, and they're heading toward Garoet, which is where the racetrack was.

Summers: Right. Of course, we weren't far from there. That's where they were going. We didn't have a truck to drive at that time, but we prepared ourselves. We took baths and cleaned up and got rid of all the old dirty clothes. We were thinking that we would try to get away. When they came back, though, they said that all the transportation was destroyed, and all of their friends discouraged it, and they thought that the only thing to do would be to give up because there were

Japanese everywhere and they were controlling all the means of getting away. They asked us to stay there if we wanted to, and they would try to hide us. But we knew that would put them in a position of hiding us, and maybe they would be killed for it. I had taken a rifle that I still had, and I gave that to him. I had just cleaned it up. I had never fired a shot with it. I put it in his attic for him. We went into the camp the day following after the others went.

Marcello: Let me back up and fill in with some more questions. Let's go back to the time of the surrender. You said that you didn't want to surrender, and I can tell from your eyes and the tone of your voice that I needed to pursue this. Some of the prisoners have told me that they felt a little bit ashamed over the fact that they had not really had any contact with the enemy, had not really fired, had not really been into combat. Was this kind of what you were inferring awhile ago? '

Summers: Yes, it was. I had not really mentioned that to anyone before, but that is true.

Marcello: One of the former prisoners told me that the whole time he was in POW camp, he had this fear that he and everybody else would be punished when the war was over because they had given up without fighting.

Summers: No, I didn't think I would be punished, but I thought that I wouldn't be thought too well of for just giving up.

Marcello: I do know that there was a great deal of anti-Dutch sentiment on Java among the local population. Could you detect this after the word to surrender had come down and it was quite clear that the Japanese were going to be in charge?

Summers: Oh, yes. We thought that immediately, and we lost all of our respect for the Dutch. We hated to be a part of it. We were ashamed of it.

Marcello: You mentioned the Dutch. I was referring to the local Javanese population.

Summers: The Javanese population, I didn't think much of them from the start. I thought they were unreliable and that they would go with whatever was better for them.

Marcello: Let's pick up your other point then. Were you referring to the fact that the Dutch did not seem to put up any resistance?

Summers: That's exactly right.

Marcello: My understanding is that the Dutch perhaps thought that if they didn't put up any resistance then business would go on as normal, and the Japanese would do nothing to them, and their property would be intact.

Summers: Yes, I think that is right. That did happen in some of the places, like around Bangkok.

Marcello: From the time you left that Dutch family to the time that you entered Garoet Racetrack, did you have any contact with the Japanese?

Summers: None whatsoever.

Marcello: They probably had more important things to do than to fool around with a couple of stray Americans.

Summers: The main thing is that they were controlling all of the places where we could escape. We gave up too easy, I thought. Anyway, that's what happened.

Marcello: Evidently, during that period after you evacuated from Singosari, you were really doing nothing but moving around, like you mentioned awhile ago.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: By this time, E Battery has been separated from the rest of the battalion. They went toward Surabaya.

Summers: They were at Surabaya when the Japanese came in. One thing happened to me during that time that we were moving around when we were in bivouac one night. We spent a big part of the night there. There was a guard duty, and I was sergeant of the guard. When I had not too much to do, they gave me work like that. I was sergeant of the guard, and one of our men was killed accidentally. His name was [B. E.] Rhodes. We called him "Dusty" Rhodes. We had an accident. Our men weren't too proficient at handling the rifle. In the changing of the guard, one of the men let his arm discharge, and he killed him right where he was. I just happened to be sergeant of the guard.

Marcello: When you went into Garoet, what personal possessions

were you carrying with you at that time?

Summers: I had my pack, which has one blanket, a shelter-half [a canvas device issued to each soldier, which, when laced to another soldier's made a small, two-man tent], and all the stakes to put the shelter together. I had my ditty bag, which contained my toilet articles primarily, but I didn't have much more than that.

Marcello: Did you have any extra clothing?

Summers: I had a change of underwear and possibly another pair of pants and a shirt.

Marcello: How about any additional shoes, other than the ones you were wearing?

Summers: No, I only had the one pair of shoes.

Marcello: I'm assuming you still had your mess kit.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: That was going to be very important.

Summers: That's right. That's one that I ended up with. It's about the only thing that I carried all the way through.

Marcello: What happens when you get Garoet?

Summers: There was no one there. We didn't see the Japanese there, but we got with our unit. We were just waiting there until they moved us a few days later.

Marcello: What did you talk about during this period?

Summers: How long it was going to be that we were going to be prisoners. We thought a month. I didn't hear anyone think it would be a year.

Marcello: Where were you getting your rations? From what you had carried into camp with you?

Summers: I believe that is true.

Marcello: During this period, you have virtually no contact with any Japanese soldiers.

Summers: No, none whatsoever. I imagine the officers, through channels, through the Dutch, were given orders. I know they were. But we didn't see the Japanese in camp.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that you could have possibly left camp again, had you wanted to?

Summers: Oh, yes, I think so. I suppose they had some security around any racetrack--fences and so forth. If we had gone out the front gate, they would have seen us and stopped us, but I'm sure that if we tried to, we could have gotten out.

Marcello: You mentioned that you stayed at Garoet for just a few days.

Summers: Yes, and then they took us to a tea plantation.

Marcello: How did you get from Garoet to the tea plantation?

Summers: I can't remember.

Marcello: You didn't have your trucks any longer, did you?

Summers: I think they took them right there at the racetrack, but we had some of the trucks in the racetrack.

Marcello: Oh, you still did keep some of your trucks?

Summers: Some of them, yes. I remember a weapons carrier and a

few trucks, because we moved there in our trucks. Now, a lot of them we didn't move there, those that had supplies, ammunition, and things that we left in the rubber plantation where we told to capitulate.

Marcello: Those were the ones that you and Shaw and others, I assume, destroyed?

Summers: Right. We didn't actually destroy them completely, but we damaged them so they didn't go in there and drive them off.

Marcello: You made them inoperable, in other words.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: You obviously go to this tea plantation in the remaining trucks that you have.

Summers: I remember the tea plantation was like a big barn with a dirt floor, and we built a fire in the center of it. It was so big that the Japanese didn't worry about us being detected when we made a fire in the blackout.

At that time, I came down with a bad case of hay fever. I had had hay fever as a youngster, but I had not had any attacks for several years. But it got so that I couldn't get enough air in my lungs. I thought I would die. At night, I would sit up all night with my face as close to the fire as I could get to heat it so that I could breathe a little bit sitting up. If I would lie down, then I would stop breathing again immediately. In the daytime, when we got out in the

sun and walked around, and I was all right. But each night, it was bad.

But we weren't there very long, either. They moved me with a group, a forward party, to prepare for the group to come in to our camp. I think there were twenty-five men total in each battery, and we had the five batteries, with three firing batteries and service battery and headquarters battery.

There were five men from each one that moved into a Chinese school in Batavia. I believed they called it Chowan School. It was a Chinese school that had a basketball court. There were concrete floors in all the classrooms and no furniture whatsoever. We rolled out our one blanket on that concrete floor for a bed. We were there about a month, I guess. We kept waiting for these other people to come in, and they didn't. We found out that they were over at the Bicycle Camp. When we moved over there, they were already there. We were there from the 26th of March until the 16th of May.

Marcello: That's at the Chowan School?

Summers: Right. That's what I call it.

Marcello: Let me ask you this to go back and get more details. You're up at the tea plantation. Still there are no Japanese around.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: Obviously, like you mentioned, your officers are getting instructions from somebody, and presumedly they're getting their instructions from the Japanese. Is it the officers that select the five of you from each unit to go to this school?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Once again, what is your purpose in going to this school?

Summers: To make preparations for the complete unit to come.

Marcello: What is there around this school that would support this unit?

Summers: I don't know. I think the Japanese got a lot more prisoners than they knew what to do with.

Marcello: I'm pretty sure that's true.

Summers: They started looking around for places to put them and make a prison. It was so crowded when we got there to make preparations that there wasn't very much room for the other people to come in.

Marcello: So there were already prisoners there?

Summers: Yes. There were a lot of English and Australians. We had work parties, or work details, out of that school. We marched from there to the airport and the town near there, Batavia. They had gone in there with bulldozers or something like that before the Japs landed and fixed it so that they could not land there. They tore up the runways, so we were repairing runways and leveling the

grounds in between. That was the work we were doing until the time that we went to Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: You get to this Chinese school. Who's in charge?

Summers: There we had Japanese. That's the first time.

Marcello: Describe your initial encounters with the Japanese.

Summers: They dealt through an interpreter to tell us what to do. When we went out on the work detail, we would have our guards with us to take us out there and bring us back. Then there would be an engineer out there to tell us what to do out there.

As we went along, there were more Australians than any other nationality. The Australians would start singing as we would march--"Waltzing Matilda" and several others. As we would sing, we would march at a very, very good pace. We'd get faster and faster and take longer and longer steps. The first thing you know, the Japanese guards would be running to stay up with us, and they would be screaming and hollering at us. We just kind of made a joke out of doing that. We would move at a pace that they could stay up with us and then just keep going faster and faster. We enjoyed showing our superiority as a race, you might say.

Marcello: A couple of other things here. What kind of food were you receiving at the Chinese school?

Summers: We were cooking it ourselves, but we didn't have food that was too bad. We had some vegetables, mainly rice.

I can't remember it being a hardship on the food at that time.

Marcello: Were the Japanese supplying your rations?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Was there a POW in command of the group? An Australian or a Brit?

Summers: We had a mess officer who decided what we'd cook.

Marcello: The Japanese are allowing the prisoners to more or less run the internal organization of this camp.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: How would you describe the conduct of the guards, other than the fact that they screamed at you when they couldn't keep up with your fast marching pace?

Summers: I don't remember seeing any of our men hit. Of course, we didn't understand them very well. Their language was a complete surprise to us. No one understood it. They were talking loud and screaming and hollering. They did display their weapons often by slinging them around, so that they might use one. The sergeant had a sword like the officers had. It wasn't quite as nice, but he would use that and sling it around to maintain his distance between us. I don't know whether he was afraid or what. I know we were afraid of him. We didn't know what he would do.

Marcello: What kind of power did you detect that this sergeant had?

Summers: He had all the power, much more than any of our officers ever had. He could stand up anyone under him and slap him and kick him and do whatever he wanted to with them. That was the kind of treatment that the privates then turned on to us later on, as it got worse and worse.

Marcello: So you were to find that eventually there was a pecking order, so to speak, and maybe the beaten child becomes the child beater. It would go from the sergeants to the corporals to the privates to the prisoners.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: Or maybe, if you had Koreans, the privates would tromp on the Koreans, and then the Koreans would get you guys.

Summers: Right. As we went from Japanese to Korean guards, I really didn't even know, when they first came there, that they were different. I just thought it was just another company or something, but later on you could see the difference in them. The Koreans were fully as mean as the Japanese had been.

Marcello: We'll talk more about that later, of course. How would you describe the work in terms of its difficulty, being hard or easy?

Summers: At that time, it wasn't too hard. I think that they had more men than they knew what to do with, but they were trying to keep us busy, and they were showing

their superiority over us more than anything else.

Marcello: Would they try to humiliate you at all at this time in front of the local population?

Summers: Yes, they did that. They sure did. They wanted to maintain the respect of the prisoners toward them. When I say respect, I mean they would keep us under control and demonstrate how mean that they could be if we didn't do what they said. That's about all I can say about that.

Marcello: Did you go out every day on the work details here?

Summers: No.

Marcello: I was wondering, because you mentioned they had so many prisoners.

Summers: At the Chowan School, I did go out almost every day, but in the Bicycle Camp, they didn't have enough work for all of us. Some of them went to the docks to clean up the docks that had been scrambled. They went through parts warehouses where automobile parts had been messed up. They cleaned those out and straightened them up. They had some work, but not nearly all the men went out.

Marcello: I guess, at this point, what the Japanese were also trying to do was to loot the island, take whatever they could use and ship it back to Japan or someplace else.

Summers: Exactly.

Marcello: You're in contact here at the Chinese school with both

Australians and British POWs.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Describe the relationships that developed among the three groups. What was your relationships with the Australians, and what was your relationship with the Brits?

Summers: We certainly liked the Australians. As a matter of fact, they were the only ones that we encountered while we over there that we really got along with well.

Marcello: How do you explain that?

Summers: I think it was because they were kind of a pioneer-type individual. They didn't like the English too well because they had been subjected to a lot of their control in Australia. They didn't like them too well and made fun of them. They liked the Americans, and we liked them.

Marcello: How about the relationships that developed here at the Chinese school between the Texans and the Brits?

Summers: We didn't understand them very well. Their language, we couldn't speak their kind of English. Of course, a lot of them were Scots and Welsh. The Welsh, I think, were the hardest to understand, along with the Irish. They were not as clean as the Australians were, and the Americans. If I were talking about animals, I'd say they were inbred. They were smaller in stature, mainly, and they didn't seem to be very well educated.

We just didn't like them too well.

Marcello: You mentioned something, and I want to follow up on it. You mentioned cleanliness. Even at this early stage, do you realize how important cleanliness is going to be?

Summers: No, I didn't, except that I could see in the English that they had more skin rashes, like what I used to call a ringworm. It would get this big [gesture] on all parts of their body, and they always just looked dirty. If they got a chance to bathe, they didn't many times. Their clothing was dirtier all the time.

Marcello: What kind of bathing facilities were available here at the Chinese school?

Summers: I believe we had kind of a shower, and it wasn't too bad. There were not very many of you. You had to take your turn to get in there. We didn't have soap, and we didn't have towels. I don't remember if I had a towel or not. I don't think I did. I can't remember that. Anyway, you could get the dirt off. You would just get in there and wash awhile.

Marcello: You mentioned that it's May when you hook up with the rest of the unit in Bicycle Camp [so-named because it formerly housed Dutch bicycle-mounted troops].

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about this. I'm assuming that the Chinese school and Bicycle Camp are fairly close

together.

Summers: Maybe four or five miles. We had never seen the Bicycle Camp until we got there.

Marcello: I assume you walked.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: What happens when you get to Bicycle Camp?

Summers: We see all of our friends. I saw my brother that I hadn't seen in a couple of months. There were lots of sailors. That was the first time we'd come in contact with those off the Houston. They were really in worse shape than we were in many respects, because they got off that ship with just what they had on, and they discarded some of that so they could swim better. So they were poorly clothed, with no shoes mostly.

The thing that I remember there in that camp, more than anything else, was how we came together and became friends with the sailors. We found some that were living near us in Texas, or some who had been to places you had been in Texas. We found out about their ships and what they thought about the rest of the war, how we were doing, what our chances were of getting out.

Marcello: I assume--and I think you mentioned this--that the good many of the sailors on the Houston were Texans, who, I guess, had volunteered for duty aboard that ship because of its name. I also know that when the 131st initially went into Bicycle Camp, there was a

spontaneous sharing of clothing and so on with the Houston people. I'm assuming that that would have already been done by the time you got there.

Summers: Yes, a lot of it had been done, but I don't think they had been there very long when we got there.

Marcello: When you went into Bicycle Camp, are you housed with other members of the Headquarters Battery again?

Summers: Yes, at that time I was with Max Upperman and Ray Singleton. T. B. Lumsden and Ray Singleton were there, but Max Upperman was nearby. There were three men to a cubicle. This was kind of hallway going down through an open building. It was open in the overhang. You could see out. Then we had what we called the veranda or porch on one side. Men slept side by side all the way down that. Because I was a sergeant, I was given a little bit better quarters than some of the others. Our officers arranged that. They said who was going to sleep where.

Marcello: In other words, obviously there were several of these barracks within Bicycle Camp. What we're talking about is a single-story building.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: There's a hall down the center, and you have these cubicles on each side of the hall.

Summers: Right. I can remember that Frank Ficklin was in the one next to me, and Jess Stanbrough, and I believe it

was Shaw. I believe that it was Jess Stanbrough that had a radio there, which he kept hidden. Although I knew he had it, I didn't know where he kept it, nor did I ever hear anything. He told us what he heard, but he kept it very, very quiet.

Marcello: Take me on a tour of Bicycle Camp. Suppose you and I are approaching the entrance to the camp. First of all, let me be more specific. Was there an enclosure around the camp?

Summers: Yes, there was a barbed-wire enclosure. I don't know of anyone who got through that at night, although at some of the camps, later on, they did. As you go through the gate, the guardhouse is there on your left. They had half a dozen to a dozen Japanese with rifles there at all times.

[Tape 2, Side 1]

Marcello: Before we switched over the tape, we were talking about entering Bicycle Camp, and, more specifically, we were talking about the Japanese guardhouse. Go ahead. Pick up the story at that point.

Summers: There they'd keep the men on guard who were going to have duties in the camp and around the camp. They were to also protect against the entry of any prisoners or anyone else that wanted to come through the gate. The sergeant-of-the-guard was there, and they treated him as though he's God. If any of their men make a mistake

in treatment of prisoners or whatever they do, he dresses them down. I've seen them beaten many times-- the sergeant beating one of the underlings. I was in the first hut or barracks on the right as you go through. From that position, you could see in the guardhouse; you could see what was going on.

As you went in, you walked down a center road or street, with barracks on either side. The Americans were on the right-hand side in the first three of four barracks. We had a place where we played volleyball a little bit there, a volleyball court. There was at least two courts, maybe three. We had teams that we played, and we had a pretty good time.

The Japanese allowed us to buy a little food to supplement our diet. We primarily bought pinto beans, which we cooked and ate with the rice. They were pretty good. That part wasn't too bad.

Of course, I can remember soon after that, on the 4th of July, they wanted us to sign an agreement not to try to escape. We refused to sign it. After quite a bit of negotiation, they cut off our rations. They were getting their guards ready to come over and work us over, I thought, by what they were doing. We were told by our commanding officer, the colonel, that we could sign that, that we were signing under duress, and it had no effect. So we did sign. I believe that was

on July 4th.

Marcello: Let me back up a little bit before we get that far. Pardon me for interrupting, but as a historian, I like a certain amount of chronology. We were talking about the physical layout of the camp. You described the fence around the camp; you talked about the guard shack. We talked a little bit about your barracks. Let's get back to the barracks again. You mentioned that you had these cubicles, usually three men to a cubicle. Describe the cubicle in terms of its comfort level or lack of comfort.

Summers: We had one blanket. I say "we." The Army had one blanket that we were supposed to carry on the field, maneuvers, whatever. I had my blanket, but it was the only thing that I had in the way of bed covers. Some of them had taken their mosquito netting from Singosari, and they still had that, which was very good, because the mosquitoes were very bad there. Outside of this cubicle, you'd go down the hallway, and there was a concrete ramp going over to another building, which was the bathroom and showers.

Marcello: Describe that building.

Summers: The commodes were a hole in the concrete with two foot places to put your feet to bend over that hole. It did have a water closet that you could trip. The water was overhead and would wash it down. But it was quite

open, and there was no toilet paper furnished. That was one of the things that we talked about. We called Java the "Land of Liquid Toilet Paper." We had water, and that was it. The Dutch, when they went to the bathroom, would take their mess gear with them, with a little water in it to wash themselves when they finished. But we had stall showers out there, little cubicles that were about waist high, with a shower that was quite adequate. There was very little privacy, but, of course, you didn't need it. We were all men, anyway. We didn't have any soap, and we didn't have any towels.

Marcello: Cold water, I assume.

Summers: Cold water, yes.

Marcello: But plentiful?

Summers: Plentiful.

Marcello: Was the shower available on a daily basis?

Summers: I think so.

Marcello: How about the mess hall? What did the mess hall look like? I shouldn't say a mess hall. Cook shack, I guess, would be a better thing to say.

Summers: That's what the Australians called it, so we soon called it the cook shack. I don't know much about the cook shack. The cook prepared it and delivered it to our area, and we served it out of a big basket or the kwali, they called it. Soup would be in five-gallon

cans, like they shipped coconut oil and other oils around in. They were rectangular and about this high [gesture], and we had a bail with it. They'd have the soup, or beans or whatever, in it. They'd have another little can, with a wooden handle attached to it, that they'd give you your rice with, and you'd put whatever you had on top of it.

Marcello: You're saying that this soup or whatever would be carried in a can that might be about....

Summers: About five gallons.

Marcello: About a five-gallon can. That describes it pretty well. You have all these young guys. Probably in the beginning, you talk about women. Very shortly, what becomes the major topic of conversation?

Summers: Food.

Marcello: You answered that very quickly, and, of course, I already knew the answer to it, but I thought I'd ask anyhow. How much food would you be getting? You seem to imply a couple of things here, that it was essentially rice and maybe some sort of a vegetable mixture or soup to pour over the top of the rice.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: How much of that would you get?

Summers: The rice, I would say, would be a scoop. For the average GI mess gear, it wouldn't fill the bottom section, if you flattened it--close to it, but it

wouldn't fill it. Then they'd put the soup over it, and sometimes we'd get these beans on top of that. By the time you get all that, it wouldn't be quite full, but close to it.

Marcello: So even at Bicycle Camp, you're always hungry.

Summers: People liked to get at the first of the line so that they'd get back in the second line. If there was anything left, they'd give you a little more. That soon became a big thing to do.

Marcello: I assume that, as time goes on, and maybe even in the beginning, everybody is watching like a hawk, when that food is distributed, to make sure that nobody gets any less or any more.

Summers: That's sure right.

Marcello: Probably more fights could start over that than anything.

Summers: That's right. The food was the thing that we were really hurting for at that time.

Marcello: How would you describe the quality of the rice you were receiving here at Bicycle Camp?

Summers: It wasn't so bad to start with. Later, it got terrible.

Marcello: In what way?

Summers: Real dirty, with worms and dirt, so much grit that when you'd chew it, you wouldn't even put your teeth all the way together. You'd just kind of mash it a little bit, then swallow it. It had a lot of worms in it, a little

white worm, like a grub worm, with a round head. At first, you would take those out, but as you got hungrier and hungrier, you would just go in the hut, where you couldn't see them, and just eat it and not worry about it.

Marcello: You also mentioned earlier in the interview that the battalion was able to purchase food outside the camp. How did this come about?

Summers: I think it was the payroll money that was left over, and they had not taken it from us. They talked to the Japanese and got permission to buy food in what they called the "canteen service." There were several times that you could buy things through the canteen, if you had any money. At that time, they were paying a little money. As a sergeant, I got anywhere from ten cents to forty cents a day for working. They didn't always pay. I would say that during all that time, they probably paid 25 or 30 percent of the time.

Marcello: This was Japanese occupation money?

Summers: Yes. But the thing about it is, everything cost so much. I remember one time I bought a bar of soap, which was the only soap I had all the time I was there. It cost me \$2.85. Of course, I still wanted the soap, and it wasn't available all the time. If it had been available, I couldn't have bought very much of it.

Marcello: Talking about this food that was bought with company

money, what might you get to supplement your diet as a result of this money?

Summers: The only thing that I know of was the pinto beans that were bought while we were there at Bicycle Camp. There could have been other things, but not that I know of.

Marcello: At this time, are the men being supervised relative to certain sanitary precautions? For instance, somewhere along the line, I know that people have told me that you had to dip your mess kit in a vat of boiling water before and also after the meal. Do I have that correct?

Summers: There was a place to wash them. It had a little mop that you could mop them out with, and then you dipped them to sterilize it, and then you closed it. That would keep the flies from getting on it.

Marcello: Was that one of the officers' functions, to make sure that the men did that?

Summers: I remember that before I was a prisoner of war, but after I was a prisoner, I don't remember it at all.

Marcello: I'm just thinking that you probably would have needed somebody older and more mature because, in dealing with eighteen- and nineteen- and twenty-year-olds, they may become a little careless about something like that.

Summers: I think that it was impressed on us by our doctor, Doctor [Hugh] Lumpkin, who died over there.

Marcello: How about the drinking liquids? Water or tea? What

was available?

Summers: At the Bicycle Camp, they would give us one little dipper of tea or coffee for each meal. I think the coffee mostly was burnt rice. Otherwise, we boiled our own water in our canteen bottle. We put the water in it and set it in the edge of the fire. You had to loosen the top so that it could steam when it got to boiling. Then you'd tighten and go on.

Marcello: So already you have to take those precautions?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: I probably should have started with this next question, but I'll throw it out here. Let me start with a statement. It seems to me, from all the interviews that I have done, that one of the important things here at Bicycle Camp is that you learn how to be a prisoner of war. You learn pretty quickly what is expected of you, how you're supposed to behave. So, according to the Japanese, how are you supposed to behave as a prisoner of war, and what will be the consequences if you don't behave?

Summers: When the guards came through, you'd jump at attention and hold your fingers right against your leg and bow at your waist. If you're not careful, that's when they're going to hit you, for any reason at all--if you're slow getting to it or if your fingers are not right or because they're just mad, whatever. You always had to

be ready for a lick to the face or sometimes a kick. More often it was with a fist or a hand, slapping you real hard.

Marcello: How difficult is it to stand there and be slapped by a person smaller in stature and one that you know you could probably tear apart?

Summers: It's very hard. I saw some that bristled a little bit, as though they were going to hit them back. They ended up getting a very bad beating. You learned to just take it. You just stood at attention and let them hit you. That's very hard to do.

Marcello: How important is it to learn at least some of the Japanese language?

Summers: It's very important. Not necessarily to talk to them, but to understand what they are saying to one another. I think all of us learned some of the language. Some that tried a little harder became interpreters. Of course, you could get into trouble there, too. If you interpret something for them that is not what they want to hear, even though it's the truth, they'll hit for that.

Marcello: Would it not be accurate to say that by learning the language, you could avoid bashings? If a Japanese guard were to give an order, and you didn't react because you couldn't understand it, he was liable to bash you.

Summers: That's true. That's one reason why we learned it. We soon learned it that way.

Marcello: What threats did they make relative to one escaping and being caught?

Summers: They said that any man trying to escape would be killed. I guess that was the only thing they said. They said that many times.

Marcello: Did you believe them?

Summers: I believed it, for sure.

Marcello: How about theft? What if a prisoner were caught stealing from the Japanese?

Summers: Of course, you would get beaten everytime. I didn't know anyone that was killed for it. Everyone tried to steal all the time. They had to, to get something to eat. Mainly it was food.

Marcello: What were the normal Japanese punishments that were dealt out to the prisoners? You mentioned slapping, and I guess that probably was the main thing.

Summers: Slapping and kicking and hitting with the fist and hitting with their rifle butt. Very often they hit you with bamboo poles. Forcing a person to sit on his feet was another one.

Marcello: Kneel down on your knees with a bamboo stick behind.

Summers: Behind your legs, and your feet sticking back.

Marcello: You're leaning your buttocks and your thighs on that.

Summers: Yes, in very hot outside weather, in the middle of the

and I could see that, and that was very hard for me to stay and watch.

Marcello: If we can sum up this section, what's the best way to avoid getting bashing or beating?

Summers: Stay in the crowd and stay back.

Marcello: In other words, stay away from the guards as much as possible.

Summers: Right. If there was a group of men working, you stay among the middle of them, not the one out there where the guard is.

Marcello: I assume you learned most of this in Bicycle Camp. They "take you to school" here.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: Let's talk about the work details here at Bicycle Camp. How are they organized and set up?

Summers: They were organized by our officers. The Japanese sent word in as to how many they would need in each group. They were divided up, and each battery would furnish so many men to go out. They never did use all the men that were available. If you didn't want to go out, you could always get out of it.

Marcello: What would the American officers' function be on these work details?

Summers: They would be the go-between between the Japanese guard and would get the men to work.

Marcello: For the purposes of those who listen to this tape or

read the transcript, what do you mean when you say that the officer acted as a go-between?

Summers: The Japanese guard or the person in charge of the work to be done talked to him partly in sign language, and partly he might speak a little bit of English. Sometimes, if it was a big work party, they'd send a person who spoke both Japanese and English. There were some Dutch there that spoke Japanese well. They would just be the go-between and take the orders and try to get the work done. If we fell down on it, the officer might get bashed or beaten up. They wanted him to be as hard on his men as their officer would be to them. That happened for quite a while. Later, they took the officers away from us, and it would be a non-commissioned officer that would be the go-between.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the enlisted men over the fact that officers did not work per se?

Summers: If they didn't, the officer would try to get him to do what the Japanese wanted him to do, to keep the Japanese off of them, because they would get in trouble. But there was some hardship there between the officers and the men at times because they didn't feel that the officer had done enough to keep the Japanese off of them. The officers didn't feel like they should slack off their work too much and make it hard on them. Both of them stood a good chance of getting beaten for

it.

Marcello: Let me come at this from a different angle. The enlisted men are working. The officers really aren't working, that is, performing physical labor. Did that cause any kind of resentment?

Summers: Yes, it did. We felt that they were as much prisoners as we were, and why should they be able to get by without working? When we were at the Bicycle Camp, that wasn't so important.

Marcello: I'm referring to Bicycle Camp right now. You needed "all hands" later on.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: What would be the advantages to going out on a work detail?

Summers: You got a chance to deal with the natives or anyone we'd come in contact with. The Japanese would try to watch you. Occasionally, you'd get a guard that would let you talk to the natives a little bit. We'd use hand signals. We didn't speak their language very well, either, but we were able to sell some of the things that we had. People sold their bedding, their clothing, which they didn't have very much of anyway, but they traded anything they could for something to eat, or, later on, quinine or any medicine that would help us.

Marcello: I would assume that if you worked around these

warehouses, there would be opportunities to steal things.

Summers: Yes, but you couldn't conceal very much on your body, so it had to be something small. If it was something that you could eat there, that was good.

Marcello: You ate it on the spot?

Summers: Yes, immediately.

Marcello: How would you smuggle things back into camp?

Summers: In your clothing. Sometimes you would take your food with you for the day and your canteen. If you got liquid quinine, you'd get that in your canteen or put something in your mess gear. There weren't very many things, though, that you could get in with. If you could get a banana or something like that, you could eat it on the work party.

Marcello: I've also heard men who went on work details talk about the Dutch women and how brave they were. Did you notice that?

Summers: They would wave the "V" to you and thumbs up and things like that, and smile, but I didn't talk to any of them. I knew it was hard on them. I saw some Dutch women beaten a few times because they were too brave. They were still free for a while. They didn't put them in prison right away. They certainly sympathized with us, but there was very little they could do for us.

Marcello: How taxing or hard was work on these details?

Summers: How what?

Marcello: How taxing or how hard?

Summers: At Bicycle Camp?

Marcello: Yes, we're strictly at Bicycle Camp.

Summers: It wasn't too bad. They didn't have a tremendous amount of work for us there.

Marcello: When you weren't working, what did you do with your time?

Summers: We didn't have much reading material. The only thing that you could do was to play volleyball there at the Bicycle Camp. I believe that was the only thing to do. They did have a little theater group. They put on a play a time or two. I can't recall any of the Americans being involved. It was the Dutch that mainly did that. Some of the Australians did. There was an Australian officer who played the part of a woman. I think he was kind of in danger. At night, the boys kind of eyed him up and down. He was kind of feminine-looking.

Marcello: In your bull sessions, what did you normally talk about?

Summers: Food, and at that time we still talked about girls pretty good, what they're doing back home, and how long is it going to be until they're over here getting us out.

Marcello: I guess, as a result of these bull sessions and the

time that you have here, you learn a lot about everybody and their family and so on and so forth.

Summers: We did, right, and became close friends with people that you just knew their name to start with. If you're with them every day, all day, you get to know them pretty well.

Marcello: You brought this up awhile ago, and I'll pursue it at this point. On July 4, 1942, the Japanese try to get the men to sign this non-escape pledge or oath. Describe the details of this. Tell me more about it.

Summers: I can't remember exactly what was said. Of course, they had a Japanese officer come and make a speech to us. We didn't understand it too well. They had a Dutch officer there, who spoke English and Japanese, and he interpreted for us. But the main thing he was saying was that they would kill us if we tried to escape, or if we tried to escape, they wouldn't guarantee our lives nor of those who were left in there. They would kill others. He wanted us to sign an agreement not to try. What that would mean, I can't imagine.

There were many chances to escape, when you're on a working detail, to get away from the Japanese guard there, but I don't think you could have got away. The Japanese, I believe, had a bounty that they would pay for any of the prisoners that were turned in. I don't

know of any that escaped. Later on, I knew of people that escaped, in the latter part of the war. I helped an Australian boy and his friend get away.

Marcello: We'll talk about that later on. You mentioned, also, previously that initially you refused to sign this. What was the Japanese reaction?

Summers: I think they cut off our food.

Marcello: Didn't they even go so far as to set up machine guns?

Summers: Yes, I can remember that, too. That, of course, was frightening because you didn't know what they'd do. We had never heard of them doing that, but I didn't know what they'd done in China. I didn't have a background of what to expect. It certainly didn't look good.

Marcello: So, what was the end result then?

Summers: The end result was that we signed it. The colonel told us that we'd be signing under duress, so it wouldn't have any meaning. We could go ahead and sign without worrying about it.

Marcello: Did you have any feelings one way or the other about it?

Summers: No, I had nothing unusual. Of course, I didn't want to say that I wouldn't try to escape. I would still have tried to escape if I'd had the chance and I thought I could get away.

Marcello: We've talked about the officers and their function on the work details. We've just mentioned Colonel Tharp

again, who, in essence, was advising you to sign this document. What kind of military discipline is still being maintained in Bicycle Camp among the American troops? In other words, I guess what I'm saying is, was there a command structure that was still being pretty much followed?

Summers: No one ever spoke of it. The sergeants were still the ones that were in charge of the group in the area. No one ever challenged that. Neither did anyone that I know of try to press a point to make something different. It was just a matter of getting by with the Japanese more than anything else.

Marcello: I gather that formalities such as saluting and this sort of thing stopped, did it not?

Summers: When we were in Singapore, the English tried to get us to salute. That's all. We didn't salute one another.

Marcello: There is still a loose command structure that's being followed. You mentioned awhile ago that you had a liaison who would get instructions concerning work details from the Japanese. I'm assuming that this in turn would filter down to the non-commissioned officers and so on.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: It was going to be important to have some sort of military discipline, was it not?

Summers: Yes, sure.

Marcello: I have something in my notes here that I've asked several people, and I've never gotten any clear replies. Maybe you can tell me something about it. Somewhere in here, was Jack Shaw court-martialed, or was there an attempt at a court-martial?

Summers: I've heard that he would have been, but he was not.

Marcello: What were the details about that? Do you recall?

Summers: I don't know exactly why, but he talked back to the officers. He wouldn't take their commands, so to speak. I've heard that he would have been court-martialed, if he'd gotten back, but I don't think that's true. I mean, they may have thought so at the time. After what we had gone through, I think that every man that made it through deserved his peace. I don't think that he would have ever been court-martialed.

Marcello: But it did have something to do with his reluctance to follow orders?

Summers: Yes. I don't know the exact thing that came up, but I knew him real well. He lived in the cubicle next to me in the Bicycle Camp. He and I tried to get away together before we were prisoners.

Marcello: Something else also has come up concerning the officers. There was some talk that perhaps they were living a little bit better than enlisted men as a result of having this company money. What are your

feelings toward that?

Summers: I think that's true. None of the officers has ever said that, but I know that they had some of the money, or at least I was told that. They said that they spent it all on this extra food that we got at Bicycle Camp. There was payroll money that hadn't been paid out.

Marcello: You brought up one other thing that I want to talk about here at Bicycle Camp. You mentioned Jess Stanbrough and the short-wave radio that he was able to put together. I've interviewed Stanbrough some years ago, and he told me the details. Describe for me what you know, or didn't know, about Jess and his radio.

Summers: What I think is that he had it in the ceiling above our cubicles. At night he would get up there, and the Japanese guards would still come around, but we were in blackout. They couldn't see very well, and so, with lookouts, he could get up there. They didn't count us after it got dark. They always had tenko, counting, before dark. He would sometimes say that it [the war news] looked better. If something happened, he'd tell us about battles they were having in certain islands and that Americans got the best of it. Of course, a lot of that he was getting from this Japanese girl, "Tokyo Rose" [reference to Japanese-American woman who broadcast popular music and Japanese war propaganda over the radio]. She was speaking English, but a lot

of it was propaganda for us, to try to get us to believe it. It was not for prisoners but for those fighting men that were out there and listening to her.

Marcello: What did receiving news from the outside do for your morale?

Summers: You got tired of hearing good news, and then nothing happened. We kept thinking something should happen that we should hear about first-hand. Time going by and nothing happening for us is what kind of got on your mind. But there were all kinds of rumors passing, and you never knew, when you heard a rumor, whether it was the truth or not. Some of them sounded very silly, the way that they were made up. I don't know whether you've heard of this American sailor named "Bandy." Have you heard of "Bandy?"

Marcello: I've heard his name, yes.

Summers: The bugler?

Marcello: Yes.

Summers: "Bandy" was pretty good at that. He was older than most of the sailors. He was a chief petty officer with many years in the service, so he was pretty salty. He had a rumor, that I really can't put on tape, that came out one time. He came up with "Bangkok, in the hands of the Chinese." I'll have to tell you how he demonstrated that, how he got it (chuckle). He watched the native Chinaman who gave him that message. It was

really something. You realized that most of the rumors that we heard were just rumors. Whether they had any meaning at all, or any truth in them at all, you never knew. But anything that sounded good, you passed it on to the next guy and hoped that it was true.

Marcello: This, more or less, leads to a transition. Were there any individuals in the camp--and if so, identify them--who were pretty good at keeping up your spirits by saying funny things, clever things?

Summers: There were several. I suppose you know Jack Dempsey Key.

Marcello: I've heard of him, yes.

Summers: He was one of the funniest I've ever heard. He could mimic any kind of a sound. He'd talk about driving his Model-T Ford. He talked about one time reboring the block with a rat-tail file.

There was a friend, also in Headquarters Battery, like Dempsey. His name was "Dusty" Slavens, who was from Amarillo. He and Dempsey Key got together to see which one could tell the biggest lie. He was talking about one time when he was a trucker up there in the Plains, where it's windy and everything. He said, "You know, the worst load I ever had, they sent me out on this job, and I had to bring in a load of loose goose feathers in that bobtail [straight] truck. I got back, and there wasn't a feather left." (laughter)

Marcello: By the time you leave Bicycle Camp, are you also learning how to improvise, scavenge, and things of that nature? How did you improvise and scavenge? Do you remember anything that you did?

Summers: At Bicycle Camp?

Marcello: At Bicycle Camp, yes. Such as making your bedding better or your sleeping accommodations better or anything like that.

Summers: I made a pair of shoes, wooden sandals, with a strap across the toe, that I learned to walk pretty well in, to try to save the shoes. I had the one pair of Army-issue shoes that I started out with. I saved them a little bit that way.

When we got really hungry is when we started improvising, more than anytime else. We cooked a snake. I was with a fellow by the name of Jack...I can't remember his name. I saw him at the reunion, too [Lost Battalion reunion]. Anyway, he and I were on the woodcutting party, and we killed a cobra snake. We slipped it into camp in the wood that we were bringing for the kitchen. We cut it up into pieces and sold it to different ones to eat. Of course, I ate my share of it, too.

We also trapped wild chicken with a little bamboo box that we put together. We had to do that without letting the Japanese know what we were doing. So we

took turns occupying the Japanese guard while the other one did something to do that.

But improvising in Bicycle Camp, of course, we played volleyball. It was a sport that I enjoyed a lot. I had never played it before. We played almost on the level of some of the games you see on TV, where they're playing on the beaches. Of course, we had six men to a team, instead of two like they play.

I can't recall anything else of improvising there, other than clothing. We tore up our shelter-halves [reference to a section of canvas issued to each American soldier, which, when fastened to another soldier's section, made a small, two-man tent] to make clothing. That material we used to make G-strings to wear. That's what a lot of the sailors were wearing, parts of the clothing that we were able to let them have. We took shelter-halves and made them into shorts to wear. I had a pair, and they would last a long time.

Marcello: Most of this sort of thing probably occurred after you got up in the jungle, or did it begin in Bicycle Camp?

Summers: It started in the Bicycle Camp, but on the food, when we got so hungry, we started gathering weeds to cook-- the hog weeds that we have over here. They have a weed like that. You eat it like spinach, and it tastes pretty good. You boil it in water.

Marcello: We'll talk about that later on. Let me ask you this. As you look back, if you had been able to stay at Bicycle Camp for your entire time as a prisoner of war, and assuming conditions would remain as they were while you were there, it would have been a lot easier to survive, would it not?

Summers: Much, much easier. I don't know what would have happened about medicine, when we started getting sick, for dysentery and beriberi and things like that.

Marcello: But everybody's health was still pretty good there at Bicycle Camp.

Summers: That's right. We started out in pretty good shape, and we hadn't gone down much there. Maybe we had lost a little bit of weight, but otherwise we were pretty good.

[Tape 2, Side 2]

Marcello: In October of 1942, the Japanese start moving units out of Bicycle Camp. Let me get your date. When do you recall that you left, because there were several contingents that went out?

Summers: The date that I've recorded is September 16.

Marcello: On September 16, you left Bicycle Camp?

Summers: Yes, we left for Singapore on the Dai Nichi Maru.

Marcello: Having said that, what prior notice did you have that you would be leaving Bicycle Camp?

Summers: Very little. I would say probably one day.

Marcello: What were you allowed to take with you?

Summers: They didn't require that I throw anything away. I didn't have too much, because we had moved from one end of the island to the other. We didn't know that we weren't coming back then, so I had just my pack and the few things that I have mentioned. I had a shelter-half, a blanket, a little underwear, socks, another shirt, and another pair of pants. That's what I had at that time.

Marcello: What feelings did you have about leaving Bicycle Camp and going to the unknown?

Summers: Of course, we didn't know where we were going. We could have been going to Japan or wherever. I think it's either five or six days that it took us to get to Singapore.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going to Japan?

Summers: I had no feeling about it. I thought that I couldn't control it, anyway, so just make the best of whatever they made me do.

Marcello: The first group that left, I think, was sometimes called the Fitzsimmons Group. Is that the group you were with?

Summers: No, I was not. I was with a later group. The Fitzsimmons Group went up to the jungle several months ahead of us. They had, I think, a little bit easier time because they had a little better Japanese guards and commander.

Marcello: So when you left Bicycle Camp, you were with the main body of troops that left?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: I think the Fitzsimmons Group was a little bit smaller.

Summers: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: Okay, so you're aboard the Dai Nichi Maru. Describe what that ship was like and what life was like aboard that ship in this period of time that you were on it.

Summers: In the holds, between the decks, they had built sub-decks, so that there was not room enough to stand up. The amount of space that you could have on the floor was approximately two feet-by-two feet, which meant that everyone couldn't lie down at the same time. When you'd let some of them lie down to try to sleep or rest, others had to stand up astraddle them or above them. It was awfully hot, and the facilities for bathrooms were out on deck in the open. You could really just lean out over the side and let your bowels go.

Marcello: So they kind of had an outhouse built out over the side of the ship, isn't that correct?

Summers: Right.

Marcello: How often could you go to that outhouse?

Summers: You had to have permission to go. You couldn't go up and stay. It was much cooler, and you could get a breeze up there. Everyone had to cooperate a little

bit. They just sort of let a few go at a time.

Marcello: What did it smell like?

Summers: Oh, it was terrible, terrible! Of course, no one had soap. No one had had a bath all the time we were there. I don't know what the temperature was, but it was almost unbearable. It was so hot.

Marcello: I assume it was very hard to breathe, also.

Summers: It was, and it smelled terrible.

Marcello: Had much dysentery broken out at that point?

Summers: It was just getting started. Right there, a lot of it seemed to be happening. Some of them were not able to get up to go to bathroom, so it was just filthy down below.

Marcello: What was the food like aboard the ship?

Summers: I can't remember anything, but I know it was rice and some kind of watery soup.

Marcello: Did you get it down in hold where you were, or did you go up on deck to get it?

Summers: As I recall, they would hand it down from above. It was in the center of the hold, and you'd walk around and get a little in your mess kit.

Marcello: How about drinking water?

Summers: I don't remember getting any drinking water during the entire six days, other than what we got in the food.

Marcello: So whatever water you had was what you brought aboard ship.

Summers: What you brought in your canteen.

Marcello: The trip lasted how long?

Summers: Six days.

Marcello: What kind of thoughts were going through your mind as you were down in the hold of this ship, which evidently may have even hauled horses or something like that at previous times?

Summers: Anything, yes. The floor was dirty. I don't know what all was in it. Everyone just tried to hold their breath and just tried to work around one another. Not everyone could sit down or lay down at one time. You'd see some down on the floor all the time, and some of them were standing up all the time. It was just how long you could stand that because it was very hard to sleep in that condition. The first night or two, not anyone slept, and after that people just kind of laid on one another sleeping.

Marcello: The Japanese, for the most part, are letting you alone?

Summers: They were staying up top. They were controlling the deck. They never did come down in the hold.

Marcello: And you said that you were on this ship for six days?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: What happens at the end of the six days?

Summers: That's when we landed in Singapore. We marched into Singapore, into Changi. The Scots, with their bagpipes, came and played for us to march in. I can

remember that. It was very unusual music.

Marcello: Changi had been a very, very large British base at one time, had it not?

Summers: Yes, right.

Marcello: Now it was being used to house thousands of prisoners, I guess.

Summers: Right. They were everywhere--all over the floors, everywhere. There were unusual things that happened there. Of course, we weren't getting along with the English too well at that time, anyway. They were wanting us to salute them. The Japanese were maintaining the perimeters of the camp, but they did not come into camp very often. The English would be taking a walk, the officers, and they would come along and pull our men up and want them to salute them. I remember Jack Dempsey Key, the leading one. He got ready, and he did his hand this way [gesture] and got the officers to salute. Then he scratched his head and laughed at them. There were always things like that going on.

Marcello: Do you remember incidents involving the so-called "king's coconuts?"

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Describe that.

Summers: I remember that some of our boys were able to climb up the trees and get the coconuts, but some of them were

not able to. They had people more or less walking guard, guarding the king's property. They caught some of our boys cutting one of the trees down. There was a fight over that. I wasn't in on it, but I heard about it. They said, "You're destroying the king's property, and you're not to cut the trees!" That brought out a lot of comment. Everyone laughed about it. We played basketball a little bit there.

There, too, we got into the work of clearing the land for a vegetable garden. This was a rubber plantation, and the rubber trees were hard to dig out, but that's what we were doing. The Japanese told us that was a garden for us to grow our own vegetables. We found out it was a garden for them. As soon as we got it done, we were going to build a railroad.

Marcello: How hard or easy was work in building this garden?

Summers: That was hard work, and they pushed us pretty hard in hours spent. They watched you to see how you were working, and if you didn't work, they would work you over.

Marcello: What were your quarters like here at Changi?

Summers: I was sleeping on the floor in a big barracks. Normally, it had upright barracks. I suppose they were several deep. But we didn't have any bunks to get in. We were just on a concrete floor.

One of the things that we did there was that "Lum"

and I found out that honey bees were going into the ceiling, going into the roof overhead, under the clay tile. They had honey up there, so we would find a place to get up into the attic and let some of the tiles loose. We'd unwire them and rob the honey from the honey bees. We got a little extra to eat there with our rice by doing that.

After we got doing that pretty good, the English were all wanting us to get honey for them. We found a big tree on the island that had a lot of honey bees on it. Looking from the ground, it looked like there was a piece of comb, maybe about this long and this wide [gesture].

Marcello: About four or five feet long and three or four feet wide.

Summers: Yes. This was at least fifty feet in the air, and there was only one limb in between. We managed to get enough boards together and tied them to the tree. I climbed up there with one of my mess gear knives, and I was going to cut the comb loose. "Lum" and my brother were down below with a shelter-half, and they were going to catch it when it dropped. When I got up there close to them, I could hear those bees buzzing. Instead of being honey bees...they looked like honey bees, except they were about an inch and a half long. They were quite a bit bigger than any of our bees.

They were not the same bee that we'd been robbing in the roofs. But I was there, so I said, "Get ready," and I cut it. When it fell, the wind caught it, and it flipped sideways. They missed it with the shelter-half. There was very little honey in the comb, but it was a big piece of comb, and everyone on the ground got stung. Luckily, I got down without being stung.

Marcello: You mentioned that the British and others also desired this honey. I assume, therefore, that this became a very good trading material.

Summers: Yes, it did. It sure did. We sold it and traded it for whatever we could get. There was a very limited amount of different things that we were able to get, though.

Marcello: I've also heard that Changi was notorious for bedbugs. Do you recall any problems with bedbugs here at Changi?

Summers: Yes. Where your body touches the floor, or whatever bedding you have, the bedbugs would come up and form a line, standing on the concrete and sucking from you. During the night, you could feel them biting, so you'd take your hand and rub real fast, and then you could smell them. They had a terrible smell. The next morning, there would be just little red dots half an inch apart, right down where your body touched the floor. We had lots of bedbugs.

Marcello: There's not too much you can do about them, either, I

guess.

Summers: No, but there was another thing that we had there, that we had picked up by then, and that is body lice. They are pretty big, and they bite pretty hard, too. They would get in our clothing. You would see the men standing around, and all of a sudden, they would reach down and catch them.

Marcello: They get in the seams of the clothing, I guess.

Summers: Yes, they would hide in the seams.

Marcello: Especially around your waistband, which is what you are pointing to.

Summers: That's right. I've seen hundreds of them. You would get them in between your thumbnails and break them.

Marcello: There were also some rumors here that the British were withholding Red Cross supplies from the troops. Do you know anything about that?

Summers: Yes, I have my idea about what happened. When we first got there, they gave us a few cookies and a little porridge made out of ground wheat, like cream of wheat. That sure was good. That lasted, I would say, two or three days. They said that a Red Cross ship had come in, and the supplies had been divided, allocated on how many men we have. They said our share was sent on up to Burma for us, to be used when we got there. Of course, we never did see it, but they didn't give us anymore.

Two or three of us liked to play sports, and we organized a basketball team. We played the English officers, who challenged us. We hadn't played since we had been prisoners, but they had a basketball. They invited us down there, and we went down to play them. They promised to serve us food if we would do this. We went down and had a basketball game. I think the English only scored one or two goals, and we scored close to a hundred points. It was quite a game. These were English officers. They probably had more access to Red Cross supplies than others. They had cookies and porridge, both, while we were there for that one meal.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, the British evidently were allowed to run this camp internally.

Summers: I think that's right.

Marcello: My understanding is they even had Sikhs that they used as guards and so on, the Indians with the turbans.

Summers: Yes, we saw them.

Marcello: How long did you remain at Changi altogether?

Summers: Let's see. We got to the Changi in September, and we left on January 7. We went by train up through the Malay Peninsula, up to Pri, or I think it's sometimes called George Town. We left on a train on top of the boxcars. We went through a number of towns to get to Pri, and we got on another hell ship there. That was

the Dai Moji Maru. That's when there were three shiploads of us. One of the ships was hit by a bomb.

Marcello: Let's stop there for a second and back up. How long were you on this train?

Summers: It took us, I believe, two days to go up there.

Marcello: Once more, did they tell you? Did they give you any forewarning as to when you were going to leave?

Summers: No, it was a very short notice.

Marcello: What were your thoughts about leaving Changi?

Summers: We were going up to where we got the Red Cross supplies. We didn't know what we were getting into. We were just following orders. That's about it.

Marcello: Describe this train trip up to Pri, or George Town.

Summers: It was pretty hot. It was dangerous because we had nothing to hold onto on top of the boxcars.

Marcello: So you were on the roof of these boxcars?

Summers: That's where I was. They were all over the train. They didn't stop very often, and the guards were doing a lot of screaming. There were lots of guards with us on there. They did stop once or twice, and I didn't get off anytime, until we got there.

Marcello: So whatever food you had was what you took with you?

Summers: Right, which wasn't very much. What it was was one mess kit full of rice. There we had a canteen, and we were getting paid a little bit for working in that rubber plantation, grubbing it. I had bought a few

peanuts to eat with my dry rice. The Japanese had told us that, because of the Red Cross rations, they were not giving us anything else. The English turned around and told us our rations had already been sent up to where we were supposed to go. What we were able to buy on our own was all we had. I bought raw peanuts, and a tablespoonful and some rice was all I had for one meal.

Marcello: How was your health holding up at this point?

Summers: I was doing pretty good. I'd lost some weight, but I hadn't been sick.

Marcello: You mentioned that you go aboard the Dai Moji Maru. You're on your way somewhere, and you're not sure where you are going. Eventually, you land at Moulmein--I think that's the first stop--in Burma.

Summers: Right. We went into a prison there.

Marcello: Describe the trip on the Dai Moji Maru.

Summers: There we had very, very little space, and a lot more men were sick with dysentery and malaria. So we tried to make room for them to lay down as much as possible, but it was very, very tiring, because you were so sleepy as well as not being able to even sit down.

Then, we were two days at sea when one of the ships was hit by American bombers, or at least Allied bombers. Our ship had taken a hit that set it on fire, but it didn't sink it. We stayed around two days, looking for survivors off the other ship, and we picked

them up. Our ship, being set afire for a short time, probably saved our lives, because they assumed that we would go down. They did have a hit on it, but for some reason or other, they didn't come back. I don't think that they knew that there were prisoners there.

Marcello: Where were you when the attack occurred?

Summers: I was in the hold.

Marcello: What were your thoughts or reactions when you understood that you were under an air attack?

Summers: It was very frightening because I didn't know whether I could get out of the hold if it was hit. Hearing the bombs coming down, making a noise, you're shaking and just praying that you'll be saved, be spared.

Marcello: What are the Japanese doing?

Summers: They're screaming. They're all up on deck, of course. They didn't do anything to us at that time. They might have done something to those on deck, but not for those in the hold.

Marcello: How long did this attack last?

Summers: A short time. I would say four or five minutes or maybe a little longer. They bombed going over the first time, and then they came back and bombed again, and that was it.

Marcello: Is it safe to assume at this time that you weren't necessarily cheering on your friends in those bombers?

Summers: You know, each time we were bombed by Allies, I

thought, "How lucky we are that they are coming back."
But still, I was hoping their aim wasn't too good that day.

Marcello: Once the attack is over, you mentioned that you stick around, and you pick up survivors. I'm assuming that means that the ship is even more crowded.

Summers: Right. A big part of them stayed on deck all the time.

Marcello: Does the attitude of the Japanese change any at all? Do they become more surly or anything?

Summers: They were frightened. The next day, someone moved fast, and some of the men jumped overboard. If you did that, they were liable to go overboard. You had to be very, very careful. They picked up some of those who jumped over. They told us that if anymore jumped over for any reason, they wouldn't be picked up. I guess they didn't. Just a little movement would be like an air raid coming on. Everyone was ready to go.

Marcello: You land at Moulmein in Burma. Moulmein, of course, is the city made famous by Rudyard Kipling.

Summers: "East is East, and West is West."

Marcello: What happens when you get to Moulmein?

Summers: They put us in this prison--Moulmein District Jail, I think it was. It looked like a football field when we were up on the side of it in some of the seats. That's where I remember spending a lot of time. We didn't have anything to eat there, and everyone was sick. We

were only there a couple of days.

Marcello: The Japanese did not harass you in any way there?

Summers: Not me. I'm sure they did those that were on the perimeter.

Marcello: My records indicate that you were there about five days. Does that seem logical to you?

Summers: I don't remember how long. January 13 is when I said that we were there. Oh, here I've got it [refers to notes]. January 13 is when we got on the ship to go to Moulmein, Burma, and we were bombed on the 15th. On the 18th, we landed in Moulmein, and we were there from the 18th to the 21st.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, you're not at Moulmein for too long, so I guess not too much happened there. Then, of course, they send you up-country, so to speak. Where do you go?

Summers: To the 18 Kilo Camp [Japanese prisoner-of-war camp located on the railroad eighteen kilometers southeast of Thanbyuzayat].

Marcello: Did you pass through Thanbyuzayat on your way to the 18 Kilo Camp? That was the base camp.

Summers: Yes, I understand that. We were never there. I was never there. I know of several of our boys that were, but I was not.

Marcello: So you went directly to the 18 Kilo Camp? How did you get from Moulmein to 18 Kilo?

Summers: In a Japanese truck.

Marcello: By this time, do you know what you're being sent there to do?

Summers: Yes. I don't know whether it was rumors or if someone who'd come back through and told us, but we're there to build a railroad.

Marcello: Did the trucks take you right to 18 Kilo?

Summers: That's the way I remember it.

Marcello: Again, for the record, you have the base camp at Thanbyuzayat, and that's where they have supplies and equipment. As the railroad progresses, they build these work camps, and they are so designated by a number which indicates how many kilometers they are from Thanbyuzayat.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: So this camp is obviously eighteen kilometers from Thanbyuzayat. Let's do the same thing here that we did with Bicycle Camp. Take me on a tour of 18 Kilo. Let's talk about it from a physical standpoint. What's 18 Kilo like?

Summers: We had huts that we slept in that are made of bamboo and thatched roofs. The hut was a long building with an aisle down the middle and an earth floor. On each side, there was split bamboo to make a deck, and that's approximately two to three feet off the ground and about six or seven feet in length. Each man would have

the width of his bamboo mat, which is about thirty inches in length. When we were all sleeping, it was completely full. The aisle was still open. In the earth floor, sometimes we had fires going.

Marcello: How many men would be in one of these huts?

Summers: I would say those huts were 100 to 150 feet long. They had about people on each side, so about every three feet there were two people. So that would be a hundred people.

Marcello: Approximately how many people would be in one of the kilo camps altogether?

Summers: Maybe 500 or 600, something like that.

Marcello: Obviously, various nationalities.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Here at 18 Kilo, are you reunited with the earlier group, or are they still up ahead of you?

Summers: They're well ahead of us.

Marcello: They've moved on to another camp?

Summers: Right.

Marcello: My understanding is that these camps had been prebuilt by local laborers.

Summers: The natives.

Marcello: Were there any kind of enclosures around these camps?

Summers: Like barbed-wire fences? Most of them didn't have any.

Marcello: They didn't have to have any enclosure here, did they?

Summers: No. There was no way to get away because you didn't

have any food, you didn't have medicine, you didn't have any shoes, and you didn't have any clothes.

Marcello: And the locals would turn you in.

Summers: Yes. I understand that they had 100 guilders [Dutch currency] or ticals [Thai currency] or whatever currency they use, [as a bounty] on each one of us if we escaped. I don't know anyone who escaped along there. Later on, I do know of some.

Marcello: You begin work on the railroad here. Let's talk about how the work crews were organized. How were you organized?

Summers: We were organized into kumis, which is a Japanese term for companies. There are fifty men to a kumi. They had all sergeants in my kumi; they had all corporals in another kumi; they had all privates in another kumi. I understand that was to stop any organization for trying to escape or for trying to overthrow them. Anyway, we were broken up into groups like that. A kumi consists of fifty men, and when we started out, they were giving us one cubic meter of dirt per man to be moved out of a cut where we were putting the roadbed through, or one cubic meter of dirt to be put on the bed to make a mound to run the railroad on. So fifty cubic meters was our quota each day.

Marcello: That's when you started out.

Summers: That's when we started out. Then, as men became sick

and unable to work, we still had fifty cubic meters, but maybe we'd have twenty-five men working. So that meant you had two cubic meters per man. That's one reason why a lot of the men didn't try to do less work. They would try to protect their fellowman by doing as much as they could. The thing that worked out is that you couldn't do two cubic meters in an eight-hour day. You'd be doing it in a sixteen-hour or eighteen-hour day.

Marcello: I also understand that a lot of times, at least in the beginning, they would have a quota. You were still relatively healthy, and you would finish the quota, and you could come in early. Then they would simply jack up the quota. They did that, too, did they not?

Summers: Yes, they did that, too. They sure did.

Marcello: In essence, on this railroad, you're going to be making either cuts or fills.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: If you come to a valley, you fill it in; if you come to a hill, you make a cut.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: What kind of tools are you using to do this work?

Summers: We had picks and shovels and baskets, hand-made, to carry the fill material from one place to another.

Marcello: What kind of supervision are you under here?

Summers: There's usually a Japanese guard who maintains control

of the men, but the work was handled by so-called engineers. They would usually be a corporal or a sergeant. The guards were usually Korean, and the men who took care of the work were Japanese. They would decide when you got your quota in and how much you had to do.

Marcello: Describe the conduct of the Koreans. I'm assuming that this is where you first encounter the Koreans.

Summers: I think so.

Marcello: First of all, describe the Japanese attitude toward the Koreans.

Summers: The Japanese treated the Koreans terribly. They beat them. They had complete control of them. The Koreans never talked back to them. They always got beat up, just like we did. Of course, the Koreans turned around and did the same thing to us.

Marcello: Koreans are fairly stocky individuals, are they not?

Summers: I think there are more big Koreans than there are Japanese.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that the Koreans were especially cruel, that they seemed to enjoy torturing animals or things of that nature. Did you notice that?

Summers: It seemed that way, yes.

Marcello: Did you have nicknames for any of these guards?

Summers: Always.

Marcello: What kind of nicknames? Can you think of some of them?

Summers: I can remember one, "Liver Lips." He was an especially mean one.

Marcello: Obviously, he got that name from a physical characteristic.

Summers: Yes. We had one that we called "Hank the Yank." He was a real nice guy. He had gone to school in the United States. He was an officer, and he had graduated from Brown University. He was easier on the Americans, although he didn't let it be known by the other guards.

Marcello: You had one back in Bicycle Camp that I should have mentioned, and maybe he followed you up into the jungle, the "Brown Bomber." Do you remember him?

Summers: Yes, I remember him. He was a big, tall guy, and he was really mean.

Marcello: In what way?

Summers: He liked to hit you with his fist, and he'd also hit with his rifle butt very often.

Marcello: Do you remember if he was in Bicycle Camp and also accompanied you up in the railroad?

Summers: No, I can't remember where he was. I remember that we called him the "Brown Bomber," and I believe that he was Japanese, not Korean.

Marcello: At this point, we're talking about 18 Kilo. What was the weather like?

Summers: It hadn't started raining yet. It was hot in the daytime, and at night it got kind of cold. That's

where we really start getting hungry, though, because the food wasn't there. If there was anything to be had in the way of vegetables, or anything that you could find in the jungle to eat, we brought it home and cooked it. I can remember some wild fruit that we found there, and it was good. But the "careless" weeds are the main thing that I remember eating.

Marcello: I've heard them referred to as "pig weed."

Summers: That's what they call it here.

Marcello: Some said "hog weed."

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Getting back to the work details again, I've also heard that when you were given this quota, it would be measured off by the engineer. Is that correct?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: He would put up some sort of a stick or whatever. Is it true that from time to time, when the guards or somebody wasn't looking, somebody would try to pull that stick and shorten the distance?

Summers: I'm sure that we would have all done that if we thought we could get by with it, but I don't remember anyone ever getting by with that.

Marcello: What might get you a bashing or a beating here on working on the railroad at 18 Kilo, or maybe even later on?

Summers: Not working fast enough, hard enough. When they came

up, if you were leaning on your shovel, you would really get it.

Marcello: Most of you guys came from small towns. You were country boys. How would work there compare with what you would have done at home?

Summers: We had had better tools and gloves and clothes to protect you.

Marcello: More food.

Summers: Right, lots of food, and if you were sick, you didn't work. I worked hard at home. I think that possibly growing up in the Depression, when we didn't have much, and working hard at home, maybe saved my life. It made it where I could take "No" for an answer and go ahead and work without some of the things that affected my mind.

Marcello: What did the food consist of here at 18 Kilo, that is, in terms of the rations that you received?

Summers: There, it wasn't as bad as it was later. We had some vegetables, and we had rice. The rice got dirtier and dirtier after we got over there. I don't know whether it was in the warehouse longer and had more rats. There was lots of rat manure in it. The vegetables weren't very good. One of their favorite vegetables over there seems to be pie melon, like a watermelon, that you cut up and put in it. It turns to water when you put it in. It did add a lot of volume to it, but

it wasn't very good. Another time they gave us something that was like a pumpkin to put in there. That, too, wasn't too good by itself. We had very, very little meat or anything like that to give it a flavor.

Marcello: You more or less answered my next question. You were always looking for something to flavor that rice, weren't you?

Summers: Right. Salt or sugar was the best thing.

Marcello: Some of those hot peppers, too, I think, were used if you could find them.

Summers: A little chili pepper that we have over here is native over there. We picked that a lot. I don't know how much food value it added to it, but it did have a taste. If we got a chance to trade with the natives--and along there we did get a chance occasionally--we could buy what we called goola, which is sugar, and it's cooked up, and it's raw sugar that is poured out on a banana leaf. It's like chocolate candy, like fudge. It didn't taste quite as good as fudge, but it was sure good with your rice, if they would give you a little piece of that.

Marcello: The goola was in bricks, was it not?

Summers: Right. They would pour it out in various thicknesses on these leaves, and they would cut it into squares and stack it up. When they stacked, they would try to put

it in one kilo [kilogram]--2.2 pounds--bricks. Of course, that cost usually several dollars to get. If you could do it, it was several of their dollars. It would be very expensive when you were making ten or twenty cents a day. It cost four or five dollars to get one kilo.

Marcello: Another thing that I want to mention here, too, is that we are talking about you working on this railroad, which, of course, is connecting Rangoon and Bangkok. The Americans and some Australians and Dutch are working on the northern end. Mainly Brits are working on the southern end, and you're eventually going to join. But we have to keep in mind that there are other jobs that prisoners have to perform in addition to providing laborers for the railroad. For instance, in camp you have to have people to work in the mess hall, the cook shack.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: That was probably a pretty good job, wasn't it?

Summers: One of the best, because you got a little bit more food. They were very careful not to let anyone take food, but you'd get in line and get food, and then you got to be in line first for the seconds, if there was anything left. So the people working in the cookhouse did a little better than those working out on the railroad, as far as food. But they didn't have the

chance to trade with the natives, so they missed that chance.

I worked for a while on the wood party, cutting wood for the kitchen. We had five men working, and we would work with one guard. We had an ox wagon, and we would take that out and load the wood on it and bring it in camp and cut it up. We'd cut it in big blocks out on the road and bring it and put it on the wagon to bring it in. Then we would unload it there and cut it and split it up for the kitchen. That was a job, too, that you got a little more chance to trade with the natives, and you could get a little more food at the cookhouse. You'd line up with the cooks.

Marcello: I understand that another choice job would be to go on the truck to Thanbyuzayat and bring supplies back up to the camp. That provided opportunities to steal.

Summers: There weren't many of those guys that were that lucky.

Oral History Collection

J. L. Summers

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

August 22, 1995

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Marcello: This is Ron Marcello, continuing the oral history interview with J. L. Summers. Today is Wednesday, August 22, 1995.

I have just a few more questions relative to the 18 Kilo Camp before we move on. You actually got to the 18 Kilo Camp when? When did you start work there?

Summers: I believe it was March 18, 1943.

Marcello: One of the things I wanted to ask you yesterday, and neglected to do so, is the nature of the terrain in which you were working. What was the terrain like around the 18 Kilo Camp when you were working on the railroad?

Summers: We weren't in the mountains yet. This is rolling hills and small cuts. It was fairly low country, but it was very dry with not many big trees. Along the creeks and rivers through there, there were large trees, but a lot of them were very small.

Marcello: I assume that although you were expected to fulfill the

quotas, like we were mentioning yesterday, they really weren't driving you or pressing you like they would later on. Is that correct?

Summers: It started pretty early. They gave us an allotment of how much dirt was to be moved. It wasn't too hard to do it to start with. In a short time--I think because people started getting malaria and dysentery--the number of people that went out to work got fewer and fewer. Of course, the amount of work to be done was always the same so that it got harder and harder for us.

Marcello: So the sickness actually started here at the 18 Kilo Camp.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Now let me ask you this. Suppose you did come down with dysentery or malaria. Who determined whether or not you were fit to work?

Summers: Our doctor, Doctor Lumpkin, was the one that we saw if we were sick enough to go to the doctor. But the Japanese were very, very strong in encouraging us to come out and work. A lot of people had their face slapped for just pretending to stay home. Even though they had a good reason, it wasn't easy to get the Japanese to agree to let you stay. The man that checked you in to go out to work, he looked you over, too. It was almost like the doctor looking you over.

If you had something that showed, such as a big tropical ulcer, or if you apparently had fever or if you had dysentery, sometimes you could see that in a person, and they would let you stay. At the end, when they were really pressing, they made everyone go. If you could stand up, you could go, even some people who were sitting down, that weren't able to stand. When we were breaking rock, I know that some of them could get out there with their buddies' help, but when they got there, they weren't able to keep standing up. So they would sit down and beat rocks.

Marcello: This would be later on, after the "Speedo" sessions had started.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: So what you're saying, in essence, is that the Japanese guard had a quota of men that he had to have out on the work party, in the kumi.

Summers: That's right. The guard was the one who was standing there and was going to hit you, but the Japanese engineer is the one that told you how much you had to do.

Marcello: But the guard had a quota of men that he was to take out to that work site.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: It was the guard who determined, in the end, who was going to work and who was going to stay back,

regardless of what Hugh Lumpkin said.

Summers: Yes, that's right. Of course, you had to be pretty sick to get to see Lumpkin. No one tried to get by faking it, because you were laying off work on your own friends. They would have to do your work if you weren't there, so if you were able to go at all, you went.

Marcello: Suppose one were sick enough that he couldn't go out to work. Was his food ration affected in any way?

Summers: Really not. The rations for the entire camp was. They supposedly didn't give any food for those that didn't go. But the food that was given was divided, and they got their share.

Marcello: How was your health holding out at the 18 Kilo Camp?

Summers: I became sick at the latter part of our stay there. I had dysentery. I was weak, and it was hard to work. The doctor put me in with the group to stay behind and not go forward with them when they moved up to the next camp. I was only able to stay there a short time. They were demanding that anyone who could walk or do anything get out and go back to work. I did get a little bit of rest, but only a few days, and then I moved up with the other group.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had dysentery during the latter part of your stay at the 18 Kilo Camp. Describe what your case of dysentery was like.

Summers: You felt very weak to start with, and you had a constant urge to have a bowel movement. Even if you were a short distance from it, sometimes you couldn't make it to the latrine. So it was a very, very messy time, and since we didn't have toilet paper, and we didn't feel good enough to go and get water, everyone really suffered because of this. The latrines were open, and there were millions of flies, which spread this and made it harder on everyone.

Marcello: Were there any kinds of medicines or folk medicines that the doctors could concoct to try and combat the dysentery?

Summers: What I was given was charcoal. They burned wood and got the partially burned part, the black charcoal, and then they would powder that. You would take that with water, and that was our medicine.

Marcello: What was it supposed to do? Absorb some of the bacteria?

Summers: I really don't know. It didn't help very much.

Marcello: By the time that you left the 18 Kilo Camp, did you still have your dysentery at about the same level?

Summers: No, I think it was slightly better. The rest probably did me more good than anything. I had a few days that I could spend on my bed.

Marcello: I'm assuming that you did not have to go to the hospital, if we can call it that.

Summers: No.

Marcello: I assume that you didn't want to go there.

Summers: Actually, at that time, I don't believe they had a hospital. We were in good shape to start with, and I think that was the main thing that took care of us in the early part of the POW life.

Marcello: You mentioned a moment ago that when you had dysentery, it was sometimes impossible to make it to these open latrines. It must have been a rather humiliating experience.

Summers: Oh, it was! It surely was! You watch your friend doing the same thing, and you sympathize with one another, but there was very little you could do.

Marcello: Have the small support groups formed at this point? You remember yesterday I was asking you to identify some of your very close friends. I know that later on, certainly by the time we get to the 80 Kilo [80 kilometers southeast from Thanbyuzayat] or the 100 Kilo Camp [100 kilometers southeast from Moulmein], that a few men would group together and share whatever extra things they had or take care of one of their buddies if he were sick. Did the support groups form here at 18 Kilo?

Summers: Yes, we had support groups, and actually they started in Java, before we left there. You would share whatever you were able to steal or get, especially in

the way of food. Of course, you'd get together and talk each night, and that helped a lot, I think.

Marcello: Who were the individuals in your support group?

Summers: T. B. Lumsden and Ray Singleton were the main two that I normally stayed with.

Marcello: Was your brother here at the 18 Kilo when you were there?

Summers: He was. He came when I did, but he left before I did. He went with the main group on up to the 40 Kilo Camp [40 kilometers southeast from Thanbyuzayat]. It was a couple of weeks before I got there with him and rejoined him.

Marcello: You mentioned that eventually you were pulled out of the 18 Kilo Camp as the Japanese needed additional manpower. I'm assuming that it was about this time that the monsoons began, and the "Speedo" period also began.

Summers: That's right. At that time, they had a lot of the roadbed completed, and we were working on bridges. We would cut the timbers and carry them to the river. They had a unique way of pile-driving those timbers into the ground and building the bridges.

Marcello: Did you do this at 18 Kilo, or was this when you moved up?

Summers: I believe mostly it was around 40 Kilo.

Marcello: Did you move from 18 Kilo to the 40 Kilo?

Summers: Yes, I walked that distance.

Marcello: Before we get to the actual jobs that you started on here, you mentioned that the monsoons began, and this coincided with the "Speedo" period. For those who listen to the tape or read the transcript, when we talk about the "Speedo" period, to what are we referring?

Summers: We're referring to the pressure put on by the Japanese officers to the engineers on the road, because they needed the railroad to bring supplies to the forces that were fighting in Burma. They had promised that a certain area would be finished, and they were going to do it, regardless of what it took.

Marcello: How do we get the term "Speedo?" Where does that come from?

Summers: Those that didn't speak English very well soon learned that meant "hurry up."

Marcello: So this was something that was yelled by the guards.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: I'll go back and talk about their conduct in a moment. We mentioned that the monsoons began. Describe what it was like to work during the monsoon period.

Summers: Of course, it rained every day, mostly all day. Often you would go through a period where it would just be sprinkling enough to keep you wet all day. Every thirty minutes or so, there would be a hard shower. So the ground stayed wet all the time, and you stayed wet

all the time. You slipped around a lot, especially in bare feet, in the mud, and it hurt the bottom of your feet when you hit the rocks. It was really hard on you to work in the wet weather. We weren't too cold at that time. When it's dry, it gets very cold there at night. When it was raining, it was fairly warm. Although we didn't have very much clothing, it wasn't really too cold for us.

Marcello: Were the thatched huts able to keep out the rain during the monsoon period?

Summers: Surprisingly, it did keep most of it from falling down on us. However, it ran under us. I've seen it a foot deep right in front of me, inside of the hut. It was always muddy because of that.

Marcello: What did these climatic conditions do to your belongings?

Summers: Everything was always wet, and there was lots of mildew on the cloth. We didn't have a lot, but it certainly deteriorated fast when got it wet.

Marcello: How was your blanket holding out?

Summers: The blanket held out fairly well. It smelled terrible, and it was dirty, and it had a lot of lice in it. Whenever the sun was out, if we were allowed to be in camp, everyone would take their blanket and put it in the sun. The lice would start crawling. You would get dozens of them--big, gray lice--crawling on your

blanket. You could pick them off when you'd see them move. You couldn't see them when they were standing still.

Marcello: What are you reduced to in terms of clothing you have to wear?

Summers: By that time, I had the one pair of pants that I had cut off and made shorts out of. I saved the legs that I cut off to make a loincloth, some cover for that part of your body. I had a shirt, which I had cut the sleeves off. They were getting ragged, anyway, so I cut them off. So I had a shirt, but I didn't wear the shirt all the time, just if I got cold. I had a shirt that was like a coat.

Marcello: Your basic body covering was a G-string.

Summers: That's true.

Marcello: How about shoes?

Summers: I had the same pair of shoes that I'd carried all the way through. I didn't wear them all the time because I was trying to save them for marches where we had distances to go or if my feet got too sore. But I often worked without shoes or with wooden tongs that I had made.

Marcello: When was it that you moved up to the 40 Kilo Camp? Do you remember the date?

Summers: I can tell you the date. I believe it was a couple of weeks after my brother had moved up. My brother left

on the 19th of June. I was left behind on March 14, and I moved up with him on the 29th, so it was fifteen days.

Marcello: So you got up there on March 29, and I think the monsoons began about April or May, did they not?

Summers: Soon after we got there. I can't remember exactly when they began. At that time, we were doing work on the bridge. A lot of it was bridge work. At least my kumi was working on that. We would stand in the water up to our waists many a time and pull ropes to pull the weight up to drive the piling. The water on your body all the time takes your temperature down to about the temperature of the water, so it was quite cold there.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit more about the bridge building you did here at 40 Kilo. Was this one bridge that you built here, or were there several bridges?

Summers: Several, but they were not as big as we would build later on.

Marcello: How large were the bridges that you were building here at 40 Kilo?

Summers: I would say that the top of the bridge was probably fifteen feet above the water.

Marcello: About how long?

Summers: Usually less than a hundred feet long. They were short bridges over small streams.

Marcello: What were the materials that were used to build those

bridges?

Summers: We got them all from the jungle, and we had little hand axes that they called an adz [reference to a special ax with a curved blade used for shaping wood]. We would take the big logs and square them up to a certain extent. When we put them in place, the piling that stood up, we put a metal stake in the middle of it. We'd bore a hole in the big timber that we put on top of that to fit over that. Then to keep them up there, they had a big staple made out of reinforcing rods, steel and sharpened. They'd staple it from one member to the other and drive it in about three inches into the beam. We put several of those on each connecting member. That was the only thing that held it together. We never did have bolts or anything like that.

Marcello: Describe the pile driving.

Summers: We would take a fairly straight member and put it in an upright position. Before putting it up, they'd drill a hole in the center of the beam or the timber and put a long metal rod in that, usually about an inch or an inch and a half in diameter, that was fifteen or sixteen feet long. Above that, we would have a couple of trees that we had made into posts and attached them together at the top. We would attach a pulley up there, and to this pulley they had one big rope. From the end of the rope, after it goes through the pulley,

they would splice many other ropes, spider ropes, that were smaller in diameter. There would be several men on those, and they would divide usually further down the line to other ropes that were attached, so that you could put twenty or thirty men driving one piling. On the count, we would pull, all together. The weight had a hole through the center of it, which went across and around the beam that went up, so that it slid backward and forward as you pulled the strings. We would pull in unison and lift it way up the rod and drop it--up and drop. Sometimes the Japanese would sing songs to us or get us to sing them or count in Japanese so that we would have good rhythm. We'd drive pretty fast. The beam would go up, and down it'd come. It looked like it would go in the ground two or three inches on every stroke, so it didn't take too long to get it down far enough to hold a train.

Marcello: Generally speaking, was the roadbed soft enough that the pile driving did progress fairly well?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: So this whole railroad was just being built by very, very primitive means.

Summers: Very primitive.

Marcello: During this "Speedo" period, how did the Japanese attitudes change relative to work and work requirements and so on and so forth?

Summers: They were mad at us all the time, screaming and hollering and beating. If, for any reason, you were slow in loading a basket and carrying a basket, if they thought you weren't really putting out as much as you could, they would hit you with their fists or slap you or hit you with a rifle butt. They kept you on the move. No one ever was allowed to stop to rest for a minute because they were tired. There was just constant movement. Because it was very primitive work, it looked like a bunch of red ants running around with dirt in a basket. It was the same way with the men on the pick or the shovel, they had to be moving that dirt somewhere all the time, or you'd get beaten up.

Marcello: Earlier we talked about the removal of the dirt back at the 18 Kilo Camp when it was dry. What was the consistency of the material that you were moving during the monsoon period?

Summers: It was much heavier with water in it, and it was like mud. It didn't make any difference. You had that much work to do, whether it was wet or dry, but it was more work when it was wet. It was softer and easier to put a shovel through it, but it was more work because of the weight.

Marcello: What kind of workdays were you putting in here?

Summers: Almost constant right on through. They said they'd let you have a day off a month, but very, very seldom did

they ever let you off.

Marcello: What time would you normally go out in the morning to work?

Summers: Usually, it was too dark to work when you got up, but you could eat and be ready and be marching out there. By the time you got there, it would be about daylight. At night sometimes, if you hadn't finished your workload, you'd light fires and keep working. Sometimes it would be 10:00 or 11:00 at night before you'd get in.

Marcello: Is this what the prisoners used to refer to as working from "can't see" to "can't see?"

Summers: That's exactly where it came from.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the food. You mentioned that you would get up in the morning, and you would have something in the morning before you went out on a job. Let me ask you this. We're in the monsoon season. You're further into the jungle, which means you're getting further away from the base camp. How did the quality and quantity of the food change?

Summers: We got less and less always, and practically no meat at anytime, but we did have some kind of vegetable matter that was boiled. That was your stew or whatever you want to call it. The quality of the rice went down a lot. There was a lot more dirt and worms and rat manure in the rice, so that it was very hard to eat the

rice.

Marcello: What would you get to eat in the morning?

Summers: Usually, about the same thing all the way around. Sometimes they would boil the rice and kind of have a gruel.

Marcello: Is this what the Dutch refer to as "pap?"

Summers: Yes, that's exactly right, and I think some of our babies eat pap over here, but it is quite different from what we were eating.

Marcello: How about your noon meal? Where would it be served, and what would you have then?

Summers: It was usually brought out to you by some of the men who were too sick to work, so to speak. They'd bring out the food with a five-gallon bucket full of stew or soup, and the rice would be in a basket usually. It was carried out there on the backs of men, with "yo-yo" sticks [so-called because the local residents, while balancing two baskets on a stick or pole on their shoulders, would sing a rhythmic chant that sounded like "yo-ho, yo-ho"]. They go from one person to another.

Marcello: It would be the usual stew?

Summers: Right. That was what we had always. We called it stew, but it was whatever they had that they boiled, and that's what you ate.

Marcello: From everything that I've heard from other prisoners,

the cook shack usually stayed open until you guys came in the evening. Is that right?

Summers: Oh, yes, sure.

Marcello: So you were getting three meals a day, a semblance of three meals.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: You were eating three times a day.

Summers: That's exactly right. We didn't get much variety. There was very little difference in the food that you got from one day to the other or one meal to the other.

Marcello: I assume you were constantly hungry, hungrier than you were even at Bicycle Camp.

Summers: Oh, much hungrier, much hungrier. We thought we were having it rough at Bicycle Camp. We found out the difference.

Marcello: How long did you remain at the 40 Kilo Camp?

Summers: I got there on March 29. I have a date of June 19, when we went to 80 Kilo Camp. We walked that distance, too.

Marcello: You walked to the 80 Kilo Camp.

Summers: From the 40 to the 80 Kilo.

Marcello: Did you get to the 100 Kilo Camp during this period?

Summers: We got to the 100 Kilo Camp, according to my records, on August 26.

Marcello: And you remained there how long?

Summers: We remained there until we moved to Tamarkan [Thailand]

on December 27, so we were there a little over four months.

Marcello: So you spent a good deal of time then at both the 80 and the 100 Kilo Camps.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: My understanding is they were the notorious camps.

Summers: They were the worst part of the railroad for our unit.

Marcello: What made them the worst part?

Summers: The work was harder, and, of course, we started in the monsoons. They were in "Speedo" all the time, and we were becoming sicker.

Marcello: I gather the 100 Kilo Camp was in a terrible location, too. Is that correct?

Summers: I don't know what you mean by a terrible location. It was on the railroad.

Marcello: Evidently, it was really wet all the time. It was kind down in a low place.

Summers: Yes, it was pretty low, and the natives had been there before us. The camp was in terrible condition when we got there, and it didn't improve because there was no one to work on the camp to try and improve it.

Marcello: You mentioned that it's during this period, let's say from the 40 Kilo Camp to the 100 Kilo Camp, when the worst occurs. This is when the health of the prisoners deteriorates.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: You're constantly in the rain. You're being overworked. You don't have much food. In part, you don't have much because the supply trucks evidently can't keep up with you. The road paralleling the railroad is washed out.

Summers: Right. At that time, I came down with tropical ulcers. It became almost impossible for me to stand.

Marcello: Describe how you got the tropical ulcers and how they affected you and how you tried to treat them.

Summers: Everything was so dirty. Anytime you got a scratch, you were liable to get a tropical ulcer. The way I got mine, we were working on the railroad, putting a ballast of crushed rock on the bed. We were getting ready to lay the ties and the rail. The Japanese were working with us by blasting the rock in the hills near the railroad. They didn't let us handle the explosives, but they did blow up a lot of the rocks. We would take them and crush them further with sledgehammers and carry them and put them on the roadbed. What happened there was that the Japanese took great pains and enjoyed watching us scatter when he would set off dynamite blasts. He wouldn't always tell us when he was going to do it. Some of them that were working with him, some of the prisoners, would get word to some of us, but they got beaten up for warning us ahead of time because it slowed down our work. They

wanted us to keep working right on up until the blast went off. Anyway, they blew up rock above me, and the rocks were coming down, bouncing toward me. I misjudged it, and one took a crooked bounce and caught me in the legs. It actually cut both legs. I didn't have any trousers or anything like that to protect my legs. It didn't scratch too bad, but both of them developed into ulcers. An ulcer can start in a very small way. You think that it's going to get right, get well, but then, for no reason at all, maybe it would get wet or dirty some way or another, and it turns into a terrible sore.

Marcello: In another words, this ulcer keeps getting bigger. Is that correct?

Summers: And deeper. It feels as though there are animals eating on you or something, like screwworms. I had them on both legs. At times you can see the bone down there. As long as it's black, it's still growing, and it will grow very fast. The way we worked to try and get rid of those is to put hot water in them. If you were unable to work--sometimes they would let you stay in camp, and sometimes they wouldn't--and if you could stay in camp, they'd put hot water on it all day. There was a good chance you would get the growing quality of the ulcer cured, and it would start turning red inside. You could see the flesh growing back just

about as fast as it went out. The problem was getting it dirty or wet, and it would then come right back on you.

I spent a week or two in camp working on mine, and while I was there, I was able to get on the detail to cut wood for the kitchen. While my legs were bad, I could at least split the blocks that they brought in. Then, when I got able to walk out, that made it so that you could talk to the natives a little bit and trade things. It was a little bit harder work than some of the things you might be able to get by with on the railroad. It paid off in the food that you got that was extra. When you had food lines, the cooks or the people that worked in the kitchen, for some reason, got to go to the head of the line. They got the second serving first. So then I started getting a little bit more food, and I got in a little better shape. As long as I was working on the wood detail, they only had one guard for five of us for our kitchen. He couldn't stay with all of us, so we were able to do a few things that he wouldn't have allowed us to do otherwise.

Marcello: We'll come back and talk about that in a minute, but I want to continue with your bout with the tropical ulcers. You indicated to me--and obviously we couldn't see this on the tape--that your ulcers were on your lower leg, on your calf.

Summers: Yes, just below the calf.

Marcello: At its worst, how large and how deep was it?

Summers: There is a certain amount of swelling that goes with an infection like that, but it looked at least an inch deep. There's not that much flesh there normally, but the swelling makes it that deep. It was to the bone, and from one side of it to the other, it was an inch and a half to two inches, in that neighborhood.

Marcello: What does a tropical ulcer smell like?

Summers: It's rotten, dead flesh. I got worms in mine, and actually some of the doctors recommended that you put worms in it.

Marcello: You're referring to maggots?

Summers: Yes. As long as you didn't have screwworms. If you got screwworms in there, they ate the raw flesh as well as the dead flesh. That makes it grow faster. The maggots eat the dead flesh. They clean it up a little bit. If you can keep it clean, then it can heal.

Marcello: Did you deliberately put those maggots in? I know, in some cases, they were deliberately put in.

Summers: In some cases, they did. I did not.

Marcello: It wasn't too hard to find or to get maggots, I gather, in these camps.

Summers: That's right. We didn't have any bandages to cover it. I managed to get a part of a mosquito netting. The bottom section of it was heavier material, and I got

some bandages. I had either two or three bandages that I could wrap around my legs. I would boil them every day and replace them, put them back on my leg. I would fight the flies off until I got them back on. That was something that was very hard to get--some kind of bandages to protect you.

Marcello: From what you're saying, I gather that tending these tropical ulcers was a constant thing.

Summers: That's true--keeping them clean and dry and the flies out of them.

Marcello: But you can't neglect them.

Summers: No, you have to stay at it, or you'd die.

Marcello: That's the alternative: you'll die. When you got a tropical ulcer, I'm assuming that that was a pretty frightful thing.

Summers: Yes, but a large part of the people had them. They got them at one time or another.

Marcello: Plus, is it not true that an individual might have other maladies or diseases in addition to a tropical ulcer? How about you?

Summers: Yes, I had malaria, and I had dengue, which they called "dingy" fever, and it hurts you almost as much. I had swelling, and I had beriberi. Of course, I was hungry. Not getting enough food, I think, had a lot to do with all of your illnesses.

Marcello: You mentioned dengue fever. Exactly what is that, and

how did it affect you?

Summers: It's very similar to malaria. We mistook one for the other. Actually, how the doctor determined which one you had, I didn't know.

Marcello: You mentioned that you also had beriberi.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Wet or dry beriberi?

Summers: Mine was wet. I had swelling in my lower legs especially. They were quite a bit larger than they should be. In the stomach is where some of them got to be very large. I didn't get that big.

Marcello: When you have wet beriberi, describe what it's like.

Summers: I didn't have a lot of pain with it. It was almost dead. It felt like you were getting fat. You didn't have any energy.

Marcello: Suppose I came up to you and stuck my index finger in this area where you had the wet beriberi.

Summers: It would stay indented for a while. The worst thing that I had was the ulcers. I mean, I felt that they were more life-threatening than the others. That was one thing that really took me down.

Marcello: At the time that you had the ulcers, did you have any of these other things?

Summers: I had some at approximately the same time. While I had the ulcers, I did have malaria. It was all more or less together. You'd just go from one thing to

another. You never did get well. You'd just get to feeling that you were able to get out and work, although you usually went to work whether you felt like or not.

Marcello: What medicine was available to combat malaria?

Summers: Practically nothing, but occasionally we'd get a little quinine. That was not through the Japanese. You traded with the natives and got it. I remember one time one of my friends had traded a blanket for some quinine. It was liquid quinine. He had it in his canteen. He came to me during the night and told me what he had. He poured some in my canteen cup, and I drank it. How much it was, I don't know, but I was so drunk from having quinine that I couldn't even get on my feet. I couldn't stand up. When I had to urinate that night, I just laid to one side and urinated through the bamboo onto the ground. There was water down there anyway, water running underneath.

Marcello: When you had these tropical ulcers, where were you? At which kilo camp?

Summers: I was at the 100 Kilo Camp when it was so bad.

Marcello: Describe--and I'm using this term loosely again--what the hospital shack was like at 100 Kilo.

Summers: I was never in the hospital except to visit, to see one of my friends. I was never that sick, I guess. It was the same as the quarters we had, except they were

separate from us. They didn't get much medicine, but they got to stay in there, and they didn't have to work for a few days.

Marcello: I've heard it said that at 100 Kilo, one normally went to the hospital shack to die.

Summers: Yes, that's true. It was where they sent them to die. You had to be about that sick to get there.

Marcello: I understand it stunk to high heaven from dysentery and the tropical ulcers and everything that they caused.

Summers: Right. Of course, there were no covered latrines, so they were completely open all the time. With several hundred men in this small area, it got to be very bad.

Marcello: Is it in this kind of situation when the buddy system is helpful?

Summers: Yes, especially with food. Of course, we all visited with one another and talked and tried to console one another with our problems, whether it was sickness or what, especially those that were in camp and unable to go out. We tried to bring them something if we could. We learned to pick a lot of things from the jungle to eat.

Marcello: Such as?

Summers: There were certain fruits that I never learned the same name of, but the Dutch natives who were with us, the Eurasian people of Java, recognized them and put us on to them. There was one fruit that looked like a

cocklebur. It was a little bit bigger and everything, but it would turn pinkish red when it was ripe. You could pull the outside off of it, and it was like a grape on the inside. It had a little bit of a sweet taste, and it was good. I didn't know the name of it. There was another one that was really a citrus fruit. It had a lot of seeds in it, and it wasn't very big, but there was juice in it. If you got it, you could suck the seeds. The same way with wild bananas. They were not much bigger than your finger, when they were ripe, but it's mostly seed. The seed was as big as an English pea on the inside. There was very, very little banana, or flesh, that you normally eat in a banana over here, but you could suck the juice off of them. We also ate banana blossoms. When it was just forming, it made a vegetable. We cut the blossom off it and cooked that.

Marcello: The Japanese had no objections to you doing this sort of thing?

Summers: They objected to you not working, and you had to do it on-the-sly and hide it once you got it. Of course, you almost had to hide it from other prisoners. They would eat it.

Marcello: You brought up something here, and maybe I ought to pursue this. You mentioned that sometimes you had to hide your extra food from fellow prisoners. Was theft

really that much of a problem?

Summers: With food, if you're really hungry, it's hard to pass it up. If you know the guy's got it, and he's had enough to eat and didn't have to eat it, if he's saving it, then it's kind of open season to get a little of it while he's asleep, even though he's a real close friend.

Marcello: What would happen if a prisoner got caught stealing from a fellow prisoner?

Summers: Usually, a fight would start among them. It didn't last long. The people were weak. There were lots of short fights over things like that.

[Tape 3, Side 2]

Marcello: Under these circumstances, I know from what I've been told and what I've read that men would give up. They would lose the will to live. How could you tell when a person had given up?

Summers: Sometimes they would say, "We're never going home." They'd talk about things that we'd all hoped for: "You'll never see your parents again," or "You'll never see your wife again." Sometimes they'd start singing religious songs, or they'd talk about seeing things that were not there. They'd just go out of their heads, more or less. They would be pessimistic about any kind of subject that was brought up. They'd say, "Oh, no, we'll never see it. This is all we'll ever

have. We're all going to die here." Usually, they'd die in a day or two.

Marcello: What was their attitude toward food, that is, what little food you had?

Summers: The men that were sick that way?

Marcello: Yes.

Summers: They'd almost get to where they didn't eat much and didn't fuss about it or anything.

Marcello: What kind of a look did they have in their eyes?

Summers: A very far away look, dull, just looking into the distance, into space.

Marcello: What could you do, if anything, to snap them out of this state of mind?

Summers: Tell them something. Give them a rumor about the war is going to be over. Tell them something that happened that was good. Tell them almost anything to try to get their mind off of their own sickness.

Marcello: I've also heard that some prisoners would try to get these individuals mad. They would insult them-- anything to get a spark going again.

Summers: Yes, I've seen that done a lot. I didn't do it personally, but that tactic was used, especially by a brother who was losing a brother. I know of one couple where his brother provoked him that way and tried to get him to fight back. He told him things about home that would make him cheer up a little bit, or get mad,

or anything, just to get his mind off of his own physical condition.

Marcello: When did you catch up to your brother again?

Summers: Actually, we were together most of the time. For short periods of time, when we were coming up on the railroad, we were separated. I lost him for the last time when we were at Tamarkan.

Marcello: You're with him most of the time in the jungle?

Summers: Yes. I'd stay with him. He would be in a different company, kumi, and his work maybe would end later at night than mine. I wouldn't see him that night, but in the morning for breakfast, about daylight, maybe I would get to say, "Hello, how's it going?"

Marcello: So you really didn't have a whole lot of opportunities to get together and sit down and speak or anything at all?

Summers: Oh, no. The only time you could was if you got in from work in time, after dark. You could go to his bed, or he'd come to yours for a little bit.

Marcello: So I'm assuming, since he was not in your kumi, he was in essence not a part of your support group.

Summers: That is true. That's one thing I hated, that I wasn't able to help him more.

Marcello: How was he faring?

Summers: He had tropical ulcers on his feet, and he had bouts with malaria and other things. No one was in good

physical condition. I think that he was pretty close to average most of the time.

Marcello: You mentioned that he did survive the POW experience, also. We'll talk more about him later. Getting back to this will to live again--I'll not tell you who told me this--several people have indicated that they had a certain disdain for people who gave up. Their reasoning was that that was the easy way out. It was pretty easy to die.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: By their giving up and dying, that put more of a burden and more work on those who were alive.

Summers: That's right. That's the way it worked out, all right. Of course, everyone hated to see any of them die, but it seemed to me as though a lot of those who did die were people who had it easier before they went into the Army. I think the fact that I had gone through the Depression, and had been told "No" so many times, and had been unable to buy this or that because of financial conditions of the family, gave me a little bit of an edge over those who had always had what they wanted in free life, civilian life.

Marcello: One of the things we have to remember--and this is just a little thing--is that in some of those farms and ranches in West Texas, where these guys came from, they did not even have electricity at one point.

Summers: That's true. I can remember when we got electricity. I sure can. My older sisters were doing their studying for school by kerosene lamp. About the time I started school, we got electricity. But that's about the only thing we had. Electricity came as a drop in the center of the room, just a cord hanging down.

Marcello: A bare light bulb.

Summers: We put a bulb on it, and that was it.

Marcello: Describe what the burial details were like here at the 80 and the 100 Kilo Camp.

Summers: A person wasn't very hard to carry. First, you had to dig the grave, and that was pretty hard to do because we tried to dig it pretty deep. This was usually done by sick men. Men unable to go out and work had to bury the people. Normally, they put them on a bamboo stretcher and wrapped them with what we called a "Dutch blanket," which is a very lightweight cotton blanket that we had been issued by the Japanese somewhere along the line. Those that didn't have blankets--there were a lot of them that didn't--would take that blanket and wrap it around the person and tie it up to the bamboo with the ties that were made from bark that comes off some of the trees. Sometimes they would wrap the person in a grass mat that was pretty soft, and they could tie it around the person's body. They would take him out and lower him in the grave, and they would play

"Taps." This one bugler for the Americans, named "Bandy," who came out of the Navy, would play "Taps."

Marcello: He was a Houston survivor?

Summers: Yes. I'm not sure what happened to him, whether he's still alive or not, but I haven't seen him since we returned.

Marcello: I would assume that "Taps" were played quite often at 80 and 100 Kilo Camp.

Summers: Yes, every day. Several times a day sometimes. The same man would also play for the Australians and the Dutch. I think the Australians called it "Last Post." Yes, you could hear that very often. It was very saddening to know who it was.

Marcello: I do know that at one stretch in here, after you got past the 80 Kilo Camp, it became a so-called hospital camp.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: Did you ever have the occasion to go back there?

Summers: I was never sent back, but several of my friends were. Most everyone went back to die.

Marcello: Yes, that was a place to die. That's what I understand. So you have no knowledge of it, fortunately.

Summers: Not first-hand, no, but my close friend from Bridgeport, named Ray Singleton, went back there. I didn't see Ray again until the war was over. He was

sent to Nakan Pathom [Thailand]. An Australian doctor there amputated his leg just below the knee because of tropical ulcers. I know that Jesse Bumpass was there at Nakan Pathom. A fellow by the name of Bert Jones, from Bridgeport, also went there. Bert lost a leg there. There were very few that lost a leg that survived. It was too much of a strain on the body, too much shock. But both of those men did come back, and they both later died at Bridgeport.

Marcello: What kind of records were kept for those who had died? Do you know anything about the record keeping?

Summers: I don't know about the record keeping. There were several who were in that area. I believe Paul Patterson may be one of them that did some record keeping. He was a sergeant. The last I heard from him, he was at Houston, although he came from either Plainview or Lubbock, up in that area.

Marcello: Somebody must have kept records because the roster of the "Lost Battalion" has a section about those who died while POWs, and where they died and what they died from. So somebody must have been keeping records.

Summers: Yes, I think they've been compiled by POWs that came back. Some of them did have records. Certainly they had records of men they knew had died.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the medical people here. Tell me about Hugh Lumpkin.

Summers: Dr. Lumpkin was a very, very good doctor, I thought. He seemed to be affected about as much by our POW life as any of the POWs. I believe he died at 100 Kilo himself--he and Lieutenant [Wade] Hampton, who came from Decatur, and I had known since we first went into the National Guard over there. We had two brothers-in-law with us, George and Howard Hall. Howard was a sergeant, and he was in my kumi. He didn't come back. He died from dysentery.

Marcello: Were you at the 100 Kilo Camp when Dr. Lumpkin died?

Summers: Yes, I was.

Marcello: How did that affect the morale of the prisoners?

Summers: That was really a blow. Everyone felt, "Well, here's a doctor, and he can't survive, and he doesn't have to go on the railroad to work." He looked fairly healthy and everything. I believe that he died from dysentery. I'm not sure of that. He and Hampton died about the same time.

Marcello: Did you ever have any contact with a Dutch doctor by the name of Hans Hekking?

Summers: No, I did not. He was with the other group of Americans, Captain Fitzsimmons's group.

Marcello: How important religion or religious faith under circumstances like this?

Summers: I thought it was a very good help for me. It gave me a lot of confidence. I think that some people felt that

it let them down. I knew a Sergeant Bowan, who was very religious. He conducted religious services in Bicycle Camp on Java. When we had a day off occasionally...the Japanese would give us a day off when we first got there. They said they would give us a day off, one each month, but after we got to "Speedo," there was no more of those rest days. This Sergeant Bowan would preach, read from the Bible, and pray for all of us. But he had tropical ulcers. As he lay in bed, when he gave up, he was cursing God. He felt that God had let him down, because he was dying, and he did die within a few days after that. But I think for me, and for most, their faith carried them through.

Marcello: What do you pray for?

Summers: Health, to be spared, to be with your family back home.

Marcello: I heard that in most cases, it was just a matter of, "Lord, get me through one more day."

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: I assume that you are living from day to day at this point.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: Were the graves marked in any way?

Summers: Yes, they had a wooden marker that we put up. I believe it was mainly a number so that you could find them. I saw them, but I can't recall exactly what they

looked like.

Marcello: I should have asked you this earlier, and I didn't, so I'll ask now. During this "Speedo" period, when the beatings increase and so on, were you personally subjected to any beatings, and, if so, describe what happened.

Summers: I was not subjected to a severe beating. I was kicked, and I was slapped, and I was hit with the fist a few times, but I was never beaten to the ground or beaten unconscious or anything like that. Some of them were.

Marcello: I understand that if you were beaten to the ground, then you were really in trouble.

Summers: You were kicked, and almost always you were hit with the butt of the rifle in the face. They loved to kick you in the stomach or face.

Marcello: I understand private parts also were targets of kicking.

Summers: Yes, they would do that when you were standing up. That was a favorite place to kick you.

Marcello: Even during this period, when you were all so ill and run down, do they still continue to have constant roll calls?

Summers: Oh, yes.

Marcello: How often was tenko?

Summers: If you were in camp, it was at night as well as the morning. But in the morning, that's when they had it.

You would come in before you go out to work. That would be about daylight or just a little before.

Marcello: And you had to count off in Japanese, is that correct?

Summers: Oh, yes. Most of the orders or commands were in Japanese. We learned to do that. That wasn't any problem.

Marcello: What would happen if you'd screw up the count?

Summers: I don't know. I can't remember doing that (chuckle).

Marcello: Which indicates to me that you didn't want to mess up on the count.

Summers: You might be slapped.

Marcello: So the old rule is still in place, that is, stay away from the Japanese as much as possible.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: Don't stand out. Stay in the background and so on.

Summers: That's what I always did.

Marcello: Yesterday, off the tape, you were telling me that sometime in around here, you and your brother did get together and decided that you needed to be separated.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Tell me about that.

Summers: That happened after we had completed most of the railroad, and we were at Tamarkan, where the bridge is, the "Bridge over the River Kwai" [actually the Kwae Noi River]. They had a detail going out, supposedly going to Japan. I don't know what kind of work they were

going to do up there, but they needed so many men. They wanted so many of each nationality--American, Australian, Dutch, and so forth. We talked about it and decided that there was a better chance of one of us getting through if we separated, because whatever happened in a camp might determine whether you lived or not. So he decided that he would go with the group, and I would stay behind. How we decided that, I don't know--whether he went or I went. We didn't know which would be the best. Just looking into a situation like that, you didn't know what was going to happen. Of course, the ship that they were to get on was sunk, and they were sent instead into French Indochina. They went up to Hanoi, as well as being in Saigon. He was in Saigon first, then Hanoi, and probably in different places down the line there--working.

Marcello: So he never did make it to Japan?

Summers: No, he was liberated at Saigon.

Marcello: Let's assume that the construction of the railroad is completed. Where were you when you were pulled off the railroad?

Summers: When I was there at Tamarkan, after he left, I was sent back to the jungle, back down the railroad line, to cut wood and place it by the rail for the engine to stop and pick up fuel.

Marcello: Let's go back again. When was it that you got off the

actual construction of the railroad?

Summers: It was December 27, 1943. They loaded us in boxcars and open flatcars. This was a train that was used to haul or coal or gravel. They took us out to Tamarkan and from there to Kanchanaburi, which is a short distance from Tamarkan.

Marcello: How did you feel about getting off that railroad at that point?

Summers: I was sorry that it was finished, but I was sure glad to get off of it. I hated to think that we were building something that would help them in their war effort.

Marcello: At the same time, is it safe to say that they had probably gotten about as much out of the prisoners physically as they possibly could have, and it was good that it was completed around that time?

Summers: That's right. Very few of them that came back were in good enough health to work at all. They had gotten all they could out of us.

Marcello: Were you present at the ceremony that the Japanese held to commemorate the completion of the railroad?

Summers: No, I was not, but I've seen pictures of it since then.

Marcello: You mentioned something a moment ago that I want to pick up on. In the motion picture, Bridge on the River Kwai, the British officer [portrayed by Sir Alec Guinness] in the movie seemed to want to instill a sense

of pride in his troops by having them build that particular bridge. Did you have any pride whatsoever in having built that railroad?

Summers: No, none whatsoever. I felt that movie was far from the truth. I don't believe anyone had that feeling.

Marcello: You mentioned earlier in the interview that you had been involved in the construction of a large bridge.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Where was that, and what took place there?

Summers: We built a bridge in Burma. At what kilo camp, I couldn't tell you, because we built quite a few bridges. But the timbers that we brought, we had some elephants to help us pull the timbers out of the woods. Actually, the timbers were so big that one elephant couldn't pull it. At times, they would put some short bamboo poles under it and put prisoners on each side, and the men would be able to pull more than the elephant would. They would take it to the bridge to go across the river or whatever.

Marcello: This was during the "Speedo" period?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: So that must have made it especially difficult.

Summers: Well, it was hard, very hard, but so much of it was hard that I couldn't say which one was the worst.

Marcello: How long was this bridge? Give me an estimate.

Summers: I would say that bridge was probably close to a hundred

yards long. It was quite deep over the stream. We went up two levels. It was not as big as some of the bridges that we crossed when we came out, some that had been built on the other end.

There was a bridge called Wang Po [at 114 Kilo Camp, 114 kilometers southeast from Thanbyuzayat], and that was where I was sent back to cut wood. That bridge was hit by the bombers while we were there. We had to repair it, but our work primarily, the work we were sent to do, was to cut wood for the trains.

Marcello: You mentioned that you ride out over the railroad that you'd just build. How did you feel about that?

Summers: I was worried about those high bridges going over the rivers. I was not sure they were going to hold. I know that the ones we built didn't seem to be very strong. The timbers were strong, but the way they were attached together didn't seem so. They were just stapled together, you might say--these metal claws that we drove into the beams. So I was worried about that. Of course, the rail itself supports it a lot. The steel rail is held firmly on each end, but there was lots of wiggling in the bridge.

Marcello: I was going to ask you about that.

Summers: It was shaky as you'd go over it.

Marcello: Were there ever any attempts to sabotage any of the work on the railroad?

Summers: I'd say no, not that I know of, at the time we were building it. We did as little as we could. We knew that we'd be beaten if we didn't stay busy working on it. If they did not think you were working hard enough, you'd be beaten. But to fix it so that it would fall down, I didn't see anyone do anything like that.

Marcello: There's another question that I should have asked you relative to the "Speedo" period. Again, you mentioned that they needed manpower to get that bridge completed. I assume that guards would even go through the hospital hut at the 80 or 100 Kilo Camps and pull people out, despite what the doctors thought.

Summers: Oh, yes. Actually, they'd have tenko for all the sick people. They'd have them standing up, and they were in very bad shape. With bleeding ulcers just that straining to stand up would cause them to start bleeding. Those that were not able to stand up at all, sometimes they thought that they were faking it and would even slap them. They would go over and examine them. The only thing that kept them away from the sick a little bit was that they were afraid they would get the disease themselves. So they kept a little distance between them.

Marcello: In other words, you have an ignorant peasant guard determining who worked and who didn't.

Summers: Right. Sometimes they would say that they had to have two more men. If the doctor wouldn't decide which ones would go, he would. They got their men.

Marcello: I've heard it said that another one of their favorite tricks would be kick people on the tropical ulcers.

Summers: Yes, that's true. Of course, that's the worst that could happen. Getting getting it dirty and bruised and starting it to bleeding would cause it to take longer to heal.

Marcello: What would these very sick people do if they were unfortunate enough to be forced to work on the railroad?

Summers: Sometimes I've seen them when they would faint, because they were not able to even walk to where they work was performed. They'd usually let them go back into the hut after that. But mainly, the men did not faint from sickness as a way of getting out of work. They did it because they were actually physically unable to do the work.

Marcello: Did you say that a lot of times those who couldn't stand would simply sit and make ballast?

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: How far might the work be from the kilo camp? Obviously, that would depend upon on how the railroad progressed.

Summers: Sure. And we did all the work, whether it was to build

the rail bed or put down the ballast or put down the ties or whatever, so it was a progressive thing. We would have a camp every ten to twenty kilometers along the road. Sometimes it was a little closer than that.

Marcello: So, given your condition, it might even take you a substantial amount of time to get there in the morning and to come back in the evening.

Summers: It meant that they'd take you out earlier, and you'd walk in the dark. There were many times that you had the opportunity to escape when you were on the railroad, but you weren't in physical condition enough to go very far. Even though there was a bounty on your head that the natives got, there were very few natives living in that area. It was just jungle, and it was very, very seldom that you ever saw a native.

Marcello: Yesterday, you were talking about some things that I wanted to follow up on. You were talking about supplementing your food, and you mentioned trapping the jungle chickens, and then you mentioned also killing the cobra. Did this occur when you working on the railroad, or was it later on?

Summers: This was when I was on the wood party. We only had one guard for five men. We would cut the wood, and then we would have to carry it to the ox cart. Then we would take it in the ox cart into the camp and cut it into small pieces. One guard couldn't stay with all of us.

Some of us would be cutting, and others would be hauling. We would slip off and do things.

Marcello: Describe the killing of the cobra.

Summers: This cobra was in the middle of the track, just outside the 100 Kilo Camp. A fellow by the name of Thurman Capps and I were sent out to cut some trees for the following day's wood for the kitchens. The kind of wood that we liked to cut was what we called rosewood. It was a straight-grained, easy-to-split wood, and it burned like dry wood even though it was green. So we cut those trees for a considerable distance from camp. We'd rather carry them further, because it was so much easier to cut it. The cooks liked it. It burned well.

So we went out to cut those trees for the following day, and we ran across this cobra. It was a fighting machine, I'll tell you. It raised its head over two feet in the air and charged like that [gesture]. We had the ballast from between the tracks to pick up and throw. Eventually, we killed it, and we slipped it into camp. We cut it up into small pieces and sold it to the guys.

Summers: We also took some wood into camp, so we stacked him in the wood.

Marcello: Where did you skin it?

Summers: Actually, we cut him up before we skinned him. Everyone skinned the piece that they got. We just got

a section like that [gesture].

Marcello: About an eight-inch section maybe?

Summers: Right, something like that.

Marcello: So, in other words, you did the initial separating out on the job with your axes?

Summers: Right.

Marcello: Did you have any qualms about eating cobra?

Summers: Not at all! It tasted good. The only thing to worry about was not letting him bite us and then saving it for food. Anything that was good for food, we ate it.

Marcello: How did you prepare the cobra?

Summers: We didn't have any fat or anything like that to fry him. We didn't have any salt. About the only thing you could do was roast it over the fire. We had fires in camp most of the time.

Marcello: You also mentioned catching the wild chickens. Was that done here while you were on the wood detail, also?

Summers: Yes, on the wood detail. We did that altogether on-the-sly, while the guard wasn't there. He never saw our trap or anything like that. We had to build the trap by stacking bamboo. We'd start up about that big [gesture].

Marcello: About two-and-a-half-feet.

Summers: And then we'd kind of go to a pyramid up here [gesture]. We'd put a top in it, and then you'd put the figure-four trigger over here [gesture]. We'd

raise it up. It has a trip right in the center of it. If we could get any of the spare rice, really the dirty rice, anything that was so bad that they couldn't use it, we'd sprinkle that under it. We caught several chickens. They're not very big. I would say a grown chicken probably weighed two or two and half pounds, something like that. They looked like a game chicken, the way their feathers were colored. They were very good to eat--very good.

Marcello: When you were on this wood detail at 100 Kilo Camp, was this because of your tropical ulcer?

Summers: That's the way I got on it originally.

Marcello: That's what I meant.

Summers: I got well there because I got a little more food.

Marcello: But you started out with the tropical ulcers at the 40 Kilo.

Summers: No, I had dysentery down there.

Marcello: That's right. You mentioned that.

Summers: I had the tropical ulcers at 100 Kilo.

Marcello: That got you off the railroad for a while and on to the wood cutting detail. You also mentioned that you had a chance to trade with the locals on this woodcutting detail.

Summers: There were very few of them, but if they came by, we did see them.

Marcello: What did you have to trade?

Summers: The only thing you could trade was your clothing, of which you didn't have much. I had a high school ring that I traded off one time. That was the biggest thing I ever traded. I traded that earlier, in Singapore, and I got a hundred dollars in Singapore money for that ring that I had got in 1939. It was mostly gold, which was the only reason they would want it.

Marcello: What was it that the natives wanted most, that the prisoners had?

Summers: What did they want? Clothing.

Marcello: Cloth of any kind.

Summers: Yes, they sure did.

Marcello: What would they in turn trade to you?

Summers: Sometimes you could get quinine. That was the best thing. If you could get anything to eat, it was usually this goola, sugar. That was the main thing.

Marcello: Also, I understand, duck eggs were a prized trading commodity.

Summers: Yes, they were. I suppose I ate two or three in my three and a half years. That was really something--to get an egg.

Marcello: You mentioned that you leave the jungle in December of 1943. You ride on the railroad. You go to Tamarkan, which is in Thailand. How long did you remain at Tamarkan before you moved on to Kanchanaburi [also in Thailand]?

Summers: Actually, we were at Kanchanaburi first, and then Tamarkan. At Kanchanaburi we were in some huts that had been made for the natives for a long time, when they were working on the railroad. It was a primitive camp, except that we were near civilization, so to speak. If you had any money, and you got the chance, you could trade maybe for a duck egg or sugar. There we were in a mango grove with lots of mango trees. When we first were in there, the mangoes were green, but we learned that we could peel those and cut them up and put them in the rice. It would be kind of like a salad. It tasted a little bit like a cucumber. It reminded me of an avocado, but it was very good. It helped us a little bit. Later, they got ripe. Of course, the Japanese were trying to keep us from eating them, so we had to do it on-the-sly always. I can remember climbing a tree at night, getting up there, and getting caught in the ants. There was an ant that is about the size of our red ant, and it is red, but a little pale red. They don't sting, but they sure can bite. They can bite and bring the blood whenever they want to. They will eat a bird, or they will rob the nest and get into the eggs. How they got in the eggs, I don't know, but I've seen them in them. They live in the tree and make a nest up there, like a beetle. Anyway, it would be a nest that would be maybe eighteen

inches or two feet across, built of leaves and put together with kind of a web. Those ants really bite, and when I got up there that night, I got in those. They almost ate me up before I got out, but I got a few mangoes anyway. I had to feel for the mangoes. It was too dark to see them. In the light of the moon, the Japanese could see you, so you couldn't go then. But we ate lots of mangoes, and that helped us a lot. We started improving our health. From there, we went back to Tamarkan.

Marcello: Was this mango grove located inside or outside the prison camp?

Summers: Actually, it was inside the camp. The houses, or huts, were in among the trees. That was in a Thai village there. I guess Kanchanaburi was the name of the village.

Marcello: So you did not remain at Kanchanaburi too long?

Summers: No, a month or six weeks.

Marcello: Did you do any work while you were there?

Summers: No, that was supposedly a rest camp. We would walk to the river to bathe, and I can remember going through Kanchanaburi and passing another camp like that. It was a native camp. I think they were Indian people that were there, Indian natives. I don't know what tribe. As we went by one time, I saw four of the Indians coming out with a bamboo stretcher on their

shoulders. They had bodies on top. I would say at least five bodies at one time, they were carrying. The bodies had not been laid out straight. They were just all shapes up there, and they smelled terribly, as though they had been dead awhile. They were taking them supposedly to bury them or dispose of them.

Marcello: I know at one point there was a cholera scare around the 105 Kilo Camp [105 kilometers southeast from Thanbyuzayat]. Do you remember anything about that?

Summers: It was not in our camp. I heard about it. Yes, quite a few died from that, I understand. Also, at the 100 Kilo Camp, when I was out looking for wood, within a short distance of camp, there was a cemetery of sorts, where I think there were natives that were buried, because they brought them out on stretchers and laid them down and threw a few shovels of dirt over them. I would say that maybe the bodies were not even completely covered, because the body was still on the surface of the ground around it. The wild animals would eat them. Within a very short distance, I saw twenty or twenty-five of those. If they had died with any disease that was contagious, it would have been very dangerous for us.

Marcello: I also understand that when the American dead were buried, they were usually buried without any clothing, because it could be used by somebody else.

Summers: They didn't have clothing when we put them down.

Marcello: Also, I understand that the natives would sometimes rob the graves.

Summers: Well, they could have. The cemeteries that I can remember were close to the camp, but just outside of the prison.

Marcello: Let me change gears here. Despite all this hardship, certain routines of camp life have to go on. For instance, what did you do relative to haircuts and shaving?

Summers: One or two people had saved some kind of a knife. I think that it was just a knife that they sharpened. It had no steel in it. They did some shaving. I didn't have a shave anytime. Of course, my beard wasn't very strong at that time. I was younger. But haircuts, that was an ordeal. It was a long time between haircuts. Tom C. Wootan, one of our boys, became somewhat of a barber. The only time that he could cut hair was the rest days that they gave us, which was very few and far between. But we kept the hair fairly short. It protected your head, for one thing, against the sunlight. I was lucky enough that I had my hat, that I started out with, through most of my POW life. That was a "Jungle Jim, Bring 'em Back Alive" hat.

When I was at Tamarkan, the Japanese had a firing battery on top of a little hill near the river to

protect the bridge. One of the details there for work was to walk to the top of the hill with a wooden bucket full of water so that the Japanese guards and men that worked on the anti-aircraft guns could have water for bathing and cooking while they were there. So that was one of the details, to walk up that hill with one of those wooden buckets full of water.

I was working there, and when we came down the hill, I was in charge of the group because I was a sergeant. We had to have a little tenko there at the guard shack at the foot of the hill. One of the men had been late coming down. I don't remember the cause for him being a little bit late, but he just came down the trail, and they had to wait a few minutes until he got into position.

The guard kind of beat me a little bit. He hit me with his fist. He was standing in front of me. He was pretty small, and I kind of rolled back with the blow. But he hit the brim of the hat with his fist, too, and it went down into the river. I partially fell and partially went on down to get the hat, but it was about a twenty-foot incline down to where the water was. He thought he had knocked me all that way, and so that was good, because he didn't hit me any more when I got up.

Marcello: You mentioned that this was a "Jungle Jim"-type of helmet. Was it the pith-type helmet or the old

campaign hat?

Summers: This was kind of cardboard-like. It had a canvas or cloth cover, but it was pretty tough, because I kept it for a long time.

[Tape 4, Side 1]

Marcello: Let's go over some more details of routine camp life. Most young men, during that period, smoked. First of all, where could you get tobacco?

Summers: That's one thing that you could sometimes trade for with the natives. The tobacco that they got there was a very poor quality, as I understand it, and of varying degrees of strength. Sometimes it was real strong. Sometimes you couldn't tell it was tobacco. But they didn't have anything to roll the cigarettes in. If they had a book, sometimes even a Bible, they'd tear pages out of it to use as a paper to roll their cigarettes in. Those that really had the habit bad, they sometimes got tobacco instead of food, instead of sugar, which they really needed. If you got any kind of chance to get tobacco on a work detail, or from the natives, you got it because it was worth a lot to trade with the other men in camp to get a little something to eat out of it. So it was something everyone fought for. It was as good as money for trading, even with the natives. The natives liked tobacco, but we didn't have anything like that to trade to them.

Marcello: How about bathing? What did you do about bathing during this period?

Summers: I'll tell you about one experience. They had a place that they would take us to bathe at the river. We would just wade into the water and bathe and come out and come back. While we were there--we hadn't seen any natives in a long time--a native woman came up in a canoe-like boat and tied up to the bank right close to us. None of the men had clothing on, so it was kind of embarrassing to me, but she didn't even seem to notice. She had some dead fish in the boat, and she would put her hand in that and get it all over her hands, and then put it in the water. She would shuffle it like that [gesture], and then she had a little pole about two feet long at the most. That had a line on it, a fishing line, that was not more than two feet long. At the end of that, there was a hook, but she didn't have a sinker or a cork. She would put a little bit of that fish on that line and put it there in the water, just on the other side of the boat, between us. She would pull those fish in there. They were fish that were that long or longer [gesture].

Marcello: About a foot long?

Summers: Yes. It was like a white perch or a big crappie. She would pull them right into the boat. She did that for thirty minutes while we were bathing. She had a lot of

fish. Everyone wanted to eat some of those fish. She turned the boat loose, and away she went. We never saw her again. That was quite an experience. She knew how to fish.

Marcello: What did you do about taking care of your teeth?

Summers: I didn't have a toothbrush. I had one for a while, but it finally wore out, and I didn't have any bristles in it. If you take a green twig, especially if you pull one and cut it close to where it went into the ground, you can just chew on it and make it a little soft and rub your teeth with it. That's what I used.

Marcello: I assume, however, that not too much food stuck between your teeth because you didn't get that much [chuckle].

Summers: That's right, but I'm sure that we all needed a toothbrush. I'm sure of that.

Another time that we went down to that river, there was a bunch of monkeys there. If there was one monkey, there was five hundred or more, at one time, that came down to the water. The monkeys were squealing, making all kinds of noise, and they were on every tree, every stump, and every rock, just the whole side of the river, just beyond us. Those monkeys were there for water, and then they left just about as fast as they came.

Marcello: Did all this take place after you were off the railroad and were either at Tamarkan or Kanchanaburi?

Summers: This is when I went back to the railroad to cut wood, and that was at Wung Yai. Another thing that happened there...we went into a native camp where the natives had lived. The bamboo was pretty rotten, and it didn't turn the water too well on the roof. So we were cutting bamboo to repair the huts and build some more.

While we were there, a native boy and girl came up to us. We hadn't seen any natives at all in the jungle, up until that time. The girl, I would say, was probably fourteen or fifteen, something like that. The boy was ten or twelve, and the boy had a beetle tied with a mandolin line--but I think it was the hair from a horse's tail--tied around the waist of the beetle. The beetle would fly around, and he would hold it like it was pet. The girl had in her hands a lot of tarantulas, similar to the ones we have around here, big, black, woolly things. She was holding against her body a double handful of these tarantulas.

I was talking to the guard because I was the sergeant in charge of that detail. We talked to the kids and asked them what they were doing. We were sitting on a big rock. He showed us. He'd take this beetle and hold it down close to the rock. The beetle would go under the rock, into a little hole, and sting the tarantula. He would pull it out, and he'd come out with the tarantula. Then he'd take the tarantula away

from the beetle, and the girl would carry it. He had been addled. You could still see some movement in the tarantula, but it wasn't trying to bite or anything. We asked them what they were going to do with those. They were going to take them home to eat. That would be an unusual meal. She offered me one.

Marcello: You weren't that desperate for food?

Summers: It sure didn't look very appetizing to me.

Marcello: You mentioned that you're at Kanchanaburi for about a month, and then you moved to Tamarkan, which was close by.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: When did you go back into the jungle to cut wood for the railroad?

Summers: It was soon after we went back there that my brother left again on the trip where he ended up at Saigon. Soon after that, I was sent back to the jungle to cut wood and went to the place called Wung Yai. That's where they were bombing a lot. The American planes would come over, and they were going toward Bangkok always. Sometimes we could hear, when we were still at Tamarkan, the bombs dropping in the distance. It was just a rumble, but they would be flying for maybe hours. We'd see three come over, and a few miles behind that, there would be three more. It was just a constant flow of planes over. When we were at Wung

Yai, they bombed out the railroad, the bridge where we were. The plane was flying, I would say, several hundred feet high--very, very low. The Japanese were very frightened. This was in about May of 1944.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about this and get these things in some kind of a sequence. You were at Kanchanaburi for about a month or six weeks.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: Then you moved up to Tamarkan.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what kind of a camp Tamarkan was.

Summers: Tamarkan was another place where there was not really a lot of work for us to do. I think that the camp was there partially to protect the railroad bridge, hoping that the Americans would see the prisoners there and not bomb it.

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

Summers: Yes, it was. There were lots of people in that camp. I was working in the kitchen part of the time, which helped me health-wise. That's the place where I was working when I went on the party to carry water to the anti-aircraft group on top of the mountain next to us.

Marcello: Also, to put this within some sort of a context, there were actually two bridges at Tamarkan, isn't that correct?

Summers: Yes, right.

Marcello: There was a steel and concrete one, and then there was also the typical wooden bridge.

Summers: The wooden bridge was gone, I mean, not usable, when we were there. You could see part of it, but nothing used it. The metal bridge, I believe, was brought there from Java, taken off of one of the railroads there. It was bombed out while I was there.

Marcello: Describe the raids against those bridges.

Summers: I was only there for one raid, but there was a section of it blown out at that time. I happened to be in a camp that was as close to the railroad as you could get there, in the number one hut, against the fence alongside the railroad. One of the bombs hit in the edge of our camp, near me, but I was in a slit trench. It shook me up and scared me, but that's about it. I think that one man was killed in camp by another bomb that hit. Mainly, they got the railroad.

At one of our [Lost Battalion] reunions, we had one of the pilots who actually flew the plane that did it. He came and visited with us in 1984 at San Antonio. I don't recall his name, but I spent an hour or so visiting with him, reminiscing about that. He was telling what they did and what they knew about us.

Marcello: What did seeing these American planes do for your morale?

Summers: That really raised the morale, even though they were

bombing close by and there was some danger. We knew that something was being done, that maybe we would get out eventually.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the Japanese toward the prisoners when one of these raids occurred?

Summers: They were very frightened, as we were, and they were screaming and hollering at us. It was very easy to get your face slapped if you didn't watch out and stay away from them.

Marcello: You couldn't show too much joy, I gather.

Summers: No, you just had to be real quiet. You knew what was going on, and, of course, they did, too.

Marcello: You mentioned a moment ago that you went into a slit trench, so they must have allowed you to at least build some shelters.

Summers: That's right.

Marcello: Also earlier, you mentioned the antiaircraft emplacement, and I'm sure it was there to protect the bridge.

Summers: Yes. I was very close to the bridge. Obviously, each time we had an air raid, they would fire.

Marcello: Let me ask this. By the time you get out of the jungle, go to Kanchanaburi and then to Tamarkan, are they kind of easing up a little bit in terms of the bashings and so on?

Summers: When we got out of the "Speedo" period, we didn't have

as much bashing, and they left us alone because they didn't have as much work for us at that time. Of course, they didn't have any food for us, and it was hard to get very strong. But we did get the rest, as well as a little bit better food. It helped a lot.

Marcello: Were your quarters at Kanchanaburi and Tamarkan similar to those that you had in the jungle?

Summers: Yes, very much the same. There at Tamarkan, we did not have enough work, as I say, to keep everyone busy, so we played baseball. I think we used a tennis ball for the baseball. I don't know where the equipment came from, but we didn't have any gloves. We even played against the Japanese on two or three occasions. As I recall, we beat them everytime. Of course, they didn't have a lot of men to choose from, but they did have some pretty good ballplayers.

Marcello: Do you remember a canteen at either Kanchanaburi or Tamarkan, where you could buy things?

Summers: I don't really remember any of them because I never had any money to spend, but I believe that there was one somewhere along the line. Maybe once in a month, you might be able to buy a duck egg, if you had the money. Somewhere along the line--I think this was at Singapore--they had a place where you could buy things, and I bought a bar of soap. That's the only soap I had during the whole time.

Marcello: You mentioned that you're selected for this woodcutting detail, and you go back into the jungle to cut wood for the railroad. How did that selection come about?

Summers: They needed so many men, and there were very few Americans in that group. Only three of us were chosen to go. You didn't know what you were getting into. You didn't know whether it was going to be better or worse than where you were. They wanted three Americans, so I was one to go.

Marcello: How many of you were there altogether?

Summers: As I remember, about 175.

Marcello: How many guards accompanied you back into the jungle? You would probably have to guess at this.

Summers: I would say a dozen guards, and there was an officer that was in charge of the whole thing. A Japanese officer was there and one non-com [non-commissioned officer]. I believe he was probably a sergeant.

Marcello: By the way--and, here again, this is something I should have asked earlier--who was in charge of these various kilo camps along the railroad?

Summers: I really don't know.

Marcello: Was it a sergeant?

Summers: Most of the time, it was an officer. The officers were not taken from us until almost all of the work was done. At 100 Kilo, we still had American officers.

Marcello: I'm sorry. I'm referring to the Japanese command

structure. Who was in charge of the camps?

Summers: Usually, one Japanese officer, and we very seldom saw him. I would say that maybe once every two or three months he would have some kind of talk or something, on a special day. I can remember on a holiday by the Americans, like, Christmas or Fourth of July, they would have a speech, and he would come out. It was always in Japanese, and they would have an interpreter to tell us what he said.

Marcello: Describe the woodcutting detail on the railroad.

Summers: We cut the wood. They would tell you how many ricks of wood and how long to cut it. We had to stack it right so that they could put it in the train in a hurry. That was where the railroad was bombed out again, and we worked on that for a short while. Also, when that was bombed out, they were afraid that trains would end up at the bottom of it. There was a train from the Burma side of the railroad.

They asked for two men to go with the guards to the next camp to give word to stop the trains so they wouldn't end up in the river. I decided to go on that trip. It was at night, and one person walked in front and one behind. The guards were between us, two guards, both of them with their rifles. I think I walked in front, and another man, an Australian, walked behind. We found out by talking to them a little bit,

as we went along, that what they were afraid of was the tigers. So we were tiger bait. Of course, we did nothing except walk up there and walk back, but it was about ten kilometers to the next place where they could flag the train down.

Marcello: Did you witness the actual bombing attack itself?

Summers: I was there in camp when the bombers came over. The Japanese were very frightened. They ran to the jungle, and we did, too. I could see the planes. The planes were flying two or three hundred feet in the air, so they were point blank. They did a little machine-gunning around. No one was killed, but they did get the bridge. It was our job to replace it, as soon as we could, so that the train could go.

Marcello: How did you feel about the Americans destroying this railroad into which you had put so much effort to build it?

Summers: That was great. That was a morale builder, to see that coming and to see the planes that close to us. We felt like they could see and knew we were there. Possibly, that's the reason why they didn't machine-gun us in the edge of the jungle. We heard the guns and didn't see where the bullets hit. They did their work and left.

Marcello: How difficult or easy was this woodcutting detail?

Summers: It wasn't particularly hard. We had a quota of how

much wood to put up, and we did it. We didn't have too much trouble with that. It wasn't too bad. We just needed food and medicine.

Marcello: How were you? What was your physical condition at that point?

Summers: Somewhat improved over the railroad period. I didn't have any tropical ulcers. I still was having malaria, and that was the main thing that was bothering me.

Marcello: How long did you work on that detail?

Summers: About two months. The reason we stopped that was because, we understood, there was a commando raid on the other end of the railroad, and the Japanese thought they were going to be invaded. So they rushed us out with two or three hours notice. We grabbed everything and got on a train coming through. Out we went.

Marcello: Did you go back to Tamarkan again?

Summers: Yes, that was our next stop.

Marcello: What happens at that point?

Summers: They took us to another camp, which was Phet Buri [Thailand]. We went on the train most of the way. We got over there and came to a railroad bridge that had been bombed out, and we got off and went by foot for a distance. We ended up there at a place where we built a runway.

Marcello: This was at Phet Buri, where you were on the airfield construction?

Summers: Right.

Marcello: What is the date here? What is the chronology?

Summers: I have that on January 1, 1945.

Marcello: At this stage, I want to ask another question, and this is something I think would be helpful to either the reader of the transcript or the listener to the tape. I'm asking you these dates, and you're giving them to me. I think we ought to have on tape how you were able to compile these dates. I forgot to mention that.

Summers: Somewhere along the line, I had gotten a cigarette package, not the cigarettes themselves. The small package of cigarettes, I believe, had five cigarettes, so it was a very small piece of cardboard that was approximately two-and-a-half inches wide and maybe three inches long, something like that. I had gotten some pencil lead from a pencil. The wooden part was gone, and I had the lead, enough that I could write a little bit with. I didn't try to write very much, because we would get in trouble for diaries and things like that. They were too hard to conceal.

Marcello: You were not allowed to have diaries or writing material, is that correct?

Summers: That's right. Anyway, I kept this little piece of cardboard, and I would put down dates and letters. I wouldn't spell out what I meant, but just letters that could remind me of what happened.

Marcello: So this was your own personal code, in other words.

Summers: Right. I was able to carry that all the way through. I was never examined on that, although they saw it. They thought there was nothing to it, that they could make out. I did it rather haphazardly, especially so it wouldn't attract attention. It was just like a scrap of paper that you happened to have there. Anyway, I brought that all the way through.

Marcello: You must have been writing fairly small.

Summers: Yes, I did, but I didn't write a lot of figures. Right here is a list of them.

Marcello: So you mainly wrote dates, and maybe a word to describe where you were at that particular time.

Summers: Yes. Say, for example, here: I have "4-13-45 Bangkok." That's all it says. I knew that I came from the one before that, "1-5-45 Phet Buri," by train and foot. We had to go by foot part of the way. Very, very abbreviated writing.

Marcello: Why did you keep this or record this information, knowing full well that if you got caught, you would have to pay a certain price?

Summers: I really don't know. It's just a record to myself of what happened so that I could recall it. I always thought we would get out.

Marcello: Did you ever have any close calls in terms of somebody discovering it?

Summers: No. They never questioned it too much. They went through everything I had, which wasn't very much in the way of personal items. They took a lot of things from me at different times. I had a coin collection that I picked up over there, a few dozen coins. Anything like that, they questioned, but they would allow you to have a little bit of money, because they paid you. I think that I had a comb, and I did have a toothbrush at times. One time I had one. Things like that, they would let you have.

Marcello: Did they periodically pull shakedowns?

Summers: Oh, yes, they sure did--many times. Sometimes, while you were out at work, they would go through your things, too. I remember this piece of cardboard that I was telling you about, I kept that with my blanket. The blanket had a little square block that said "100 percent wool" and all that, a description of the blanket, a little piece that was sewed to it. I ripped out one side of it, and I kept that cardboard in there. They never found that. They shook the blanket out many times, but they didn't look under that.

Marcello: I understand--and this may be POW folklore--that the Japanese kind of had a one-track mind. They may come through the barracks one day, looking for a particular item, and they would ignore other things that they might be looking for on some other day. Is that true,

or is that part of the POW folklore?

Summers: I know this, that they did overlook a lot of things. Usually, when they found something, they'd find the same thing somewhere else for one of the other prisoners.

The other thing is that I think they went through our things just to tear things up. They would kick them out and spread them out all over. If they didn't see what they wanted, they would just kick at things. I wouldn't say, for sure, that they went for one thing at a time, but I'm sure that when they found something, then they would look for the same thing for other prisoners.

Marcello: A couple of other things come to mind that I should have asked you about by this point. By the time that you get to Phet Buri, had you received any mail, or had you been able to send any postcards?

Summers: I had sent postcards on several occasions, one of which got through. That card was written before I was a prisoner. When my parents got it, the card had been sent about eighteen months earlier, so they didn't know for sure whether I was still alive or not. That was in 1945, so that was pretty far along in the war. My parents are the ones who established that I was a prisoner to the War Department. As late as 1944, they had no word from me, but a friend from my hometown

named, Merrell Gibbens, wrote a card at one of these times when they allowed you to send them. It was a card that had certain questions that you could answer.

Marcello: It was a preprinted card, in other words.

Summers: One question was, "I am with..." and had a blank, and this boy put my name on there. His parents got in touch with my parents and told them about this card. Up until that time, the War Department didn't know that I was a prisoner. My parents went to them with that information. They wrote to them and told them what they had. I have a copy now, where they accepted that as being proof that I was alive. At that time, they began listing me as a prisoner.

Marcello: Did you ever receive any mail from home?

Summers: None whatsoever.

Marcello: How about Red Cross parcels? Did you receive any Red Cross parcels?

Summers: There were Red Cross parcels received one time, and that was when we were in Bicycle Camp in Batavia. There was one parcel for each six men, so we divided them up for six people. That was very welcome. We didn't have anything in it but food. I remember sugar and butter. I remember one of the prisoners, T. B. Lumsden, and I got into a little bit of an argument over how we would use our butter. I wanted to use it, in fact, we did use it like I wanted to. He finally

decided that was all right, but we mixed it with rice flour and kind of made a pie dough. I believe there was a little tin, a little can, about a couple of inches in diameter, a very short can, inch-and-a-half or two inches tall. We had a can opener in there, the kind that you twist. We got it open, and we made fried pies, using the butter for shortening and some rice flour that we had gotten.

Marcello: What else was in that Red Cross package?

Summers: That's the only thing that I can remember.

Marcello: Powdered milk?

Summers: Probably so, but I can't remember.

Marcello: Cheese?

Summers: I believe that there was a little cheese wrapped with cellophane, a small piece, a small quantity, but we made it last us a week or two.

Marcello: Spam?

Summers: Not that I know of. I can't remember any meat in there, but there probably was.

Marcello: How about chocolate? Was there any chocolate in it?

Summers: There was a little bit of chocolate, just like the cheese, wrapped in cellophane.

Marcello: Did you consume the contents right away, or did you spread it out?

Summers: Oh, we rationed ourselves. We sure did. I don't know whether there were other Red Cross parcels received

while we were going along. I know that when we got to Singapore, they said a Red Cross ship had been in and left some food for us, and that ours had been sent up to the jungle because that was where we were to go. They gave us a little bit to eat for a day or two. I don't mean a meal, I mean, a little bit to supplement our rice so that it was edible. That was very good, but we understood that the English were eating Red Cross parcels long after we left.

Marcello: Let's get back to Phet Buri again. You mentioned that you were involved in airfield construction.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: Describe exactly what you did here.

Summers: The actual work that we were doing was to clear it and level it so that the planes could land. I did not work on that project. I was working in camp as a cook. I had learned at Tamarkan to work in the kitchen, and I did that primarily to get more food. We would boil rice, and we would never let it get dry like you normally cook rice. So it would be real sticky and mushy, and we would mash that and make a kind of desert. We'd cook it in coconut oil, and if we had anything sweet to go on top of it, we used it. Anyway, we put whatever we could in that.

While I was there, a couple of my friends, who were Australian, wanted to try to escape. They tried

to get me to go with them. Although I knew I could get out of camp easy enough, I didn't know where I was going or whether I could get to India, which was a long way off through the jungle. Having been to the jungle, I didn't want to go back. So they did escape, and the fellow that I remember best, that I talked to and was trying to get me to go with them, was named Ron Volz. Since we have been liberated back to the States, I've had a letter from him. He did manage to get away. He did not get home, but he got with some of the people who were on the outskirts of camp. He was taken in with them, and he was essentially free for the rest of the duration, which was about...this happened in the early part of 1945.

Marcello: Did you play any part in his escape, other than knowing about it?

Summers: Yes, I managed to steal a little food for him to take with him. I was talking about the rice cakes that we made. I don't know...there were half a dozen or so of those that I gave him at night to take.

Marcello: I'm assuming it wasn't really that difficult to get out of camp.

Summers: That's right. It wasn't too hard. I had thousands of times to escape, and I was free when I was in the jungle. Often, I could have gone, but I didn't have a way of going. I wasn't physically able to go. I

didn't have any food. I had no way to protect myself from the insects or wild animals or whatever I might encounter. I knew that I'd be turned in by the natives, and the only thing I could do was try to get with the natives. If there were Americans or other Allies in the jungle, operating out there, we didn't know it.

Marcello: What was the Japanese reaction when they learned that these Australians had escaped?

Summers: Actually, I didn't know. That was a pretty good-sized camp, and being a different nationality, we didn't have to account for them in the American group. About that time, they moved us to Bangkok.

Marcello: How long were you at Phet Buri altogether? You went when, and you left when?

Summers: We moved to Phet Buri on January 5, 1945, and we moved to Bangkok on April 13, so we were there a little over three months.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were working in the cook shack because you could get some additional food there. Was there ever any resentment over the fact that the cooks may have been a little fatter than the other prisoners?

Summers: I'm sure there was. The people who were in the cook shack were not really free to take food, but they got the ration that the other men did, before anyone else, and then they got in the line for seconds before anyone

did.

Marcello: You mentioned that you didn't actually participate in the work on the airstrip. As an observer, how did it compare with work on the railroad?

Summers: The work was very similar. I'd say that it wasn't a "speedo" job, although it wasn't a relaxed work, either. But the fact that we were closer to civilization, and the food in camp was a little better, was the main thing that made everyone a little bit better able to do the work. There was not quite as much disease as we had in the jungle.

Marcello: Describe the trip from Phet Buri to Bangkok.

Summers: To get to Bangkok, they put us on a truck first, to take us to a place called Rat Buri, where the bridge was out. There we got on the train again. It took us on to Bangkok. It was not a long distance. All of it was made in one day.

Marcello: What happens when you get to Bangkok?

Summers: In Bangkok, they sent us out to another place. We were there just a short time, at Nakhon Nayok [Thailand]. It's in the northern part of the country, just across from Indochina. At that time, I don't know what they were calling it, but it was what was French Indochina. Our home there, near Nakhon Nayok, was in rice paddies, in what looked like an old pagoda, or it could have been a school. It was a two-story building, and it was

pretty old. I happened to sleep under it. It was built up off the ground quite a ways, I guess to allow for high water. It was four-and-a half or five feet from the ground up to the floor. I slept under there. There's where we were building caves into the walls of the mountains around there.

Marcello: Describe this work.

Summers: It was like the ground work we did on the railroad. We'd go in with picks and shovels and carry the baskets out. The actual work that I was doing there was on a detail to walk to the nearest town, which was Nakhon Nayok. I had a pack horse--actually it was a donkey--with a pack saddle on it. We carried food in the form of rice and sometimes some kind of vegetable, onions or whatever, for food. But it was not for us. At least we didn't get any of it when we got back. Each day, we would walk into town, which was ten or twelve kilometers away, and load this up on our pack mule or donkey. I was in charge of one donkey. I had a pack on each side, big packets, and I had one pack on my shoulder. Then I would lead the donkey. There were several of us, half a dozen or more.

Marcello: Accompanied by a guard?

Summers: Oh, yes, we had two guards. One time when I was in Nakhon Nayok, a Japanese officer came by and asked the guard if he could talk to me. He took me into a little

restaurant, and they sold sake in there. We sat down at the table, and he offered me sake. I didn't drink at the time. I'd never even tasted whiskey at the time, and I probably had not had more than one swallow of beer in my life. Anyway, he wanted me to have a drink with him. He spoke a little English, but he said everything in Japanese. We talked awhile, and I managed to drink a little bit of the sake. The guard came to see if I could go, and he let me go.

Then, for the first time, he spoke English. He said, "Very well, Summers, do not worry. Very soon, we'll all go home." What he was asking me, more than anything else, is how we would treat them if they were prisoners of war. That was just before the end of the war. It was before the bombs had dropped, but I would say it was the latter part of July.

Within a day or two, they moved us away from the camp and into another, larger camp. Within hearing distance, there was another camp, and that's where the American officers were that had been taken from us. We had been there a short time when they announced that the war was over.

Marcello: Let me back up again to Nakhon Nayok. You mentioned that you were building these caves. Elaborate on this a little bit. What was the purpose of these caves? What were the Japanese doing?

Summers: The Japanese told us that they were going to put supplies in them, and that's what we were bringing. However, they never did let me go to the caves with the supplies. The reason that we had to bring them by pack saddle across the rice paddies is because there was no road going across there from our area. We followed a little trail in between the rice paddies to get there.

Marcello: What do you surmise to be the real purpose of those caves?

[Tape 4, Side 2]

Marcello: When the tape ran out, you were mentioning, of course, that they were actually going to put gun emplacements in there, and they were going to kill the prisoners, in case there was an invasion of the Allies. Let me ask you this. As the war is winding down, you obviously know that the tide has turned, and the Japanese are losing.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: What fear did you have that the Japanese would kill you, and what preparations, if any, were you making to deal with that contingency?

Summers: The preparation I was making, or thinking about, was trying to escape to the jungle. If it were that close to the end of the war, I might be able to stay out until the Allies came in and took over. They moved us back to the big camp, near where we were. There were a

lot of other prisoners there, and they were bringing us together. I understand now that the reason they brought us together was to kill us. Of course, that didn't happen, either.

We were there about two weeks--and I was having a very bad stage of "dingy" [dengue] fever--when they called us to the parade ground at an odd time. They didn't ask for any work details that day. They took us out on the parade grounds at 9:00 or 10:00 in the morning. The Japanese officer addressed us, and we had an interpreter to tell us what he said. He told us that the war was over. He didn't come out and tell us that right away. What he said was that he had been instructed to keep us under surveillance, and the guards would not allow any of us out of the camp. But the war was over. He was to give us as good a treatment as he was able to in the way of food. There would be no more work, and they would give us the medicine that was available. But he was to hold us in the prison until he was relieved by the Allies.

Marcello: A couple of questions here. When was it that you received the word? Do you have the date for that?

Summers: I don't know if I have it written down here, but it was August 24, 1945. The 29th of August is when we were released. On the 24th, they moved us back into Bangkok. That was the day that the American officer--I

believe it was a lieutenant colonel--came into our camp with some native trucks that he had hired to come in there and haul us to the airport. He asked us how long it would take us to get ready. We said we were ready. Within a short time, we were on the trucks and headed to the airport.

Marcello: Let me back up for a minute. When was it that the Japanese commander made that speech telling you that the war was over?

Summers: It was in August.

Marcello: It was in August. What was the date when he gave that speech?

Summers: I can't tell you the exact date, but I know it was the 29th that we flew out. We had known about a week at that time. It was somewhere around the 21st or 22nd.

Marcello: The 21st or 22nd of August.

Summers: Yes.

Marcello: He never did tell you that Japan had lost. Is that correct?

Summers: No, he never did.

Marcello: What was the reaction of you and your comrades when you heard that the war was over?

Summers: They said that every man had to be on the parade field for this. I was very, very sick. I could only sit down and thank God [weeping]. I looked at the ground and prayed. Some of the guys were hollering. That's

all I could do--sit down [weeping].

Marcello: Were there any celebrations in the aftermath?

Summers: I couldn't tell you. A lot of them were hollering and screaming and singing songs. The Japanese maintained their guard at that gate. None of us were allowed out. I don't know of anyone that tried to get out. The fact that the war was over, that was all that mattered.

Marcello: Were there ever any feelings or attempts to get even with any of the guards at this point or later?

Summers: I'm sure there were some, but not in our camp. I've heard of some, but we just wanted to get away from them.

Marcello: This is what I gathered. Everybody was just so happy to be free that thoughts of revenge more or less faded into the background.

Summers: That's true.

Marcello: Were you suddenly given more food?

Summers: They said they would make food available as they could, and we were given more. I can't remember it being especially good, but it was all you wanted to eat. We had some fruit and some medicine, but it was a very short time until we were flying out.

Marcello: Where was this camp, incidentally, that you received the word?

Summers: Nakhon Nayok.

Marcello: Then you mentioned that eventually they take you down

to Bangkok. In the meantime, you know that the war is over.

Summers: We didn't see Americans or anything like that until we got to Bangkok.

Marcello: My question is, are you getting a little antsy now?

Summers: Yes. Of course, once we got on that plane, it was a short trip to Rangoon. We landed and there we saw the American nurses, the first white women in quite a while. They came out and gave us a little food. We had some C-rations that they opened, the cheese, and I don't know what all was in there. We didn't even get off the plane. They got on the plane. We went from there to Calcutta, to a hospital there. They started examining us.

Marcello: Is that the 142nd General Hospital?

Summers: Right.

Marcello: What kind of treatment did you get in Calcutta?

Summers: In Calcutta we got some clothing, to start with. Actually, we got a little bit of clothing in Bangkok. It was clothing that had come in from the Red Cross sometime during the war, but it was American khaki pants. The pants had been cut off. We got shoes, khaki pants, and a shirt. When we got to Calcutta, they took all of that away from us. It had just been put on dirty bodies, and it was filthy. They gave us new clothing.

They examined us, the doctors did. Those that were in the best condition were the first to go on home. I happened to be one of those that they thought was able to go. So I flew out on the 7th of September, and I reached New York on the 12th of September.

Marcello: Let me go back and pick up some details. How long were you in Bangkok before you were taken out?

Summers: Two or three days, I would say.

Marcello: You didn't receive any extraordinary rations and so on there.

Summers: We started getting more rations from the day they announced the war was over until they came in there with the trucks and took us to the airport.

Marcello: When did you get first "American" food?

Summers: When we got to the 142nd General Hospital.

Marcello: What were you craving?

Summers: Dairy products: milk, cheese, ice cream, things like that. I could eat very little, though. It made me sick. But it tasted good.

Marcello: Does it take long to put that weight back on again?

Summers: I started gaining right away. I think that I weighed 135 pounds at that time. I had gained quite a bit since I came out of the jungle the first time, in fact, when I got to working in the kitchen, and there was also more food available around civilization than being in the jungle. So I started gaining pretty fast.

Marcello: What was the lowest that your weight got down to? You may have to estimate.

Summers: We didn't have scales.

Marcello: Sure.

Summers: I don't think I ever got down below a hundred pounds, but close to it.

Marcello: Your weight at that time normally was?

Summers: About 180 pounds.

Marcello: So you lost a good percentage of your body weight as a result of that experience.

Summers: Right.

Marcello: You come back to the States and go to New York. What happens at that point?

Summers: We started out with a lot of people coming back, and because the war was over, there were a lot of upper-ranked American officers who were trying to get on there. Actually, they allowed us preference over them and passed us through. At each stop, there would be a doctor come aboard and check everyone out and take some back to the hospital. When I got to New York, there were about twelve left of our group.

The Red Cross there were trying to help us get out, to go home. We were all to be sent to the hospital nearest our home. There were only three out of our group that were given passage out of New York, and I happened to be one of those. The other ones were

Lieutenant Dave Hiner from Abilene and J. B. Heinen, who lived in Dallas. The three of us came out. We landed in Fort Worth at the old airport. There was no DFW [Dallas-Fort Worth (Texas) Airport] at that time. That was about 3:00 in the morning. Although they knew that I was in the States, they had not heard from me after I got to New York. They didn't know I was coming home, so I phoned them. My sister lived in Fort Worth, so she came out and got me at the airport. Everything was rosy from then on.

Marcello: How long did it take you to adjust to your new status?

Summers: Well, I'm not sure I ever have. I was very nervous, and I couldn't stay at home. I don't ever remember spending any evenings at home, at my house. It was because I couldn't be tied down with my parents. They would ask me questions. Other POWs who came back with me, we would get together and go somewhere and do something. We'd come home in the middle of the night. The next day, it was just getting ready to go and get away. We didn't have any particular place to go, but we couldn't stay home.

Marcello: I've heard others talk about the fact that they really couldn't handle being around large numbers of people and, I guess, people asking questions.

Summers: Yes, that's it. It's hard for me to talk about it always. I feel free when I'm with other prisoners,

because they understand what I'm talking about. They know how I feel.

Marcello: A couple of questions at this point, and we will probably finish the interview. Suppose I had asked you to do this interview in 1946, 1947. What would have been your response?

Summers: I couldn't talk about it. I felt that way a long time. In fact, I'm just now getting to where I talk about it.

Marcello: You mentioned something a moment ago, and it's something that you and I talked about yesterday off the tape. I've done well over a hundred of these interviews, and I have a pretty good factual knowledge of what went on in the camps, how people reacted, and what they did; but I'll never be able to understand, will I?

Summers: No, you won't. Words don't express feelings very well.

Marcello: It goes back to what you were talking about just a moment ago, in that the only person who really does understand is somebody who shared the experience with you. How has that POW experience affected you, let's say, through the years? What influence has it had upon your life, I guess is what I'm trying to say?

Summers: I think this. It has made me appreciate life more. I came back, and on the way home from my discharge at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, I stopped at Austin and registered to go to school. In fact, I didn't go

home until I'd started. It was a summer session, and I stayed there until I graduated in 1950. During that time, I was married and had a boy, my first child, born while we were still students. All of that is good, except I have never really felt like that I have done as well as I would have if I hadn't had that experience. I feel like I can't talk to people like I should. It's hurt my communication, even between my wife and I. I've made a living, and we've had a good life. Now it's about the end of it. I look back and think that I don't know that I would have changed any of it.

Marcello: As you look back on your experiences as a prisoner of war, what do you see as being responsible for your survival?

Summers: Of course, there's a big factor of luck, but the fact that I grew up during the Depression and that I knew what doing without was all about helped me. That didn't disturb me as much as some of those who hadn't. The fact that I believed in God, my faith, brought me through.

Marcello: As an interviewer, I'm not supposed to ask leading questions, but I'm going to, anyhow. I'm referring to something that I mentioned earlier. One has to have a strong will to live to go through an experience like that.

Summers: That's right, sure. A will to live is the difference in whether you came back or not, really.

Marcello: Obviously, many things can be involved in that will to live, or what establishes that will to live. It can be your religious background. It can be any number of things. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

Summers: Not really. I think you've let me get this off my chest, so to speak. I hope that it will be of some help to my family to understand me.

Marcello: I want to thank you very much, Mr. Summers, for taking time to talk with me. You've said a lot of interesting and very important things. I'm sure that your family, as well as historians and students, will have a better knowledge of your experiences.

Summers: Good. I'm glad we've done it.

A P P E N D I X



LOST BATTALION ASSOCIATION

2BN 131 FIELD ARTILLERY • USS HOUSTON (CA-30)

San Antonio, TX
August 8, 1983

Dear Jay,

Attached is a copy of the document you requested. I am delighted to have found the original of this document among the papers that Mr. Sam Milner sent me and I in turn sent to Lester Rasbury as he is the historian of our Association. For many years, Mr. Milner had these papers in his possession to make the necessary research in writing his historical book about the Lost Battalion Association.

As you can see, the first three names on the list are somewhat muddled. As I recall and can partially see on your copy and the copy I have and your copy was made off of, the names are, Glen Jones, Clyde Jones, and Homer Martinez. The long time fold in the original made it impossible to stretch out the sheet without permanently damaging it beyond repair.

Jay, I feel proud to be able to give this to you. It is because of men like you that made it possible for men like me to be here today. I am glad to know and have you as a friend.

Faternally,

Roger White

Sept 13, 1995

Dr Marcello,

I'm sending you a copy of an order that was never acted upon, probably because Col. Sharp did not sign it. It's possible that you have previously seen the order.

I have included this cover letter so that you will know how it came to me.

Sincerely yours,
D.L. [unclear]

GAC/JEH/dan

200.8

17 October 1948

SUBJECT: Recommendation for United States Army Personnel of 2d
Battalion, 131st Field Artillery Regiment, 36th
Division

TO: The Adjutant General
War Department
Washington 25, D. C.
THRU: Commanding Officer
2d Battalion
131st Field Artillery Regiment
36th Division

1. It is requested that recognition be made for the excep-
tionally meritorious services rendered by the following during
the period 8 March 1942 to 29 August 1945:

20813544	Jones, Glen W.	1st Sgt.
20813532	Montgomery, Clyde S.	Sgt.
20813546	Lee, John W.	Sgt.
20814111	Hensley, John	Sgt.
20813580	Baker, Millard L.	Sgt.
20814088	Prunty, Luther C.	Sgt.
20814105	Worthington, Charles E.	Sgt.
20813679	Lumsden, Thomas B.	Sgt.
20812998	Webb, Wade H.	Sgt.
20813712	Morrow, Roy L.	Sgt.
20813022	Williamson, Don T.	Sgt.
20813834	Rogers, William C.	Sgt.
20813006	Bray, Charles B.	Sgt.
20813672	Brown, Lawrence M.	Stf Sgt.
38051105	Casey, Otho C.	Sgt.
38038088	Biffle, Will U.	Pvt 1cl
20813606	King, Ray W.	Pvt.
20812941	Badgwell, Loyd T.	Pvt. 1cl
36105692	Curley, LaVerne A.	Pvt.

The above named individuals by their initiative, willingness, cheerfulness, and ability constituted the nucleus whereby life was possible during the hardships experienced by American Prisoner of War, from 8 March 1942 to 29 August 1945. Their never-ending sacrifices, their ability to perform the seemingly impossible, and

their capacity to summon the last drops of their reserves and are responsible for the return of at least seventy (70) men. Their actions were beyond the call of duty.

2. It is requested that recognition be made for the standing services rendered by the following during the period March 1942 to 29 August 1945:

38050703	Reis, George H.	T/Sgt
20812999	Schmid, Ella P.	T/Sgt
20812945	Cobb, Hirschel R.	S/Sgt
20813330	Patterson, Paul L.	S/Sgt
20813725	Singleton, Roy O.	Sgt
20813668	*Hall, Howard L.	Sgt
20813682	Summers, J. L.	Sgt
20813868	Bruner, Edger C.	Sgt
20813691	Brown, Alf	Sgt 1cl
20813334	Tins, Roy E.	Pvt 1cl
34140923	Skiliern, Paul	Pvt
38050530	Rivero, Louis J.	Pvt 1cl
34114094	Dinkins, Broadus C.	Pvt
20813080	Harris, Claude R.	Pvt 1cl
38038946	York, Coy D.	Pvt
34141125	*Wilson, Fred O. Jr.	Pvt
20813620	Self, Glenn B.	Pvt
38027512	Rios, Felipe	Pvt
38060232	Slavens, Charles O.	Pvt 1cl
20813707	Jones, Bert F.	Corp
20814095	Fillmore, Benjamin D.	Corp
38026396	Wright, Houston T.	Pvt
38052096	Capps, Truman L.	Pvt 1cl
38026173	Martinez, Martin Jr.	Pvt
20813737	Buck, Johnnie W.	Pvt 1cl
38018820	Snake, Lawrence	Pvt
38025825	Saldana, Reynaldo A.	Pvt
38051061	*Tiemann, Elton W.	Pvt
20813687	Baldock, Earl F.	Corp
20813681	Rising, Wayne M.	Corp
38027539	Jeter, Lewis W.	Pvt
36098495	Dunn, Ernest B.	Pvt
20813855	Boatman, Harvey W.	Corp
38052419	Green, Charles W.	Pvt 1cl
20813156	Martin, John W.	Corp
20813715	Rasbury, Lester C.	Pvt 1cl

The above listed individuals formed the main body around the nucleus as mentioned in paragraph 1. By their willingness to do more than their share of the many difficult tasks assigned, by their constant performance of the many small but important tasks and by caring for the sick, by their unfailing cooperation with those in command during all phases of Prisoner of War hardships and by

willingness to place the whole ahead of self they are responsible for the return of at least seventy (70) men.

3. In my opinion, without the services as rendered by the individuals as listed in paragraphs 1 and 2, plus their corresponding counterparts among the navy personnel present, few, if American Prisoners of War would have survived the hardships endured during the period 17 January 1943 to 13 April 1944.

Charles A. Cates
CHARLES A. CATES
Maj, 2d Bn, 131st FA

Julius B. Heinen O 3164
JULIUS B. HEINEN
Capt, 2d Bn, 131st FA

*Known Dead

Wichita Falls, Texas

October 30, 1945

Approved.

BLUCHER S. THARP
COL., 2d Bn, 131st FA
Commanding

Bexar-Medina Implement Co., Inc.

P.O. Box 219

La Costa, Texas 78039

Dates as Jay remembers

Sailed 11-21-41 San Francisco

.11-29 & 30-41 Hawaii

Landed 12-14-41 Suva, Fiji Isle

Sailed 12-15-41

Landed 12-22-41 Brisbane Australia

Sailed 12-27-41

In Port 12-30-41 Darwin, Australia

Sailed 1-3-42

Landed 1-11-42 Sourabija, Java

Train to 1-11-42 Malang, Java

First Bombing 1-9-42 Malang, Java

Left Malang 2-27-42 for front

3-1-42 Japs landed

Capitulated 3-8-42 Bandoeng, Java at Race Track (I went into 9)

First prison - Goerut, Java (Tea Plantation)

Sent to Botavia 3-24-42 - Left Mark

"Choan" School Camp 3-26-42 to 5-16-42

Bicycle Camp (Botavia) 5-16-42 to 9-11-42 - Met Mark

Sailed for Singapore 9-16-42 to Changi Prison on Dai Nishi Maru

Landed 9-21-42 (6 days voyage) Worked grubbing rubber trees for Jap garden

Left 1-7-43 - Train thru Malaya to Pri or Georgetown Top of [unclear]

Sailed 1-13-43 for Moulmein, Burma Dai Nishi Maru

Bombed 1-15-43 (one of our 3 ships sunk, our ship hit)

Landed 1-18-43 - Moulmein (Moulmein Prison) (1-18 to 1-21-43)

Started on railroad 1-27-43 at 18 Kilo Camp

Left Behind 3-14-43 - sick dysentery

Moved 3-29-43 - 40 Kilo Camp (walked)

Mark left 6-19-43 for 80 Kilo Camp (walked)

Bexar-Medina Implement Co., Inc.

P.O. Box 219

La Coste, Texas 78039

in 80 & 100 K. Camp
Moved 7-6-43 to 80 Kilo Camp - Joined Mark / *hardest work, worse*
Moved 8-26-43 to 100 Kilo Camp *in train coal car (living conditions, less*
Moved 12-27-43 to Kanchanaburi, Thailand *food) (most deaths in*
Mark left 3-24-44 for Siagon *did not see again until in Calcutta in 1945*
Moved 6-9-44 to River Bridge Camp (Camp #1) Tamakan *(River Kachin)*
Moved 11-2-44 to Wonji on railroad *cut wood for train (bombed out*
Moved 12-19-44 back to Kanchanaburi River Camp *US Commando raised a bridge*
Moved 1-5-45 to Phetburi via train & foot *built airport near camp*
Moved 4-13-45 - Bangkok
Moved to Nakhon Nayok
Moved to Mountain Camp 5-4-45 *dug caves for supply storage*
Moved to Nakhon Nayok 7-4-45 *(rec'd. news war was over 8-13-45)*
Moved 8-25-45 to Bangkok *in warehouses at docks*
Liberated 8-29-45 *(flew out on C-47 to Rangoon to Calcutta)*
Calcutta 8-29-45 to 9-7-45 *flew on thru N. Africa to Agora to N. Africa*
USA - 9-12-45 *in Holleran Sea Hosp. in New York*

Mar 8th & 9th 1942

Col. Sharp assembled men to tell them the Dutch had capitulated and had ordered the U.S. soldiers to also give up. Our instructions were to go to this race track & wait for further instructions. We were told that there was no known transportation to get to Australia, but we were free to try if we felt like it.

Master Sgt. Edwin E. Shaw and I were selected to stay behind the convoy and sabotage any vehicle left behind and then come on to the race track. We put sugar in the gas tanks, threw away ignition wires and ignition caps. While we were doing this, an elderly Dutch couple (60 to 70 yrs old) came by and talked to us. They gave us some bananas & oranges and ended up inviting us to come to their home (which was a very nice house in the country). They had two grown daughters living with them. The daughter's husbands were away in the Dutch Army.

Our plan was to try to escape to Australia and the Dutch family went to try to find transportation, while Sgt. Shaw and I got cleaned up and made arrangements.

preparations that we could so that we would be ready for whatever.

When the Dutch gentleman returned, he told us that he believed that it was impossible to find any of his friends that had any hopes of getting away.

The Japanese had taken control of all ships, boats, planes, etc. He said he would try to hide us and furnish us with food as best he could if we wanted to hide out.

He decided that it would be too dangerous for his family to try to protect us -- so we decided to go to the race track and give up. He thought we would be rescued by the Americans within a few months. If we had have known that we were looking at $3\frac{1}{2}$ years -- we would have taken the chance.

Sgt. Shaw died on the railroad and his body is now resting in the Punch Bowl Cemetery in Hawaii. I went to dedicate a Memorial in May, 1944 in memory of the 131 men we lost in that part of the world. Twenty Seven of our men have been reburied in the Punchbowl.

Kanchanaburi Camp.

a. Mango trees in Camp.

1. green for salad.

2. ripe - very good (several varieties)

3. Climbed trees at night + feel for mangos

4. Flesh eating ants

b. trips to river to bathe

1. passing indian camp (seeing burying)
detail with 3 or 4 dead on one
bambo stretcher.

c.

Tamakan Camp. (River Kwai)

a. Water detail for anti-aircraft Guns

b. American air raid that blew out one
section of the bridge

c. Worked in Kitchen

d. Played baseball (w. tennis ball)
against the Japanese (2 or 3 games)

e. Became friend of Ernie Jookey - I
still correspond w/him (Aust. sailor off the
Perth which was sunk at the same time
as the Houston)

only 3 1/2 hours
Honji Camp (second trip on railroad)
work - cut wood for train fuel

Unusual events:

1. Trips to river for bathing
 - a. Monkeys
 - b. native woman fishing among bathers

2. R.R. Bridge bombed out (Womps)

- a. released rail to break guard's log
- b. walked to next station as tiger bait to protect guard.

3. allowed to go to jungle during air raid

- a. set ~~snare~~ snare for deer at abandoned native camp.

4. Cutting Bamboo to ^{repair + build} camp huts.

- a. encounter with native boy & girl. (Buttle on horsehair to capture transhlers) Girl offered sex w/PKs

5. Comando Raid caused us to be evacuated to Jamakan on very short notice.

① Changi - Singapore
Had some extra food from American
Red Cross parcels for a few meals (2 or 3)
Cookies & Cream of Wheat? The English told
us our share was sent to Burma so that
we would get ours when we got to
Burma.

② Climbed coconuts in the for coconuts
but had words with the English
over damaging the King's property

③ Robbed bees in roof of buildings
④ " " in one tall tree -- several
people stung -- no honey -- large bees
like our honey bee except larger
and meaner.

(1)

San Antonio, Texas

Notes of speech made to Lions Club
Kilburn

Happy to be here

When Professor Carlisle ask me to come, I was doubtful that I could hold the atten. of such an educated group -- but he said that you're not too formal, and some of the members even call him "Corby" -- I told him I would come

I want to tell you ^{some of my war experience} why I'm proud to be an American"

1. Product of Depression (1930s)
2. 1 yr college 1939-40
3. Selective Service act 1940. mobilized w/ Nat. Guard
2nd Bn 131st FA 56 Div.
4. Nov. 21, 1941 sailed for Philippines
5. Nov. 28-29 Pearl Harbor (week before it was bombed)
6. Bombing Dec. 7-41
7. Landed in Aust. Dec. 22, '41
8. Sailed for Philippines on Dutch ship Dec 28th for P.I.
9. Went ashore in Soerabaja Java Jan. 4th
10. Sent to Malang airfield Jan 4
11. First Japanese air raid Jan 11 (almost daily thereafter)
12. Road march Feb. 24 (475 men 134 trucks)
13. Japs landed Feb. 26
14. Prisoner Mar 2nd (I went in on Mar 9th)
15. Sent to Singapore in Sept. on freighter w/about 47th per man. (sub decks 5' apart)

(2)

San Antonio, Texas

- Jan. 1943 sent on top of freight trains to Pri. on Malay Peninsula to ship to sail for Moulmein Burma.
7. 1 ship sunk by am. Bombers Jan 15th
8. Started work on R.R. Moulmein to Bangkok
9. many camps.
20. Work: 50 men to Kyau
1 cu yd. dirt per man
Rations for workers only
21. Scarce food. dirty, wormy rice
dried fish -- wormy
Poor cattle
22. Pie-melons for veg.
22. no soap, toothbrush or clothing
23. Malnutrition, dysentery, beri-beri, malaria, cholera, tropical ulcers etc.
24. Humiliation -- no mail, beatings, salute etc.
25. Told war was over Aug 22nd (fell to ground to give thanks to God -- cry)
26. Met Am. Air Force Colonel Aug 29th (38 yrs ago today) and flown out to Calcutta India.

I get a tremendous feeling of pride when the American flag passes. No other nation comes close to having the freedom that we enjoy. Our flag is a great