

S: I'm here with Mr. Damon Conrad Alberty My name is Ken Samuelson. My address is 545 Southwood Drive in Eden, North Carolina, 27288, telephone number (336) 623-7787. Mr. Alberty, if you would give your name, date and place of birth.

A: My name is Damon Conrad Alberty. I was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, August 28, 1924. At the present, I'm living in Mayodan, North Carolina, at Box 307, Mayodan, North Carolina, telephone number 548-9216.

S: Can you tell me your address when you went into service, Mr. Alberty?

A: It was on Spruce Street in Greensboro, North Carolina.

S: What time period was that?

A: 1941 was when I left to go into service.

S: What branch of service was it?

A: [It was the] Army.

S: Why did you choose the Army?

A: At that time, the reason I chose the Army, I had a brother who was going to Annapolis Naval Academy. At that time, I didn't like the Navy too good, so I joined the Army. The reason I joined the Army was this: I used to listen to Eric Sevareid [CBS war correspondent] and Edward R. Murrow [CBS radio and television commentator] coming from London. When I was going to school, the most things I was interested in was geography and history. I knew eventually this country would go to war. I was kind of an adventurous sort of person anyway, so what happened, I went to High Point to enlist. At that time, a sergeant got a dollar for each man he enlisted. I enlisted in the Army. He said, "Boy, you're not 18." I said, "Yes, I am." He got the dollar for enlisting me. I went ahead and left there and went to Ft. Benning [Georgia]. That's where I took my training in 1941.

S: [You had your] basic training in Ft. Benning. What age were you then?

A: [I was] 16.

S: [You were] 16 when you entered the service. That sounds a little young.

A: That's right.

S: How did you get in at 16?

- A: At that time, you didn't need a birth certificate. If you remember, the draft came about 1940. They started drafting people. I knew then that this country was going to get into war. What I wanted to do was take my train and ship out to somewhere safe like the South Pacific because everything was happening in Europe. There was Hitler done took over Poland, Czechoslovakia, moving into France; Mussolini on the move in Africa; Stalin was already gearing up the war, too. Hitler was ready to conquer Europe. Mussolini, he was just a little puppy. That's all he was. But I knew this country was eventually going to war, so I wanted to get down in the South Pacific and I had on my mind either the Hawaiian Islands or the Philippines, never knowing where this war was going to start. That's where it started at, right where I was.
- S: You zeroed in on the European problem, but you weren't really quite as well tuned in to the problem in Asia.
- A: Not that time. The only thing that was going on in the Pacific at that time, if you remember, in 1934 the Japanese invaded China. It already had Korea since about 1907 or 1908. They already were in Manchuria. They were already there. The Japanese were the furthest thing away from my mind because the Pacific was a big area, and the Pacific Ocean is a big ocean. I figured the Philippine Islands, or maybe Schofield Barracks [largest Army post in Hawaii], or someplace like that in Hawaii would be a good place to pull a duty. At that time, they were known as a short discharge. If you go serve two years in barn duty, you got credit for three. I figured in the Pacific I'd be safe from Europe. It just turned around backwards.
- S: You joined in Greensboro. Follow through what happened to you when you joined. Where did you go?
- A: From there I went to Ft. Benning. There was a 29th Infantry Division that I took infantry training from.
- S: This was basic training?
- A: [This was] basic training. When I finished basic training there, we went on the Carolina Maneuver in 1941. From there, they got us all together; they wanted volunteers. I used to volunteer for anything. We volunteered; they got a bunch of us together and they shipped us from Ft. Benning to Ft. McDowell, California. Now you've been to San Francisco probably.
- S: Oh yes.
- A: You know that if you come by Alcatraz, you've got Angel Island. Angel Island was a

port of embarkation. That was known as Ft. McDowell. They put us on a ship there in October 1941 known as the *President Coolidge*. We got to Hawaii in November. This was about a month before the war broke out. I can see those battleships still lined up there. We had about three days in Honolulu. We left there. Some of the Japanese fleet, it wasn't the main fleet that hit Pearl Harbor, because it was north up around from the Coral Islands, they came around from the north. We passed two Japanese destroyers and about two transports and the ship I was on, we were escorted by four destroyers. Those destroyers signaled those Japanese ships and they said they were on maneuvers.

This was only about three to four weeks before Pearl Harbor was hit. You know going across the 180th meridian line, you gain a day going over it, which was the 8th. You go to bed on the 7th you get up on the 5th coming back. You lose a day coming back. We got to the Philippines about three to four weeks before the war broke out.

The same day that Pearl Harbor was hit, December 7, about ten minutes till eight, they hit us in the Philippines. Japanese heavy bombers from Formosa [Taiwan]. 350 heavy bombers came over, they came over to the northern part of Manila. They knocked out Nichols Field, Clark Field, Nielson Field, the Navy yard. They tore it all up, every bit. Then the Navy fighters came over.

We were stationed out at Ft. McKinley, where the 45th infantry was Filipino Scouts. That outfit I belonged to was known as the American Foreign Legion. It has never served in this country. It originated in Siberia in 1917, moved down to Shanghai, and from there they've moved to Wall City in Manila. It's an old Spanish fort there known as Wall City. The walls are sixteen feet thick. That was our headquarters. I was the 31st infantry. Anti-Tank. It was a regiment.

That regiment has never served in America, except [when it] was reactivated during the Korean War and served with the 7th Division in Korea. The insignia was an old polar bear because it originated in Siberia. From there, I'll never forget the day they bombed us. MacArthur had declared Manila an open city. That was December 25, on Christmas day. Then all of us were taken, everyone of us, full-field packs and everything, all our equipment was destroyed as far as personal equipment was concerned, like our foot lockers and this and that was all destroyed.

They rushed us up because eighty transports was coming down from Formosa. That's where they came in at. The 45th Infantry, the 57th Infantry, the 31st Infantry regiments, and about three or four of the Philippine divisions. We held the Japanese until we could get a line formed across Bataan. Bataan is about twenty miles wide and about twenty miles long. It protrudes down into the China Sea. On one side is Manila Bay, on the other side is the China Sea. This plan was drawn up in the 1930s when MacArthur resigned as

chief-of-staff and became a field marshal in the Philippine Army. He was the advisor to President [Manuel L.] Quezon, who was the president at the time. After the war broke out, they reinstated him.

They pushed us, the main objective, that plan was drawn and was known as the Orange Plan: to retreat into Bataan and to hold until reinforcement. We held on to that peninsula for four months. I want to tell you something. People can read about it, they can talk about it. We had no newspaper reporters. We had no photographers to take pictures. There we were, eating monkey meat. We ate dog meat. We ate cat meat. We ate iguana lizards. We ate anything that we could get our hands on. We had no graves registration. When a man got killed, we carried him back as far as we could and buried him. We didn't have graves registration like they have nowadays where they carry him back to the morgue and box him up and then balm and ship him back. We buried them right where they died at because we had no facilities.

Being young, it gets you hard. It makes you hard. You become hard. You build a shell around you. We stayed there for four months. Men were dying from malnutrition, beriberi, dengue fever, yellow jaundice, elephantiasis, everything under the sun. We would lose almost as many from malaria and dysentery and starvation [as we did] in combat. We lasted for four months and General King [Major General Edward P. King Jr., surrendered U.S. forces under his command at Bataan; spent three-and-a-half years as a POW] was the commanding general on Bataan. He's buried down on Jekyll Island off of Georgia.

When the order came out on surrender, I'd already been wounded. When the Japanese came in, they'd overrun all of us, have us lined up on the road, went into the hospital where the men were. It wasn't [so much] a hospital as bunks up on the trees. Some of them had their legs amputated. They had nurses there. Some of them took off to Corregidor.

S: You're talking about U.S. nurses or Japanese nurses?

A: U.S. nurses, and most of them took off to Corregidor. Dr. [John] Bumgarner in Greensboro was in a prison camp; he's a cardiologist. He's about 85 years old. He wrote a book that was sent to me, *Parade of the Dead* [subtitle: *A U.S. Army Physician's Memoir of Imprisonment by the Japanese, 1942-1945*; published in 1995].

S: Where does he live?

A: In Greensboro, John Bumgarner. He's about 85. He was a cardiologist out at West Lawn Hospital.

S: He's still living?

A: He's still living, yes. We used to go see him a lot, me and my wife. After the surrender, though, it was unbelievable the way men was treated. You couldn't understand that men, some of them on crutches, some of them barefooted, some of them with dysentery walking along the road with blood running down their legs, and they'd stop us every few minutes. They put us in columns or groups of 100 with guards on each side. A lot of men that fell out, they shot them on the side of the road or ran a bayonet through them right there.

Some of them would take off out across the field, the guards would shoot them. They even buried some of the Filipinos about half-dead. They'd make somebody else dig a hole, beat them in the head with a shovel and bury them alive with a pack of dirt on them. A boy lives down in Morehead City, North Carolina. His parents had wrote in this book that they were looking for him. He was right next to me and he pushed a guard. His name was Sydney Gorem. He was a staff sergeant. They took him out right beside the road and beheaded him.

Hey, you're talking about a nightmare, it was a nightmare. You built this shell around you and you lost your emotions and you was more like a robot that somebody was commanding you to do things. You didn't know which way to move. They'd give you a little dry rice and a cup of water. Dry rice once it goes into your stomach, water swells it up. We lost, counting Filipinos and Americans, I'd say anywhere between 8,000 and 10,000 men died on that march, which run all the way from Mariveles, all the way up through Cab Cabin, Bogak, up into San Fernando, up into Tarlac up into Camp O'Donnell up in the province of Tarlac.

We stayed on that march about ten days. All the men that we lost, the roads on both sides were covered with bodies. The men with malaria and dysentery couldn't go any further. They were so weak. They were nothing but skin and bones. I always use this phrase; they sold us out in the South Pacific. I always blamed George Marshall. I hate to say that, but I blame George Marshall for it. He said, "We can't take care of the Pacific. Europe is our main objective." We knew then that the lines from San Francisco from Hawaii and from Hawaii down to the Philippines was 6,000 miles. It's 10,000 miles from Manila to San Francisco. When Wake and Guam had already surrendered, I was in prison with some of the guys from Wake. Colonel Deveraux

S: Deveraux, he ran for mayor in Baltimore when we lived in Baltimore. Back up a second, Conrad, you don't mind me calling you Conrad, do you?

A: No.

S: How long were you in the Philippines before the Japs attacked?

A: I'd say about three or four weeks.

S: What were your duties during those three or four weeks?

A: We were out on the firing range taking machine gun practice, rifle practice, and automatic weapons.

S: What kind of facilities did you have there?

A: Tents is all we had. Squat tents.

S: How about the equipment that you had?

A: The equipment we had, we had the old Springfield, 03 [1903]. We had the old Browning Automatic Rifle [BAR], which was an automatic rifle for a while. We had grenades over there that—believe it or not—had been stored in the jungles over there since the First World War. You could unscrew them and the fuse was already dehalved, and it had turned green in that damn hot weather. We had the old French 77 artillery. We had the 155s [Howitzers]. The planes that we had was the old P-37s. We had the old P-35s. We had the old B-18 bombers. Then we had a few B-17s that came up at the Clark Field right before the war broke out. All of them was caught on the ground except for Captain Kelly [Colin Kelly, called “first American hero of WW II, flew bombing runs against Japanese navy in first days after Pearl Harbor; his B-17 bomber was shot down on December 10, 1941; Japanese cruiser he was targeting was misidentified as the *Haruna*—it was the *Ashigara*]. [Did] you ever hear of him?

S: Oh, yes.

A: He was the first who got the Congressional Medal of Honor.

S: He sank the *Haruna* [actually the *Ashigara*].

A: Yeah.

S: He was operating out of Clark Field. That's where he was flying out from. The equipment we had was obsolete, it was no good. We had the old Lewis machine guns [light portable machine gun] that had the drum on top, not the clip. They had the old drums where it's just like a rifle and you sit it right on top of it.

S: How much of it actually worked?

A: Very few of it. The ammunition that we had, even for our rifles, the old 3s, was stamped on the back of it, 1917. That's what we had. We wasn't prepared. The first day at Nichols Field, believe it or not, at Clark Field and Nielson Field was the same thing that happened at Hickam Field [Pearl Harbor]. The Japanese came right over. General White was the blame of that at Clark Field. All the bombers, the old B-15 bombers, two motors, it wasn't a very big bomber, they were lined up. They were lined up to fight us and they came right down across, them Zeros [Japanese fighter planes] and took out all of them. We had, at the end, believe it or not, after the first month after the war broke out, we had two planes. We used to use that V for victory but we had to keep them flying, both of them. That's what it was, keep them flying, two of them.

S: P-40s?

A: P-40s, Then they came out later with this P-39, then Europe had the P-38. But we had nothing. The first prison camp I was in after the Death March, believe it or not, was Camp O'Donnell. You could smell that camp ten miles before you got there. I was on burial detail for approximately six months. We buried 26,000 Filipinos, about 2,500 Americans, not counting those who were executed.

The second camp I was in, Cabanatuan—that was six months later. It was a prison camp north of Manila; we lost 2,500 Americans. I was on burial detail for just about four months. Every morning they had the bodies stacked up. The guys were nothing but skin and bones. People have read about the Holocaust, they've seen films about the Holocaust, but they've never seen films about the atrocities in the Southwest Pacific. It's never been published. Even the pictures of it, there's none there. The people who can relate back to it and try to study it, because there was no communications whatsoever.

Every morning on burial detail, we had a big building out in the middle of a field of rice patties, known as the Zero Ward. Every man was dying. They moved him in there and lay him on a grass mat. There was nothing but flies and filth. You could smell it and that human waste all over them. [There were] flies that big all over them. [There were] ulcers on their legs, tropical ulcers like that. Some of them there'd be maggots working down in the ulcers. I was small, and we'd dig a hole maybe half as big as this kitchen, almost as deep, and you could put [in] 100 bodies. You didn't bury anybody with clothes on. Clothes were scarce. You didn't know if you was burying a captain, or a colonial, or a private or a corporal. Everybody went in the same grave. [There was] no identification. We had no dog tags. They took everything we had. The only thing we had was a prison number.

My number was Hati Ocko San Juan, 834. I'd get down on one end of the hole, a man would get on the other, and roll bodies off. We'd level them up, then stand on them and stack on top of them. Then we'd put dirt, stack a little more, then bring some more bodies, we'd stack a little more. Then if there was 200 men who died, what we did, we put up a cross, we put 200 men. That way when the war was over they could go back where they could say, we know 200 men are buried here. The next day was the same identical thing. Where we lived at in there were old huts made out of bamboo. Guys laying there dying and smelling.

We had one latrine at one end of the camp and one at the other, an old straddle trench, maggots constantly working in all of that crap where men had gone. Some of them laying around had dysentery so bad they'd just lay around that hole. You had one water spigot for the whole camp. You'd get up and line up to get water. You got a half a cup of water a day. You didn't get a bath or nothing. The Japanese, every morning they'd give you one bowl of rice and a cup of fish soup, that's what you got. At noon time you got a bowl of rice and a cup of fish soup, that's all you got.

I stayed on that burial detail for, I reckon, about six months. Then the camp began to thin out. They began to ship them here and ship them there. They didn't know, when the Japanese took us, they didn't know how many it was going to be. There were so many Filipinos, but they gave them amnesty, all the Filipinos just about, except the Filipino Scouts, which had American officers. The Filipino Scouts had American officers trained by American officers. The Japanese figured they were just the same as Americans. That camp there, you could go five to ten miles away from it and you could smell it. I don't know if you ever smelled death or not, or burning flesh, it's a smell that penetrates you. You never forget it. It's always right there. You never forget it.

From there I was transferred to Cabanatuan. I stayed in Cabanatuan for about four or five months. We buried 2,500 Americans there, about 2,500 or 2,600. Then when it rained, you had to go cover it [grave site] back up because the bodies would be sticking up, there'd be arms sticking up or there'd be a leg. There wasn't too much dirt you could put on them anyway because of the rainy season; you'd have so many in the hole. People was interested in surviving. They weren't interested in burying people. I mean, we buried all we could, but you were interested in surviving. We had men who tried to commit suicide and would cut their wrist and crawl up under the old hut.

One guy, I'll always remember, I won't call his name, we just called him "Harebrained Harry," he tried to commit suicide three times, and he was one of the first persons I saw in the hospital when I come back. Everybody's trying to live and he's trying to kill himself. You see so many young boys. They put us in ten-men squads. If one man

escaped, they shot the other nine. Psychologically, here's what they're doing. If you're in this squad, you'd better keep an eye on the other men. If one man escaped, you'd better go with him or you're gone.

When they executed the officers, they didn't ever shoot the officers much. They beheaded them. Outside of camp, they had two great big poles. When they beheaded an officer, we used to witness this when they'd behead them, they had barbed wire, they carried them outside the fence there. They kneeled them down, this guy named, Schloopa, we called him "Schloopa," a big Japanese. He looked like a Mongolian. He had high cheekbones, but he had a saber. It wasn't as long as an original saber, but it was heavier. It was something like a meat cleaver. He could whack a head off and it would drop just like that. It'd be just like a chicken, that body would. They'd take their heads and they'd hang them up on each side of those poles. They'd leave them up there for three days till the eyes bloated them.

Every morning you had to go on burial detail right by those heads. They'd cover up them bodies out there of the officers they beheaded, but you had to look at this stuff all the time. You wanted to say, how am I going to feed my family? Then you become hard. Listen, you serve one year in there and you become hard. You have no emotions, no feelings, no nothing. The only thing you've got in the back of your mind is one little key word, it's survival, survival, survival.

I'll never forget when MacArthur left us in March 1942. He sent pamphlets over on Bataan, I mean I thought that Wainwright, too, Wainwright was commanding general on Corregidor. He died down south of Fort Sam Houston, I believe in 1953 [September 2, 1953 in San Antonio]. MacArthur sent pamphlets over on Bataan and said this: "There are hundreds of planes and thousands of men on their way to the Philippines. If you stay and fight, you will survive. If you run you, will be destroyed. I shall return." That's where it came from; a lot of people don't know that.

Then he took off [March 11, 1942] on a [PT boat], I believe his name [commander's name] was [Lt. John] Buckley, PT Boat. He [MacArthur] went down to Menidor [Mindanao] down that way and took, I believe, a B-17 out and went on down [to Australia]. I thought about a lot of that in prison. I stayed there and then they shipped me. They lined us up one morning and began to pick out certain ones. I was picked out. I didn't know it, but I was picked out and put on one of the roughest details in the Philippines. In fact, I've got letters from Australia. They knew I was on that detail and this man was writing a book about it—[about] Nichols Field and the White Angel [a vicious Japanese Naval commandant who supervised the work detail; he wore a white Naval uniform with cloak so he was nicknamed the "White Angel"]. They hung him later, the Japanese Marines.

We had to build an airfield. Every morning you got up at five o' clock. You were at work at six o' clock. There's a mountain there almost that big and there was 600 of us. What we had to do was flatten that mountain. You look at it and say, "Hey, how am I going to do it?" Then you look at that guard with them bayonets and you say, "We can do it." What you did, you ran tracks over the top of it. You'd cut down four feet then you'd drop the track. Then you cut four this way and drop the track. You'd go all the way down to that ground level where that field was, then you'd work that way with a track on each side.

I stayed out there, and I'll never forget this as long as I live. This boy was named Cross. He's part Cherokee Indian from New Mexico. He escaped one day, and he got up in a mango tree. A bunch of Korean laborers told the Japanese where he was. They had an old big bell there, where they rung for us to come in at noon time and give a little rice bowl. They found him, they wrung that bell, it was about eleven o'clock, I knew it wasn't time to eat or nothing like that, so we came in and lined us up. They had him there. We didn't wear anything but a G-string.

I was barefoot. I was barefooted the whole time I was in the Philippines. I never had any shoes. My head was shaved. I had an old straw hat and it had Hati Ocko San Juan, 834 right across the top, my prison number. They took him, I'll never forget him. Every time Easter comes, I think about it. They stood him up, took a bamboo pole and split it and started beating at his neck down to his ankles, then took salt and rubbed it all over his body in the back. Blood was running on the ground. They took him out where we was dumping the dirt, lengthened the runways that come off where the hill was being leveled out, they'd bring the dirt down to dump it to make the runway go farther.

Captain Yukota, after the guards shot him, they hit him right there and tore the side of his head off and he come up out of that hole hollering, "You S-O-B!" When he did, Captain Yukota walked up and took a pistol and shot him right in the head and he fell back. We put dirt right over the grave. That's where the runway is today, I reckon he's still under there. That's the way we buried men. I stayed on that detail I suspect about six months. Then they started shipping them to Japan.

S: Tell me about your day. How did it begin and how did it end?

A: The day started in the morning at six o' clock and you got off at six at night. You had twelve hours of picks and shovels, seven days a week, thirty or thirty-one days a month, whatever it was.

S: You were fed out in the field?

A: Yeah, you got a rice bowl out there and they had a big drum that had fish soup in it.

That's where they boiled fish. It wasn't nothing but just soupy water. You'd go in and get a bowl of rice. You have this little bowl. Everybody carried a little can. The organization I belonged to that defended Bataan and Corregidor, we have a newspaper known as *The Quan*. *The Quan* means anything you can mix in a bucket. That's the nickname of it. We started six in the morning till six at night. At bedtime you were down. You see, we had no lights.

You lived in these meipa huts. You laid down on those grass mats. Eight o' clock at night, that was it. You laid there until the time they got you up. Tinko, five o' clock roll call. The guards come by every hour with a flashlight. They had your number painted on that grass mat, Hati Ocko San Juan, 834, Hati Ocko San Jugoi, 835, right on down what your number was. They'd come and check it. Tinko in the morning, roll call. You fell out, you run out there and lined up. You had little five-gallon cans like that. They had rice in that. Then they had a man with a bucket of soup beside of that.

When you eat that, you march, got your pick and shovel, you lined up on the main street and you marched out to work. It was about three kilometers out to Parnaki, right at where Nichols Field is. Then they turned you over there to the Japanese Marines. The Army was watching us there, but when we got there, it was under the Japanese Marines. That's why this Captain Yukota was a Naval officer. They called him a "White Angel" or a white Naval captain with a big white cloak. He always stood up and looked down at you. Japs love to get up on a high place and look down. They can't talk level. They've gotta look down on you. You got hard to all this mess. I stayed there I reckon about six months.

S: Working on that runway the whole time?

A: I worked on that runway. I'll tell you it was getting these big Mitsubishi bombers in. It ain't getting these big bombers in, it was trying to lengthen the runway. The Japanese were moving their forces south and were coming through the Philippines. That's how the Air Force came down, they flew down. Especially the fighter planes, they were island hopping down. Then they lined us up that morning and said we're going to Japan. Then we'd go over to work.

S: What time frame was this now?

A: This was about July, something along there, 1943. They took us down to Port Air. The biggest pier at that time in the South Pacific was Port Air Pier #7. It was a big pier. We were already ragged and dirty. We were nothing but skin and bones. The g-string we had on, the old hat, they made us take them off, we stood right there naked. The forward hold—It was a freighter. They had a fallen aft hold. I believe it's 600 to 9, I forget how

much went in to the forward hold. What it was, there's coal dust down there about six inches deep. It's made to sit between each other's legs.

You had to go down an old wooden ladder, down into it. There wasn't no nets. You had booms up there, but there wasn't no nets because they had no pole on it. They was going to use it for a prison ship. We sit between each other's legs for twenty-eight days. When your bowel was moved, you stood up and did it there and sit back down in it. You urinated right where you was sitting. I was up next to the bulkhead, and I could get a little moist. I'd take my hands like that to wet my lips. Manny Lawton and his wife sent me the book [*Some Survived: An Eyewitness Account of the Bataan Death March and the Men Who Lived Through It*—published in 2004] that he wrote. He worked for Strom Thurmond [U.S. Senator, R-South Carolina] in Washington. He was on a ship just like that I was on but they'd cut some of the guys that died. They'd cut their jugular veins and suck their blood out of it, dying of thirst.

S: Who cut their veins?

A: The Americans did. They'd cut the dead bodies for something to drink.

S: Manny Lawton and his wife MaryAnn sent it to me by my daughter; she lives down in South Carolina. He worked for Strom Thurmond before he died. He died about ten years ago of cancer. We'd sit in that ship, and about four days out, somewhere between the Philippines and Formosa, Taiwan, a siren went off. American submarines, at that time, were doing a lot of patrolling. They sunk a ship behind us. Our ships weren't marked, but we knew it was them. We had already accepted that.

S: You already thought you were dead?

A: Oh yeah, we already accepted that. You get to that point and say, that's it. That's the end of it. They sunk the ship behind us. When I got off that ship...

S: This is in Japan?

A: In Moji, Japan, a little place south of Homji, I was caked in human waste, all over me. Crawling up that ladder [I was] weak.

S: How did they feed you in the hold?

A: They lowered a rice bucket down. You got a handful of rice and a half a cup of water a day. That's all you got.

S: Did men fight over this?

A: Oh listen, guys screaming, guys hollering. My God, I said, hey man, this is the end of the world. I always put a little humor to it. You've got to have a little humor. I told guys, "Listen, if you don't eat that rice, you ain't going home. Brother, you'd better get with it." It'd be what stuff had been stored in, you'd eat worms. Eat anything, it don't make no difference, you'd stay alive. People don't understand that. That's something I can't understand about the American people. They really don't understand.

I'll tell you, I was sitting on the board down there, in fact, I was sitting on it for fourteen years. I told people down there two years ago, I said, "Let me tell you something. You come down here about cats digging up your shrubbery, dogs doing this." I said, "One of these days, an earthquake or tornado hits this community to bring it together." They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Hardships bring you together. It gives you a better outlook on life. It makes you understand things better. Spiritual and physical, maybe not physical, but mentally and spiritually it makes a better person out of you. To really understand things sometimes, it shouldn't happen this way, you have to be knocked plumb down to the bottom before you can look up. You appreciate things."

Right now, my heart desires nothing because there's nothing really I want except my family's health, my health, and peace of mind. That's all I want. I don't want nothing else. I just get to thinking about all of that after I got off that ship caked in all that human waste. As they cleaned us up and put us in old Japanese uniforms, they shipped us down to a submarine base down in Tanagauwa, building dry breakwaters. Building had a dry breakwater out there, a submarine base. The Americans bombed us out of that.

The next one was Nawa. This was in 1944, later on, was working the submarine base moved us up to Nawa. Then in 1944, I believe it was in November, here come—I didn't know what it was. I looked up and never seen the vapor trails of B-29s. Then I could hear all them bombs going off across the bay over there. They were really laying it on them. Then they came over later and they hit our camp. It wasn't big demolition bombs. It was probably about a 500 pound or something. They bombed us out of there. Then we moved us up—about 114 miles north of Hiroshima. We worked up there unloading timber, raw rubber, coal, soy beans, in Manchur, down in Saigon.

S: How did you have the strength to do it?

A: Let me tell you something. You don't think that you can. Now you can will yourself to die. That's a sure thing. You can do that. You can go home today and get to feeling a little bad and say, I believe I've got a touch of the flu or something. You go crawl in the bed and you stay in there two or three days. You're going to be sick. You've got to fight it. You'd

be surprised what the human body can stand. You can take abuses. You can take beatings. I stood in solitary confinement for thirty days.

S: Why?

A: For leaving my hat out when it was raining. When it started raining, the rest of the guys grabbed theirs and I forgot mine. You went to go out to work and it was raining too hard. Cherry Blossom, the guy in charge of the camp, hollered over and says, Haki Ocko San Juan, cutchi goa jimi shaun, come to the office. I had my hat. I went over there and he beat the heck out of me.

S: What did he use?

A: His hands. Open handed like that. Then they put me in solitary confinement behind the camp, just a big old thing made out of tin at the top. You couldn't sit up, you couldn't stretch out, you urinated down to the bottom. They'd give you a cup of rice. I sat in that thing for thirty days. I'll tell you something, here's what you had to do. I think of the borders that bordered this country, I think from Maine down to the coast of Florida all the way down through New Mexico right on up through California on up to Washington, I'd think of every capital, every river, every city I could think of. Then I'd think of people I went to school with in the first grade, who my teacher was, who my teacher was in the second grade. I'd think of the boys I was raised with. All of these things had to keep your mind going. You could go in there and forget everything, and you'd come out knowing nothing. You had to exercise your mind while you were in there. That's what I did.

They'd bring that cup of water a day and one rice bowl, a cup of water a day, one rice bowl. [I spent] thirty days in there. I got hard. Listen, I was hard as concrete. I didn't weigh but eighty or ninety pounds, but nothing fazed me. I've had them guards walk by and put their rifle right there. He said, "Okay." I'd say, "Okay" because if he shot, I'd never notice anyway. You're living in a different world all together. You're not living in reality. You're living in a zone that it's hard to explain. You're living in something where you're more of a robot and you go by commands because you have no emotions. There's no emotions. You don't have any. You just don't have no emotions. If a man fell dead right there, it didn't bother you. When they executed somebody, you just stood there and looked.

S: Just glad it wasn't you.

A: Yes, that's it. I'd get to thinking about it. There's only two in my company that's living. One other guy lives up in Shelby [North Carolina]. His health is bad. I was fortunate. Not

that I know of I've got anything wrong with me, but I think of all of those things, the hardships in almost four years. I never will forget when they dropped the atomic bomb. They lined us up that morning to this colonel. He went to UCLA in 1934 and went back to Japan as a colonel. He spoke perfect English, but he wouldn't speak it around you.

The morning they dropped the [first] atomic bomb, I believe was August 8 [August 6], on Hiroshima. He lined us up. The orders had already come. This was amazing. Orders that came in from the Tokyo Imperial Japanese Army. If the Americans ever invade Japan, which it was already forming in Okinawa, getting ready for the invasion, every American prison of war, every British prisoner of war, everyone will be put to death either by firing squads, gas, or fire. If the Americans invade Japan, all prisoners will be executed.

A lot of people say today, "Why did we drop that bomb on Japan?" Let me tell you something, I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for that. If the Americans had invaded Japan, there wouldn't have been a prisoner alive. The morning they dropped that bomb he lined us up, pulled out that saber. He walked up and down that line, them black boots a-clickin', just walking up and down that line. I'm standing up in the front right, just standing there. He says, kino! That was yesterday, Americans scopi, American plane, bee neju coo, B-29, shiza bocuize smaban, everything go.

I wondered, what in the world [happened]? I'd been locked up, no communications, no letters, nothing. What it was, the atomic bomb had destroyed the whole city. We didn't know it. But let me tell you, about two weeks after that, you're talking about American bombers coming over to Japan. The camp right above us, I knew it was going to be bombed. It was another town, but the Americans were rotating the towns using fire bombs and synergy bombs. All the homes were made out of plywood mostly. If you notice, the big boards up in the corner of the house, if you run a big bolt through there, they'd slip about an inch on each side on account of earthquakes. They built their homes like that to keep it so it could heal.

That night about twelve o' clock I heard [airplane noises]. I heard them coming in. I told this ol' boy from Liberty, he died later, I was up on the third deck of this old warehouse. We were doing stevedore, all this raw rubber, pig iron, soy beans and all that stuff. The first load [of bombs] came right along the waterfront. The next load come across our building. One of the nose plates came down, cut his hand off right here, and the building was on fire. Guards [were] going everywhere, prisoners hollering and screaming and jumping over that barbed wire, and I'm going down the road.

That city burnt there for, I'd say, about five or six days, a whole city. There was only one concrete building in that city. There was a big textile mill laying just about a half a mile up in the valley. We was all over on the side of the hill and there were the guards the

next day trying to round us up here and there. The reason that we had guards in Japan was to keep the civilians from killing us. When you had a fire in Japan, they had no fire department.

There are little canals that run everywhere. Children jumping in and screaming on fire. People jumping in those things. You pay no attention to them. You say, this is all right. This is the way it's going. This is the way it's supposed to be. The next day, this little pursuit of P-51s. They were coming, these aircraft carriers. You know more about the Navy planes than I do, [but there were] a lot of Navy planes, fighter planes, strafing everything that was walking. It was still burning. People on bicycles, they'd strafe them.

S: This is after the first bomb?

A: Yeah.

S: The second one hadn't been dropped.

A: No. It'd be going up like that. Admiral [Mark] Mitscher [Vice Admiral of the Fast Carrier Task Force], I remember, Task Force 15. That's where it was coming from. They had a field day. They'd go up like that and come down and strafe them people on bicycles. We was all over the place trying to round us up. Then they moved us to an old cement factory way on past the town. This textile mill was the only concrete building there. Every morning, they still worked every day at burned-out places, cleaning up here and there, every morning at ten o'clock, I'd look at the guard and say, non gee deska. He'd say jue jee. Ten o'clock. B-29 coming in every morning from China, exactly ten o'clock. The next day, here come that B-29 in. I'd say, non gee deska, jue jee, ten o'clock. The next morning it didn't come in. It came in Mosaka. I said, this is it. I told this old boy, Bolaskysa, he was a Pollock, I said, "Watch that textile factory now. You watch it." I looked up at a B-29, that bomb coming out of that bomb bay was a blockbuster. That thing went down through three floors in that textile mill. It must have been a delayed fuse, and that thing came up like that.

After we were liberated, Dutch Airborne liberated us. It was in September. September the 4th or 5th. I had the opportunity, a bunch of us got out, and we went over to that old mill. We was after everything. Guys grabbing rifles and shooting guards, I didn't do that. Listen, I'd done been through too much. I'd done seen so much hatred in my life, I didn't want any more of it. I just got sick of it. But I'd never seen so many bodies of young girls in all my life. See, nobody but young girls in that textile mill. That blockbuster, that's what it was. It hit that textile mill and bingo, she was gone.

They carried us through Hiroshima after that, the Dutch Airborne. Hiroshima, you could

smell it twenty miles before you got there. I'd asked you before had you ever smelled burnt flesh. If you ever smelled it, you'd never forget it. It's a penetrating smell. It hangs right there in your nose. You'll never forget it, the smell is always there. It looked like they cooked them people on a charcoal burner. That was 87,000 people. That's small. People say, that's a lot of people.

Let me tell you, in May 1945, B-29s came over Tokyo, the wind was blowing forty-five miles per hour between Tokyo and Yokohama, it was a firestorm. It killed over 100,000 Japanese. Not the atomic bomb, but the firestorm, just like what happened in Germany and Dresden [between February 13 and 15, 1945, 1,300 American and British air forces dropped more than 3,900 tons of high explosive and incendiary bombs on Dresden]. It's the same identical thing that happened in Germany and Dresden. 158,000 there. Take Hiroshima, Nagasaki all together, about 150,000 between the two of them. One bombing raid on Tokyo and Yokohama. When I was liberated, I could stand in Yokohama and see almost to Tokyo. [It was all] black, scorched earth. That's what it was in Japan.

S: I talked to a man the day before yesterday who dropped the fire bomb.

A: B.G. He lives in Moxville, I bet.

S: No, he lives over in _____.

A: Does he? What's his name?

S: Bob Arden.

A: Well, there's a guy, a B-29 pilot, I go over and see. I'll go over to the nearest home and talk to the veterans. This guy, he's messed up, I mean really fouled up. He was a B-29 pilot. You look at him and you say to yourself, somebody's safe. There goes an old soldier. They don't remember that man was a young soldier at one time. He was young.

S: Very young.

A: He was patriotic. He was faithful to his country. He was a true believer. That's why I say, sometimes when I go to make talks to people, even in school, these kids will sit there, and here's what they're saying to themselves. Oh, all of this stuff couldn't have happened. This man is living in a world of fantasy. You say to yourself, you've got a lot to learn.

S: If you don't learn from the past, you're doomed to repeat it.

- A: I stayed in a hospital out in San Francisco about six months. They asked me, I could go anywhere in the world I wanted to, I weighed eighty-seven pounds when I came out of prison.
- S: Tell me how you were released from prison. What were the circumstances?
- A: Oh, the first thing was, we cut out strips and put on top, POW on top. After we knew the war was over. We woke up and the guards were gone.
- S: You didn't realize until the guards were gone? You were still in prison.
- A: We were still in prison camp. We didn't know the war was over in September [September 2, 1945]. I believe it was signed on board the *Missouri* about August sometime, or September 2, when it was signed. Here was all the guards gone, all except a few here and there where they lived at.
- S: Were you worried about the civilians coming in at all?
- A: Yeah, that was the point. A lot of guys were grabbing rifles and were shooting and going into houses and breaking in. They were wild, they were crazy. They'd been locked up for four years, starving to death and everything else. They were just taking everything into [their own] hands. They reminded me of the Russians really. When you come out of a prison camp, but I couldn't see it. I just couldn't see it. One guy I know, a little guard, he wasn't a bad guard. They called him as the trestle was going over, the railroad track going up where the cement factory was and where the mill had blown up. They [POWs] took him like that by his feet and arms, threw him straight up in there and he hit that railroad track down there. Just like that. That's the way they was.
- S: Were civilians a threat to you?
- A: Not at the last. They'd all gone. The city done burned. The city was about 60,000 or 70,000. Cherubala. The city was short. They'd gone, what hadn't got killed.
- S: How did you figure your POW site was missed? Were you just lucky?
- A: No, it hit us. A nose plate came down through and caught Beau Collins. It cut his hand right off. We was on fire. It destroyed the whole city.
- S: The POW buildings were still [standing]?
- A: No, it burned down, too. A load of bombs came down and incinerated a bunch. It came

right down like that.

S: Were you sleeping out in a field then?

A: No, I was on top of a building inside of an old warehouse. When it bombed us, when it got on fire near the thing, it was popping the bombs, everybody was trying to get out. The guards were taking off out the gates.

S: You were unloading all this material?

A: No, this was nighttime. Twelve o' clock. See, the Americans never did bomb us during the day. It was always at night. You had bombers come over in the day to get military objectives, but not at night. At nighttime, that's when you'd come over with the incendiary bombs. That's when they dropped them. You could see the cities. You could look down and see cities burning way down fifteen, twenty miles.

S: When did the guards disappear?

A: After they started dropping the bombs. All of them took off going out the gates every which way. Me, I grabbed a Japanese rifle one of them threw down. I'm going down the street with a Japanese rifle. It's a dang wonder somebody hadn't shot me. I didn't know what I was doing. I had that rifle. I figured it might save me. I was in a tight spot. You do some crazy things.

S: What did you do about the POW? You said you put a POW sign where?

A: On the last building. The cement factory. We put POW on the top [to alert American bombers].

S: That was the last standing building?

A: It was the last standing building. This was way up in the valley, the cement factory was. It was away from the town. Them planes came and see POW and they call back, and these B-17s coming in from Okinawa all loaded down with food dropping out with parachutes. Blue, purple, green, every color. Drums, they'd hit, bust open, they had shoes in it, chocolate, I never seen so much food in all my life. Some of the guys ate so much they got sick with diarrhea. Man, they'd eat. They almost killed themselves with corn beef. I didn't do that. I said, "Hey man, I ain't killing myself." I was just 21 years old then.

S: How long was it between that point then and the time you were actually rescued?

A: It was about two or three days. The Dutch Brigade and Airborne came in. I believe it was the C-46 right down in the valley where we was. They came into the camp.

S: Paratroopers?

A: Paratroopers, yeah. They dropped right down into the camp where we was. The Dutch Airborne was what it was. They had a lot of British imprisoned up in Japan, a lot of Dutch. Down in Java and Sumatra. Singapore fell February 18, 1942 [actually February 25, 1942], they eventually shot Yamashita [General Tomoyuki Yamashita most famous for conquering British colonies of Malaya and Singapore; known as the “Tiger of Malaya.” [Lt. General Masaharu] Homma was in charge of the death party and Yamashita was the “Tiger of Malaya.” He was the “Tiger of Malaya” when they took over the British. I stayed in a hospital in San Francisco for I reckon about six months.

S: When they liberated you, you were eighty-seven pounds?

A: [I was] eighty-seven pounds.

S: When they liberated you, what happened to you at that point?

A: They carried us all on a train and carried us to Yokohama and they put us there on an airfield, I forget the name of it. Then they had us all there and they put us on that and flew us down to Okinawa. Then they put us on a hospital ship.

S: They took you to the Philippine islands?

A: We stayed there and they brought us back on the hospital ship to San Francisco. We stayed in the Philippines about ten days. Then they came back and they put me in Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco. I stayed there about six months. After I got kind of straightened out, I'll never forget, Ward Bond, Maureen O'Hara, John Wayne [movie stars] came in the ward where I was. There were all these movie stars going around welcoming guys back.

S: You were eighty-seven pounds. Were you physically intact?

A: No, physically, I wasn't. Until I got way down there, they was giving us this type of food and this kind of food and this type of vitamin.

S: What kind of food did they feed you to bring you back?

A: It didn't have any taste to it.

S: Like hospital food?

A: Yeah. I still don't eat much food. Let me tell you something, I feel guilty. When I sit down to eat, I feel guilty. I think of all of those days that I starved and all of those people that starved to death. I eat just enough to satisfy me. I never overeat. I'll tell you what I can do. I can go two or three days, which I don't, but I can go two or three days and never think about food, it don't even cross my mind. I get up in the morning and I'll eat cereal. I'll eat lunch. We may go out to dinner somewhere, but food never crosses my mind. I've done without it so long it's immaterial if I eat or not. I eat enough to live. I take vitamins, the right type, and I eat the right type of food when I do eat, but I'm not what you call an eater. A lot of people are eaters, I'm not. I'm not an eater. Your stomach shrinks up.

Like I say, special food they'd bring to you, then the next month you're putting on a little weight, the next month you're putting on a little weight. Colonel Burry was in prison in the war, he came back and made him colonel over one of the wards there. He came up to me and said, "I'm going to give you a choice: You can retire militarily on disability, or you can stay in the service, pick any place in the world you want to go, and stay there, if something bothers you or if something flares up after prison life." I went to Rome and spent two years in the American Embassy in Rome. In Rome, let me tell you something .

...

S: I want to hear about that, but let's go back. I'm intrigued by other things. Let me go all the way back to the Philippines. When the Japs invaded the Philippines, you retreated back to Bataan. What happened when the Japanese actually captured you? What was it like? Where were you physically and what was happening out in front of you?

A: We didn't know it really, but we'd been having artillery barrages for about three or four days. Constant artillery barrages. They were boom, boom, boom, boom, it continues for three days. The whole line was covered with artillery fire. A lot of men was getting killed. I was a BAR man, Browning Automatic Rifle man. I'd already been hit in the back and the stomach, which hadn't knocked me completely out. It stunned me, but it hadn't completely knocked me out. When they started coming through them rice patties, there was no way.

S: What time of the day was this now?

A: This was about nine or ten o' clock in the morning. On April 9, 1942, I've never seen so many Japanese. You could see a few every once in a while.

S: You were behind some kind of a wall?

A: We was down in dugouts. They came over. They were just like the guys down in Vietnam. They were coming out from everywhere. I've never seen so many. Who we was fighting was the Japanese 14th Army. The Kuan Kong, they called it, out of China. They'd been fighting in China for two or three years before they ever invaded the Philippines. That was a crack unit. What they was trying to do is crack everything they could and move south. They wanted to go to Australia. Their objective to start with was Australia, to take it all. They got down almost to Guadalcanal, that was your first offensive, 1942, you know. August 8, I believe. Here it was, guys going up this way, Japs just grabbing, shooting, going into the hospital like I told you earlier where they were on these beds with mosquito bars, shooting the guys in them beds there, in that canvas cot, is what it was. It was just a madhouse. Just a madhouse.

S: When did you finally say, hey, I've been captured.

A: When I was coming out of the hole, one was right down on me like that and that bayonet was just about that long. He done like that and I went. He could have killed me right there, which they were doing some of. A lot of them got killed that way. Then they marched me down the side of the hill.

S: Your unit was just strictly overrun.

A: It was overrun.

S: A guy came to your hole and just said, up and out.

A: See, we didn't have replacements. When you lost a man, you had no replacement. Now in Europe, they lost so many men. They had replacements to go in. In the Philippines, you had no replacements. In the Philippines, you had nobody but yourself. When you was gone, you was gone, and there was nobody to replace you.

S: What were your thoughts when you were sitting in this bunker, or whatever you want to call it? What were your thoughts when you knew, hey, we're about to be overrun.

A: Listen, you're not scared. You get to the point that you're not scared. It's just like our artillery barrage. You say to yourself, hey, it won't get me, it won't get me. It comes close to you. It'll knock all the way around you. You can almost reach out and touch the craters. But you say to yourself, hey, it's not me. I had a guy who went on patrol with me. I forget his name. He always said, "I'm gonna get killed." I said, "Quit talking that stuff." One morning we did patrol duty along the edge of the rice patty. We was crawling

along the edge of it and I told him, I said, "You'd better stay down." He raised up, and when he did one of them machine guns hit him right there. It tore him all up. I scooted back along the edge of that rice patty back to that hole. You're not scared until it's over with. After all of this, we had our hands up, and they marched us down the trails there through the jungles and out in the road, then you say to yourself, my God. It all comes to you at once. It's just like a car.

[End of Tape A, Side 1.]

A: You're driving a car out here and you come close to having a wreck. Close now. It doesn't bother you right then. But when you get down the road, you think about it. You say, hey, wait a minute. I could have lost it.

S: I can relate to that.

A: That's what happened. It's not right then. When the adrenaline is flowing, you get strength that you don't know you've really got. I know in some of the camps I was unloading soy beans, 180 pounds.

S: How much did you weigh?

A: Hey, the boy that did had codies. They'd hook him on the beams and throw him up in the air like that, two men would, and he'd run under it and grab it by the ears. Then you'd run into a ramp up to a boxcar and dump it. You'd say, how could I do it? But see, they have a system. You saw how they got two baskets on a stick on the end? They call it a yehoh basket. What it is, you fill that one and that one with the same amount of weight. You put it on your shoulder and you don't walk, you trot. See, and that weight goes back and forth. You never feel it. You put 100 pounds in that one and 100 pounds in that one and that thing kind of bows over like that. You put it on your shoulder but you gotta have a trot. See, what you do, you don't walk. You've got to rock with it.

S: It makes it feel like it's light.

A: Yeah. You learn a lot of things while you're in prison. I'll never forget one day, there was one guy on sick call, a guy named Spurlock, from down in Waco, Texas. Hadn't had no meat, had no nothing, just getting that rice and cup of pea soup. He said, "When you get your rice, I got something." I didn't know what it was. He says, "Come on." He had a little can about that big where he cooked. Everybody carried a little can just like you see in the Civil War. Everybody carried a little can, something to put in case you get anything to eat.

He had some meat all cooked up and I put it on my rice and ate it and, oh man, it was good. No meat, I hadn't had any. He said, "That was a cat." What he did was caught a cat and skinned it and cooked it up while we was out working. It tasted good. I've ate dog meat, cat meat, monkey meat. Monkey meat is just like a baby. You can skin a monkey and it looks just like a newborn baby. You can put him down in a pot. It don't make no difference, he's eatable. Small pythons, you can eat them. Even iguana lizards, you can eat them.

You can dig up under a bamboo tree, and the sprouts, the same thing if you go to a restaurant in one of these Chinese joints. You can get right down there and cut them tender sprouts off, boil them, and drink that as nourishment. To get your iron, what you do is find rusty nails, put them in a jar and fill it up with water, shake it, and hide it somewhere. In three days, all that rust gets off those nails, you drink that rust, that's natural iron.

S: You did that?

A: Oh, yeah, sure. You have to do things like that.

S: How were you able to do that and keep it secret?

A: You had a building there, a grass mat, you take a little jar. They didn't know what it was. They didn't even mess with it. There wasn't no such thing as contraband because there was no contraband. There was nothing to have. There was no contraband. You were stripped of everything. A jar sitting there looked brown to them, it was just brown. They see you picking up nails. They don't know what you're doing with them. They know you wasn't building an airplane.

S: How were you able to get, let's say, the roots of some of those bamboos?

A: That was in the jungle. That was when we was still fighting. We still do that on Bataan now. Let me tell you something comical. It wasn't comical then. We eat up the 26th Cavalry. We ate the whole cavalry. Listen, the 26th Cavalry was a horse outfit. They had pack mules. On Bataan, them [Filipino] Scouts would rush them Japanese in a rice patty, or sugarcane field, they'd get on those horses and take right off after them Japanese. They were good fighters, them [Filipino] Scouts were. There were times when them horses got killed in our artillery barrage [and] we got a chunk of it. We'd eat everything but the saddles. Let me tell you, we'd have ate them if we got them in a pot, but they were tough. Eating horse may be like eating a combat boot, but it's good to chew on though when you're hungry. That horsemeat is just like steak.

S: You ate that whole cavalry.

A: We ate the whole cavalry. 406th Cavalry Regiment. It wasn't a big regiment, 1,800 horses. We ate the whole cavalry.

S: You ate 1,800 horses?

A: [We ate] 1,800 horses. Everyone got killed on our side of the line. I don't know how many it was altogether, but we ate that whole dang cavalry up. We ate the whole thing.

S: That is amazing.

A: That outfit didn't get wiped off there. We just ate them out.

S: Did you eat them raw?

A: No, you cook them in an old pot down in the jungle, down in the valley. You chop them up.

S: So you didn't have trouble with cooking them?

A: No. Coconuts, you get them off a tree, old bananas.

S: Let's regress a little bit on the Bataan Death March itself. How did you find out you were going to go on a march?

A: Nobody knew.

S: They just rounded you up one day?

A: That's right. They just had columns after columns of Filipinos and Americans. See, Filipinos could escape very easily, some of them could. Because he was a Filipino, he could fit right into the crowd.

S: Were there people lining the roads?

A: Oh yes, all up the roads.

S: So they would just slip out?

A: Some of the Filipinos, not Americans. Now, Edgar Whitcomb, he's dead now, he was a

governor in Indiana, he was on Corregidor. He escaped and went down to Australia. He fought on Bataan as a guerilla for a while. He was a governor out in Indiana but he's dead now. The other guy—that boy, was a good guy on Bataan, was Captain Wermuth, he was a sheriff of Jefferson County, Colorado. Art Wermuth was his name. They called him a one-man army of Bataan because he was always in behind the lines. Nobody knew how far that march was. Most of them would have died before they got there anyway because they never said I can make it. The longer roads, they weren't making it. They were laying there with their mouths open, blood coming out of their rectum, some of them had malaria. Some of them had bloated up.

The heat over there—you can leave a body out a day or so. I used to keep a stick about that long tied on my little string—I, had on my g-string here. When I went on burial detail, I'd just take that stick, and some of the guys would bloat up, some of them were nothing but skin and bones, but some of them would bloat up, you'd run that stick down through their stomach and let the gas off. It'd go down and keep from carrying all that weight because the cemetery is about a mile from camp over to the Zero Ward where they kept all those who died and stack them out. Then you had to go almost a mile to the rice paddy where you'd bury them.

S: On the Bataan Death March itself, there were what, 10,000, 12,000 [people]?

A: Casualties.

S: How many people total were there?

A: I really don't know. I'd have to count Filipinos and all [approximately 76,000 were on the march; estimates range from 6,000 to 11,000 died on the march—mostly Filipinos].

S: It was well over 10,000?

A: Oh yes, but it was over 10,000 that died. I would say at least 25,000. That's counting Americans, Filipinos, the Filipino Scouts, the constabulary, you had your artillery units, your Air Force, your Navy. A lot of men. Let me tell you what they did to them guys in the Navy who were stationed over in [the Philippines]. Them guys never had any combat training. Officers never had no combat training. They had boot camp maybe up in Virginia somewhere one time. We had a lot of West Point officers. Some of them went to the Naval Academy. They threw them over on Bataan. Threw them over and give them a rifle. If they're cooks, give them a rifle.

Just like the Battle of the Bulge, they took everybody. Nobody was spared. They took the Navy, like I said, the Okinokos, all of them. All of them were shuttled between

Bataan and Corregidor. All the Navy men had lost the PT boats. A lot of them had lost the mine sweepers, the old pigeon. All the old Navy men was Asiatic. Have you ever heard a man going Asiatic? The old Asiatic flea [fleet?]. They'd been married to Filipinos, living with them, shacking up with them. They wasn't married to them. [They] had a beard, been over there ten years, stationed at __. They'd eat that rice, and they'd been eating it for years over there with the Filipinos anyways.

All it took them Navy men, officers and all, I saw officers over there, with all their insignia and everything, right in a foxhole. Air Force pilots—with no airplane—digging foxholes. Everybody was in the defense at Bataan. You had Navy, the Marine Corps, we had a detachment, the rest was on Corregidor. I was attached to a Marine outfit there on Bataan. There was chemical warfare, there was the Air Force. There was engineers, there was quartermasters, all different types. All of them was one. There was infantry. That's it, all over.

S: On the march itself, you just started out one day. How long did you march during the day?

A: We'd march, I'd say, about six or seven hours. That's in the hot sun, about 400 [about 65 miles] miles. Men [were] cracking out. To see a man just fall over and a Jap just walk up, take that bayonet, and just shove it down through a man and let out a scream. That's it. Nothing said, everybody just walking along. Going along in a daze, just looking on. Guys in the field start to run, somebody shoot him. A guy laying over here dead. Tanks come over, one guy decided he wasn't going to get out of the way; a tank rolled right over him. He looked like he was somebody's fresh sheet. Pressed a man right there in the middle of the road. Then they'd get a chance, they'd come by, some of them Japanese trucks while we was marching. They had a bamboo pole, and as they come along, they started hitting guys on the head. I'd look around, see them coming, and I'd duck.

Everybody was just in a turmoil. Them troops that hit us, I'd like to say it was the 14th Army, the Quantong Army up in China. They were tough hombres. They were tough. They were jungle fighters. You even look cross-eyed to one of them and they'd knock your head off. You had to learn to speak. I didn't know how to speak, but I learned to speak. I said, "How'd you learn to speak Lagonta?" With a bayonet stuck in your butt, you can learn a lot of things. You had to learn to count off in Japanese. Like ten [counts to ten in Japanese]. That's ten. [More Japanese], four times ten is forty. Counting is very simple. Once you get into Jue, Jue Ichi is eleven. If nei is two, Nei Jue is twenty. Jue is ten, San is three, so San Jue would be thirty. [More counting in Japanese]. It goes on up until you get to 100. [More counting in Japanese].

S: So you learned all that Japanese while you were over there?

A: Yeah, while I was there. You did it for your own benefit. If they say “Uui,” that’s hey. Quachi go ee is come here. I’ve learned something. You’d better not be close to them at all. If you look up, they’d kick you right in the face. They had little spikes, like cleats. Not as big as golf cleats. If you were bent over working and you see a guard come up in front of you and he yelled, “Uui,” and you look up, he’d usually kick you right there. Holler at me, I’d back up. I knew what was coming. You had to think a little ahead of them. You get to a place you think like an Oriental. You had to think. You had to think like them. You had to know what kind of a person they were. There was Siggie Moed, he was known as a ragged hunter. We had one that was known as the “fox.”

We gave them nicknames. Every one of them had nicknames. You worked up just what kind of person they was. You had to study them. When you’d get a chance, you had to study them when you was on a [work] detail. You had to say, hey, I’ve got this guy just about figured out. You had to do it right. If you didn’t, you was a dead duck. Psychologically, you had to be ahead of him. That’s what you had to be ahead of. I tried to stay one hop ahead of them.

S: You’re marching six hours. Did you get any food at all?

A: One day we got a rice bowl up at this little old place known as Cab Cabin. Then after that we’d get dried rice maybe one day. Then you’d stop and there would be big old barrels of water where you could get a cup of water out of there and eat that dry rice. You’d chew it up good. Then maybe you’d go another six or seven hours and you may not get anything. Then you’d come to a little barrio, a little town, and then they’d have guards everywhere. I crawled up where they had roosters. They have a lot of cock fights in the Philippines. I laid in chicken shit and all up there under the buildings where you’d lay there and guards watching you. You didn’t care. You said, hey, I’m in another world. This ain’t where I belong. I’m here.

You have to accept the fact. First of all, you’ve got to accept something: That you’re a prisoner of war, you have no rights, you’ve lost everything, you have no country. You just won’t forget that. You have no country. If you do, you don’t know where it’s at. No help has come, we haven’t seen anything. We haven’t gotten any food, we haven’t gotten any reinforcement. We haven’t got nothing. We’re sold down the river. They said if we held out, we’d get reinforcements, I said we held out, we haven’t got nothing. Our objective was to hold out six weeks, that’s all it was. Six weeks.

If we held out six weeks, they said, we can get Australia prepared so they can jump off from New Zealand and Australia up to Guadalcanal and all of this crap. We held out four months, nothing. Not one thing. The only thing, the submarines came in, took a few

nurses off of Corregidor and some gold. They took some gold off of Corregidor. They took some of the nurses to Australia. The rest of us was sold out. A lot of people don't know it, but I know you're taking this down, a lot of people contradict us, that's all right. Every man has his own say, his own beliefs. But I know mine from facts. World War II, Pearl Harbor, was not a mistake. It was a big mistake because Churchill and his admiralty and his friends knew that Pearl Harbor was going to come. They knew it a month or two months before.

Here's the point. A lot of people didn't know it, but Roosevelt and Churchill were distant cousins. The British had broke that Japanese code. They knew it was coming. Here's one thing England had to have. They had to have a battle cry. They had already been beat at Dunkirk [evacuation of British troops by sea, May 26 to June 4, 1940]. Their backs had been pushed into the sea. What happened? They knew that if America was secretly attacked, that they would go into war, America would. They wouldn't relay those messages to the people like Admiral [Thomas C.] Hart [commander of the Asiatic Fleet] and General King in Hawaii. They were cut off. No information was gave to them. British had the information. England had the information. Churchill had the information. They had to get us into it to save their hide. Now, you know this as much as I do. If it hadn't been for the Japanese attacking Pearl Harbor and Americans going to war, Hitler would have been sitting in London. There's no other way. The truth is the truth.

Another thing, if he [Hitler] never went into Russia [German invasion started June 22, 1941], he'd been better off if he'd stopped and talked, took a little time and retreat and build-up. England knew what was coming. They had to have a battle cry. Now we had to have one. Like the Alamo. Here's what the American people had: Pearl Harbor! Pearl Harbor! Let me tell you something. I don't know if you ever read the book, *At Dawn We Slept* [by Gordon W. Prange, published 1982] and that's what happened. Hey, that code was broke a long time before, Pearl Harbor would have never happened. It would have never happened.

Admiral Yamamoto [commander of the Japanese invasion force]—he served time in London, served time in Washington, sacrificed all them boys on the *Arizona*, over 2,000, some of them killed. There's about 800, 900 of them still sealed in the *Arizona* today. They never knew what hit them. Bomb, bingo, that was it. A magazine went up and that was the end of it. It's all on the account that they pulled us into it. Then, you know, we declared war right then on Germany and Japan at the same time. Japan had never been there. We had the aircraft carriers, we had them battle wagons, we had tin cans there. If the British would have only told the Americans what was taking place, Pearl Harbor would have never happened. That's hindsight. It didn't bother me until twenty or thirty years ago when I began to piece things together and try to think this thing through.

S: I appreciate your comments on that. There's a lot of controversy about that, of course. You said you marched six hours.

A: Oh yeah.

S: What happened? I mean, you were exhausted.

A: Oh yes, all the time.

S: Would people just fall out on the side of the road?

A: That was the end of you. If you fell out on the road, that was the end of you.

S: What did you do when you finished marching then?

A: You squatted down, right in the road.

S: You squatted?

A: Right in there, or sit down in the middle of the road. That's what you did.

S: You couldn't sleep?

A: Nope.

S: If you fell over you were dead? You were awake twenty-four hours a day?

A: I was talking to a man the other day about the liberation of Filipinos, a good friend of mine, he's 76 years old. Through all the combat through there, I can truthfully say, I don't know how, but I don't know if I ever slept. I might have. I had to, to live, but I can't remember.

S: You slept sitting up?

A: Yeah. But I never remember sleeping. I laid in foxholes and I'd take my head and lay down like that on the side of the hole, but I never can remember sleeping. Not during the war time. Maybe there was so much going on that I forgot it, but I can't remember sleeping.

S: During the march you had men who were probably losing their minds.

A: Oh, we had a lot of them.

S: Did you have any of them attempt to attack a Japanese soldier?

A: Oh yeah. That's what I was telling you about—the boy from down in Morehead City. When he pushed that guard, he [guard] pushed him right up on the side of the road and beheaded him right there.

S: That was the end of him.

A: That was the end. It was just like that.

S: That cured that impulse.

A: Yeah. When you hit that head, that blood shoots out like that. That body's just like a chicken. You know growing up how your mamma used to wring a chicken's neck to cut it off with an ax?

S: Oh yeah.

A: The body's the same way. It's a muscle thing, you know.

S: So you got just a little bit of food.

A: Very little.

S: And very little water. How long did the march last?

A: It lasted us about eight days.

S: It's amazing that more people didn't die.

A: I'll tell you most of them died of the results when they got into the prison camp. They were so exhausted, so they just gave up. They said, I can't go no farther. I said, "Listen, you'd better get that out of your head." A guy turned out to be a doctor down Kentucky, Everett Harold. He was in the Zero Ward where all of them died. When I would go to pick up a body, I told him, "You'd better make up your mind if you're going to live or die." He said, "I can't go no farther." [He was a] big man. He wasn't big then, but during peacetime he's big. He laid there. I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll bet you a case of whiskey—which I didn't drink—that you make it back."

I'd already thought I can't lose. If he dies, I don't pay him. If I win, if he lives, I've got the whiskey. If I lose, he's dead. I done figure that out. The first man I saw in San Francisco was him. He went to med school and became a doctor. He died about five years ago out in Kentucky. He was laying there, though, blood passed, globs of blood just sitting there from dysentery. [He had] malaria. I had malaria about six to eight times out in my head.

S: Did you get any medical attention in any sense along the way?

A: No. Like in prison camp, when a man had to be operated on for appendicitis or gangrene, they usually die from shock because they use big hack blades just like they did in the Civil War. You didn't have ether or nothing like that. There's no quinine. There weren't sulfur drugs or penicillin. They weren't invented in 1942 by Fleming [Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin in 1928, but it was not used until latter part of World War II] in London, England. We had none of that. We had none of this modern medicine. You just couldn't make it.

S: Who operated on these people?

A: A lot of Americans were doctors.

S: So the American doctors were operating on them?

A: Yeah. Japs would come in, too. They just about died from shock. Me, I'd try to keep dysentery [away]. I'd go around where they cooked rice in that old big pot and I'd get that charcoal and eat it. I'd eat charcoal. Charcoal will stop diarrhea. It won't kill dysentery, though, because you've got to have sulfur drugs. You've got to have an antibiotic in your system to kill dysentery. Then these guys had malaria of the brain cerebral. They go out in the head. They go crazy. I had malaria, but I beat it. I'd be freezing. The temperature would be 104 degrees outside, and I'd lay down there on the grass and just be freezing to death. Two or three of the guys would give me their blanket at nighttime and I'd sit there and freeze.

Then in late 1943, in the last three or four months in Japan, they started getting a little quinine in. It wasn't very much. We had nothing. There wasn't such a thing as sulfur drugs or penicillin or none of this stuff. You just didn't have it. The first aid kit you had was a little patch-up thing. It wasn't worth a hoot. I don't know why the Army invented them anyway. We just throw them away. The only thing they're good for is a nosebleed.

S: In your prison camp experience, were any of the Japanese soldiers benevolent at all?

A: We had one. He came up to me and said, “Toshi.” He asked how old I was and I told him. He’d shake his head. His name was Yammaguchi. He was a sergeant. He had one eye. It got shot out in China. He’d come up to me and he’d talk, and every once in a while—I didn’t smoke—but he’d give me a cigarette. That would be the first sign that hey, he might be a decent guy. After that, on work detail, if we was working pretty hard, and he was one of our guards. He’d say “yashume,” that [means] rest, take a break. We’d all sit down for maybe fifteen or twenty minutes. He saw somebody else coming, another guard, one of the officers, and then he’d put us right back to work. I never did see him beat up on anybody.

We had one guy named Siggi Moto. He’d beat up on everybody he could. Every time you’d turn around, he would slap somebody against the head and holler. I never much passed by him. That guy, Captain Dakota [Yukota?], they finally hung him—the one they called the “White Angel.” He was Navy and the rest of them was Marines. He was a mean dude. He was something else. He was mean.

S: Was that the guy that was on TV? There was a TV show not too long ago called, I think, the “White Angels.”

A: It might have been. It might have been some of the guys talking about him on television. That’s the roughest detail in the Philippines.

S: Your officers, how did they react under these circumstances?

A: Believe it or not, all humans are alike. There’s a certain level you could reach [and] you can’t go no farther. When you become a prisoner, there’s no rank, nothing to do in the first part [of the war]. When they come at nighttime, the garbage from the Japanese, and dump it over the fence where you’re out, officers and enlisted men would fight over it. Everybody was down to rock bottom. There was no rank the first year. Until about the second year, when they began to organize, maybe when a man was inspected for this, and the officer. The first year, it was dog eat dog.

S: You say eventually some of the people who were natural leaders, it might be a private . . . ?

A: Yes, Colonel Beecher is one of those. He’s out of the 4th Marines, one of the best leaders there were in the camp I was in. Colonel Beecher. He was a full colonel out of the 4th Marines Regiment out of Shanghai. He was a leader. War campaign, hadn’t turned up front like that, but he was a good leader. Then we had officers that collaborated.

S: How could anybody lead in those circumstances?

A: You had to win the confidence of the men. First of all, that individual had to learn how to approach the Japanese authorities. Once he got along to that level and could communicate with those officers what he'd like done, to ease the load of the prisoners, then you could say he was a good man. One American lieutenant almost got me killed. His name was Armentrap, from Salt Lake City, Utah. He's dead now. I was out on detail one day, and he told Siggie Moto something, and Siggie Moto come down. I think it was a shovel I had broken or something. I forget what it was. Siggie Moto come down and he really beat the heck out of me. Armentrap was the one that told him. I said to him, "Let me tell you something, I ain't saying this to myself. You got me, and I'm going to get you!"

This other guard, known as the Rabbit Hunter. I had a little bar of soap. Soap was precious, and he come and ask me why my eye was black. I told him, "Siggie Moto, the reason was Lieutenant Armentrap." He said, "Armentrap?" I said, "Yeah, I gave him that bar of soap. I brought it out that day special to give to him." He went up there and he really laid out on Armentrap. There it's known as the "survival of the fittest." You had to counteract. You couldn't take everything. You couldn't take it all. We had to collaborate. Collaborate with the goose. We had officers that were partial to some of them. You could see that they were getting cigarettes. They'd get a little extra rice. You could see this. But what could you do about it? You couldn't do anything about it.

S: Was this probably due to just a personal liking of a person?

A: I don't really know.

S: Because they couldn't get anything from the prisoner.

A: No. They used to have oranges. They used to eat oranges, and pile the truck up with the peelings, the Japanese would. They'd back the truck up to the barbed wire fence and dump them. You'd see lieutenants, captains, fighting over that stuff like animals. You'd look and remember, when you was in basic training, and, man, they had that one lieutenant and captain, and brass would shine, and he was spic-and-span, and look at him today, he's a dog.

S: Everybody was a dog.

A: [Everybody was] trying to exist. Just trying to live.

S: Was there any sort of discipline in the prison camps?

A: Not the first year.

S: Was anybody punished by the Americans?

A: No way. It was just a madhouse. There was no punishment for anything. Everybody was on their own.

S: Was there anybody who was attempting to escape and somebody else told the Japanese?

A: No, nobody was ever told on like that. Not that I know of.

S: To gain favor?

A: No, I don't think so. When an American escaped in the Philippines, he didn't have but one choice: join a guerilla band. He had to know where the guerilla band was and he had to have connections. A white man standing out in the Philippines, a Filipino would turn you in. They kept two flags. They kept an American flag, they kept a Japanese flag. If the Americans pushed them this way, they waved the American flag. They pushed them back that way, they waved a Japanese flag. It was immaterial to them. The Japanese told them this: you're the same skin as me. You're Oriental. Not Occidental. He's American. You belong to our race. Asia is for the Asians. It was all propaganda.

[Interruption in Interview.]

S: Let me ask you another question about your prison camp experience. I can imagine that the morale was poor, but can you talk about the morale of the people in the camp?

A: There wasn't no morale. Have you ever been to a nursing home and watched people walking around inside that's been there for five or six years? That's it. That was it. There was no level of this or level of that. We was all about the same thing.

S: You just existed.

A: That's all you was. You was just a number. That's all you was. Nothing else.

S: Did they tattoo a number on you?

A: No, these I got in the Philippines. It used to be a tradition. You're a Navy man. You used to go across the 180th Meridian, along Neptune, king of the sea. That was when I was young. Those old Navy men over there, some of them had been there over ten years. They were covered all over from neck to feet. My brother went to Napa [Annapolis] Naval Academy. He was the same way. He's dead now, he died about five years ago. He

was in the invasion of Normandy, had command of a ship there. A lot of people don't know it, but down in Samoa and Tahiti, there was a tradition at one time. Get tattooed. It goes back to Egyptian times. Now it's more of a fad thing. With these young people, it's more of a fad. Not then. It was, you belong to a certain club back then.

I can say this: the men when I went into the service, they were men with tradition. Their service meant something to them. They really was kind of an adventure sort of person. I was when I was young. I used to fish and hunt and camp out. That's the reason I'm living, I reckon. I used to mow lawns in Greensboro all day for ten cents. I used to mow Richard Sompriety's [spelling?] [lawn], a congressman. I used to tell him about it when he'd come over here to talk to us. I used to mow your mother's yard, she'd give me ten cents with the old reel type. Things like that. I camped out in the summertime. Once we had the recreation department, we didn't have all this expensive junk. What we had, we made it.

We made recreation, we did; woods, swimming, lakes, trees, lean-to's, tents, cabins. We did it. It wasn't digging into this budget, that budget. I hear so much about stinking budgets now, it drives me crazy. We made things like that, so it toughened me up. When I went in, I was pretty tough anyway. I was a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle] member, hey, that [gun] weighs twenty pounds. Dang, carrying that thing. You get used to it. That's why I say what we done, if our forefathers had no more initiative than what we have today in some cases, they'd be no further than the Mississippi. They would have never got there. Now, it's for somebody to do everything for you. You don't have to do that when you've got somebody else to think for you.

S: When you were in prison camp, of course, were there many new prisoners?

A: No. You had the old Bataan and Corregidor bunch. That's what you had. Down in Palawan [western Philippine island], that's where they took a lot of prisoners down there, marched them down in a tunnel, poured gasoline on them, and set them on fire [December 14, 1944]. 110 of them at one time. They was from up there in the Philippines, but they carried down on detail. There was some down in Palawan, Mento, Mendonale, carried them to different places. Down in Batangas and Lipa, and work detail parties here and there. I know some of the men was on work detail there on Bataan after burying some of the Japanese bodies.

A lot of people don't understand. See, you take his left arm up like that and the Japanese officers come by and stop right here, tag it, and throw it in the basket. They just stack up the rest of the bodies, throw diesel all over it, and burn all them bodies. Then their arms are burnt. Then the ashes are sent back in a little container, a big box. They put so many in there. They carried a little wooden identification dog tag, and what they did when the

Jap officer go around, two men with a basket, one on each end, and what happened when they came to Japanese bodies, they'd hold up his left arm and whack it off right here. They'd tag it and throw it in the basket. They'd take all the bodies, stack them up, pour diesel all over them, and burn them. All the prisoners who died in Japan, they cremated the Americans. They cremated all the Americans. They didn't bury anybody in Japan. They cremated everybody. Burial is a luxury in Japan. Land is so priceless.

S: Before we get into after you got out of the hospital, what recognition did you receive as a prisoner of war?

A: None.

S: After you got out?

A: Nope. They gave a POW medal in 1980 something [medal instituted in 1985].

S: Other than that you got no recognition?

A: Nope. Congressman Neil [Abercrombie] came down here from Washington, flew over here to Mill Park and [gave it to us]. I've got it right back here. And I've got some pictures of me and him.

S: Let's go on from after the hospital when you were offered any place you'd want to go. Where did you choose?

A: Rome, Italy.

S: Why did you choose that?

A: I'd read a lot about Rome. I'd read a lot about Athens. I'd read a lot about places in Europe. I was always interested in the Coliseum, the history of Rome, because Rome, at one time, as you know, was a powerful country. It's shaped like a wagon wheel. All the spokes went out. It went into England, all Asia Minor, into Asia, everywhere the Roman empire. I went to the American Embassy, I was stationed there with 280 military police. That's what I chose. I didn't do anything. I didn't have no duty to pull whatsoever.

S: This is because you were a POW?

A: Yes. We had just a little something, I was injecting. The German general there, I had to carry down his breakfast every morning. His name was George Albert Kesselring, in charge of the German 10th Army [Field Marshal of the German 10th Army; commanded air

forces invasion of Poland, France, Soviet Union, Battle of Britain; commander of all German armed forces in the Mediterranean; conducted slow retreat up Italian peninsula; replaced Field Marshal von Rundstedt; surrendered southern portion of divided German forces on May 7, 1945; sentenced to death in 1947 but sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and he was released in 1952]. I had to carry it right down in the basement where they kept him at. I fed him his breakfast every morning.

S: Kesselring was down in the basement?

A: Yes, at the American Embassy.

S: What time frame was this?

A: 1947. He lived in a Russian zone, so he didn't want to go home. We had 100 German prisoners of war there living in the Russian zone. They pulled KP, kitchen duty, motor pool, and all of that. I respected him, I talked to him. Kesselring, I sat on the phone and talked to him every morning. He talked perfect English.

S: Is that right? This is in Italy now?

A: This is in Italy. He was in charge of the German 10th Army, George Albert Kesselring.

S: Oh yeah, I'm very familiar with him.

A: He died about ten years ago of cancer [died July 16, 1960]. He didn't want to go back. [He was] a short, stocky built guy, had on a green tunic, black boots, no ribbons, no nothing. We had him in a cell downstairs. We had about seven Italians down there in the cell. They're the ones that went outside Rome and took all them people and marched them into the cave outside Rome and killed them all [March 24, 1944, a mass execution in reprisal for a partisan attack in Rome; known as the "Fosse Ardeatine Massacre"]. I forget the name of the cave. It was under German command, though.

We held the Italians responsible for it. What it was were these, not guerillas, but some who had killed a bunch of Germans there, and they marched all these civilians out there to a cave and killed them all. There's still a big shrine there now. People don't know how your destiny was really talked about back then, what they had planned for us, you and me, in case we lost the war, this country. I went into an office there. They had all these maps and everything. One chart in there had this country divided up into three occupation zones.

S: The United States?

A: Yes. One for Germany, one for Italy, and one for Japan. From the Great Lakes, your business and industrial, all the way up down to Virginia all through there up to the Midwest, Germany. From there all the way down to Florida and around to the rice patties and Louisiana and Mississippi and Alabama through there were rice growing countries that were Japanese. From Texas all the way up through Nevada and Wyoming and Utah and Colorado, all up through there, up through Seattle, Washington, were going to be the Italians. Here's what they had. Every man through the ages of 18 and 25 years old will be deported from this country, be sent to Europe to build it back up. They had it all planned.

S: Where did you see this?

A: In the war room in Rome, Italy. All these documents were there. Listen, I could be a billionaire if I wanted to. There was ancient paintings there that the Germans had stole. There was no way they check on them to send them back. I could have wrapped up one and sent it, Michelangelo, any of them. It didn't make no difference. I didn't touch nothing. It was all there if I wanted it. A lot of officers I knew did it. A lot of them got rich off it. I never did take one thing. I could have picked up one painting and sent it back to this country and never had to work another day in my life. I didn't do it. It didn't appeal to me. I'd smell gasoline and gunpowder and duffle bags. You've still got that smell. The old Navy bag, it's a certain smell to it. You've got it in your nose. You know it's there. You don't want no more of it. You want to shake it out, dust it out. Another thing I get to thinking about, studying Paul in church, and I think about how he was struck down on the road to Damascus, and how he became blinded.

[End of Tape A, Side 2.]

S: He became blinded you say?

A: Yeah, but what gets me is I walked the same road Paul walked. I've been south of Rome, and the way he came into Rome was up the Apian Way. I've been outside of Rome and walked right up that road. It's all made out of cobblestones with these big grooves in it like where the chariots traveled over it. It's still laying there today the same way. That road where he came in is still there. It's out in the field, and it's about half as wide as this kitchen. Big cobblestone grooves where the wheels of the chariots were coming into Rome.

I've been all over that Coliseum and I can just sit up there and picture all those Christians that were killed, all of those lions that were turned loose on them, all the gladiators that were battling each other to death when all the big wheels were sitting up there witnessing.

I've been in the Catacombs under Rome where all the bodies were buried. They're sitting on shelves while all the Christians went on the ground. They're sitting with their hands tied and they're sitting on shelves petrified. St. Angelo's Castle is full of them down in the basement. The Tiber River runs right beside it. It's amazing, but it's things that I wanted to see for myself.

I've been all over the Vatican, I've been inside of the Vatican. I've looked at the work of Michelangelo. It's amazing. We, in this country, are very backwards when it comes to art protecting. And something else: Over here, we don't save anything; we tear it down. I've been in homes over there that have been standing over 500 years, made out of brick, adobe, or something. The old walls of Rome, you've got gates that go into it. They call it the Seven Hills of Rome. The old Roman Empire, these gates would come into each one of it. It's all cobblestones.

With that Roman Empire, they went out and just about conquered the world. The old Roman Empire inside of Rome, people still live in some of the homes—it's 1,000 years old. Over here, a building gets forty years old, then comes a building inspector, gotta condemn it. Don't put a date on when it was made, and let's hold it for generations for the children that's coming up. Let's tear it down, build something new. Not over there. You know in Korea, the way they heat their houses? They're hollow. The walls are hollow, made out of adobe. You build fires at each end, the heat goes up through the walls and keeps the house warm. They're always figuring out things.

S: How long were you in Rome then?

A: Almost two years.

S: You say you had actually no assigned duties?

A: [I had] no assigned duties, none really whatsoever.

S: This was, you might say, more of a dispensation to you because of your service.

A: That's all. I remember driving around. When the captain's wife wanted to go somewhere, they called me up and I'd carry her. She was an alcoholic and I'd have to carry her to the Majestic Hotel and Ambassador Hotel. I met Luciano [organized crime leader] while I was over there. He ran a nightclub in Rome, but he lived down in Naples.

S: [Charles] "Lucky" Luciano?

A: Lucky Luciano. That's right. I drove up there one night in a Jeep. I just drove up there. I

was broke. The guy told me, go down there, a big shot gangster from America has got a lot of money. Well, I was broke. I went down and borrowed 5,000 lira. A lira is only worth about 600 something lira to a dollar. We hadn't gotten paid. I walked in there, and I says, Sergeant So-and-So told me you loaned money. He said, yeah, yeah. Me a big shot gangster in America. I said, yeah, yeah. I was young, about 22 years old. He carried me back there in that room, opened up that safe, and there it was, deported back to Italy from Sing Sing [prison in Ossining, New York], Lucky Luciano, that's who it was. I didn't know Lucky Luciano from nobody. A 22-year-old kid. I had never heard about Lucky Luciano. There he was in white slavery, drugs, racketeering, money laundering. He died in Naples.

S: He's the guy that you met?

A: Oh, yeah. He run the Opola Night Club in Rome. You'd be surprised that all your big shot nightclub owners in Rome and Naples were at one time tied up with the Mafia in this country and was deported back to Italy but still had connections. You'd be surprised.

S: Amazing. Where did you go after you left Rome?

A: I left there and went to Tokyo, 1st Cavalry. I went back and I had to write up statements against former prison guards. I wrote up statements and had to identify them. They'd give them a trial. Before they gave them a trial, they had to have the evidence that was true. I had to identify the ship, which was *Anesio Marue*, how many men was in the forward hold, how many was in that hold, 900 here, 600 there, 40 died, how many days it took, some of the prison guards and all of this. Then they used that against them. They kept them up in Sugamo Prison [Tokyo prison used by Allied occupation forces during the post-war occupation; used to house suspected Japanese war criminals as they awaited trial by the International Tribunal for the Far East; site of executions].

S: Do you have copies of any of this stuff?

A: No, I don't have any copies. I wish I had kept all that. But see, it was junk to me. You know what somebody's treasure, it was junk to me. [Hideki] Tojo [general in the Imperial Army and later prime minister of Japan from October 1941 to July 1944; hanged for war crimes in December 1948] was up there. We didn't know he had one daughter and lived in Yokohama. If you remember, Tojo shot himself [several times] in 1945 [September 8, 1945]. He tried to commit suicide, and Captain Johnson out of the Medical Corps saved his life. That's the American system. They saved his life, tried him, and then hung him [1948]. That's the American system.

Anyway, they hung him in, I believe, December [23], 1948. I'd been in Rome for just

over a year. When they hung him, it was about twelve o' clock at night. The hangman's name was Lieutenant Knot. I'll never forget it. I used to kid him about his name to be a hangman, Knot. They hung, I think about eighty-seven altogether. That lieutenant, he's about your size. Every time he got done hanging somebody, we'd go into the bar, everybody would take a drink. They had eight scaffolds out there. Nobody paid any attention. They always say it's a bunch of death and crap, it didn't make any difference what they'd done. He had a daughter who came and claimed his body and took him down to Yokohama and cremated him.

I came back and I was stationed awhile up at Camp Lee, Virginia [Petersburg]. A man came up there and would give them basic training. I stayed for a while there and went to Trieste up on Yugoslavia, Italy, and Austria, where they come together at the end there. Trieste is a free territory on a trust command. Yugoslavia wanted it, Italy wanted it, and Austria really wanted it, but she didn't say. So I stayed there until about 1953.

S: Getting back to your duty in Japan, how long were you there?

A: I was only there for, I reckon, about a little over a year.

S: Your mission while you were there was to build evidence? Were you a witness at any trial?

A: [I was] not even a witness, just take this evidence. These that had eye witnesses of things.

S: You had eye witnesses.

A: Yeah, but they didn't have but Captain Dakota. I wrote about Captain Dakota because they were already getting ready to hang him. There was already an open and shut case on him. Just like Homma and Yamashita was an open and shut case. There wasn't no hearsay about it or presume this, or presume that. This was a fact. I stayed there. I'll never forget, General [William C.] Chase. He was commander of 1st Cavalry Division up at Ichibacharoo, outside of Tokyo, next to Sugamo Prison and Ichibacharoo, which were about five miles apart. He used to call me over there and talk to me. He was kind of a bragger. He said, "I liberated you guys in the Philippines first." I said, "You didn't liberate me." He said, "Why didn't I?" I said, "I was in Japan. You liberated some of them." He was a two-star general. I knew something fishy was going on, him and his Colonel Murray. I saw too much of this stuff. Johnny, this guy who was with the prison, he went with the CID. He was an undercover agent in Japan. He went back as a CID operator.

S: CIA?

A: CID, Criminal Investigation Department, of the Army. Johnny told me something was going on. Here I am, one day, and he drives up in a car with three stars on it, Johnny did. But he was the driver for [General Robert L.] Eichelberger [commander of U.S. 8th Army, which was part of the occupation force]. Well, Eichelberger had gone somewhere on vacation and he drives up with three stars, wasn't even covered. I crawled in there with him. We ride down the road with everybody saluting. Hey, Johnny's about half tipped. Come to find out, when General Chase came into Tokyo and Colonel [J.K. ?] Murray was a finance officer, they hit the banks the first place. Nobody knew it. They knew what they were after.

The first thing that Murray grabbed up was about \$900,000 worth of diamonds. By the order of Chase, Chase was a two star commanding general of the division, 1st Cavalry. They stole all of that crap. Hey, here I am sitting with this dude, he's a crook two star, which a lot of them are in the Army, you know, big shots. The next thing I know, they done court-martialed Colonel Murray and kicked him out of the service, took General Chase and shanghaied him to Taiwan. MacArthur was still in command.

S: They didn't reduce him in life or anything?

A: No. It's the top level stuff.

S: That's friends in high places. MacArthur was in charge while you were there?

A: He was in charge.

S: Can you comment on him?

A: I'll tell you one thing about him. The people in Japan worshiped him. As much as Hirohito. Now, he did a smart thing. I will have to give him credit for this. Regardless of what Hirohito knew, see, Prince Canoi [spelling ?] was assassinated. He was against this war altogether, Prince Canoi. Hirohito knew what was going on, but MacArthur was ahead of him. MacArthur says, I can keep him as a puppet. That's what he was. He was a puppet. As long as they worshiped him as an Emperor, MacArthur had it made. Finally, MacArthur could reverse the thing, let them know he wasn't God divine, generally which they would accept.

Then they started almost worshiping MacArthur. But he didn't have Hirohito tried. Hirohito was the one with the greatest responsibilities. He did try to overrule some of the military leaders. MacArthur, he moved in there, and the people lined the streets and he'd

leave that Mija building. They lined for MacArthur. They'd bow. He did a lot for Japan, I'll tell you that. That was the best occupied forces in the world, at one end of World War II, to keep things normal. It was normal. The whole relation was normal. Now look at them today, everything you've got is Japan. When these Toyotas first came out, everybody said, who'd buy one of those things? Now the whole world's got them.

S: What happened in 1953 after Trieste?

A: I left [and] came out of the service. I came out on a medical discharge because I had that opportunity in 1946 to get out one.

S: Are you on any disability?

A: Yes. The way they did it, each year I was a POW, they gave me credit for four years. I had thirteen years in. I got about thirty years altogether so I just came out in full retirement.

S: So you retired?

A: Yes. I've had letters from Sam Ervin [U.S. Senator (D), North Carolina]. I've had them from Jesse Helms [U.S. Senator (R), North Carolina], Howard Goems writes every once in a while. His nephew's name was Isen Covell. He was executed in Las Pinas. He was on the detail at Las Pinas. I was at Nichols Field. Las Pinas was a small airfield for just fighter planes. Isen tried to escape out there and they beheaded him. He lived at Liberty.

S: Liberty, North Carolina?

A: Yes. That's where all the Covels are from down in Alamance County, down in Liberty. All them German Lutherans, a Lutheran church.

S: Before we get into your life after the military, I want to ask you a couple more questions about your life in the military. You've seen some Hollywood movies that depict a lot of things that you've been through. What's your opinion on those?

A: [They're] a bunch of baloney! There's nothing like the real thing. The only thing that I see or try to see a biography [or] combat photographs of actually what has happened, like Saipan, Tarawa, Guadalcanal, the invasion of Normandy. Those things, you can see what hell is. You can see that. This Hollywood version, you can look at it, it's wrong, the web belts are wrong, the way they carry their weapons is wrong, the way they dressed is wrong, the way they carried themselves, it's all a bunch of mud.

S: I know you had probably one of the most hair-raising experiences anybody could ever go through. Can you think of anything that was particularly humorous through all of this?

A: Yeah, I can think of this. We used to have a guy in camp, he loved cigarettes if he could find one. That's all he talked about, was cigarettes. We was getting ready to move this latrine. I'll never forget it. We had a latrine there. It had old straddle trenches. When you moved that thing, you had to dig a new one toward the end of the field. The guys would go out there, there were two boards there. This guy was always going around looking for a duck that the Japs throw down. I'll never forget it.

S: Looking for what?

A: A cigarette duck. Just smoke. They called them a "duck." They covered up that latrine. One of the guards knew he always looked around. He sprinkled some cigarette ducks on that latrine. Dirt went about that high on him. He went up there and stepped in it and went down over his head. He sunk in it [laughter]. I'll never forget it. There were all kinds of humorous things that happened. A guy eating rice, he said, "There's a worm in it." I said, "Give it to me. That's meat. Give it to me. I'm going home. You can stay here if you want to." I'd tell them, I'd say, "You guys are giving up. You gotta think positive. You can't let it get you down."

This guy I was telling you about, Harebrained Harry, every time he'd go crawl up in that building, cut his wrists, we'd take him out and patch him up. He'd get back to that hospital, there he laid. I said, "Harebrained Harry, everybody else is dying." Harebrains is laying in the bed. He's trying to kill himself. I was always saying something to some of the guys. I'd say, "Listen, you ain't going to make it."

Just like I was talking about Harold, that doctor from Kentucky. I said, "You ain't going to make it if you don't start thinking. You've got to think positive." You've got that key word in that brain up there and it says, survive, survive, survive. I figured out when I was supposed to die. 1943 in October, I had it all figured up. If the rate men was dying the way we was burying them, I was supposed to die in October 1943. That's the end of it. A guy says, "Who's going to bury you?" I said, "Who cares? I'm going to be the last one." I'd figured it up. This guy asked, "How many died today?" I said, "See how many there are, right there, October 1943, I'm a gonner."

S: You did a little equation.

A: I'm a gonner! [laughter]. He said, "Who's going to bury you?" I said, "Who cares?"

S: I'll tell you, to get humor out of this situation is really stretching it.

A: You have to. You've got to have a sense of humor regardless of where you're at. It makes the load lighter.

S: I know you had a lot of sad incidents. Can you think of anything that would be particularly in your memory that just won't go away? Anything you can think of?

A: There's many of them. One that stands out: You had these four young boys. This was before they put us in ten-men squads. Four young boys [were] in the building I was in. All four of them escaped. [They were] young boys; 19, 20, 21, 22, somewhere along in there. [They were] nice looking boys. There was a Martin and a Johnson. I forget the other two boys' names. I felt sorry for them.

This was the second prison camp I was in, Cabanatuan. They took them right up on the side of the hill and tied them up. Right on the side of the hill where we could see them. They stayed there all day. That night and the next morning, they were digging a grave. I knew then that was the end of them. They were good boys. This was [Cabanatuan]. They were digging that grave up there. Digging the long one. I saw the guards come through the main gate, six of them with rifles. They had guard towers all the way around. They went out the back gate up on the side of the hill where they dug that grave. [They were] just young boys. They lined them up there and shot all four right there. That was one of the things.

S: Something you remember.

A: In O'Donnell, guys were just dying there. You get used to it. Just to see young boys, what you call real healthy, but active, and they all got caught. They stood them up on this hill behind the camp. A little bitty hill.

S: So everybody could see.

A: I stood right there and saw them when they fired and they went down. Things like that.

S: I know you already mentioned that you've seen some well-known people in your career. [Albert] Kesselring [German field marshal] is one that sticks in my mind. That's an interesting one. Can you think of any more?

A: General Johnson, he was a major on Bataan. He was on the Army Chief of Staff. Harold K. Johnson. He was on Bataan as a major. He was with the 26th Cavalry. He was the officer for the 26th Cavalry. Then he took a man of the 7th Army in Germany, before he got Chief of Staff. This was about 1949 or 1950, he was Army Commander of the 7th

Division in Stuttgart, Germany. I believe that's where he was. Then he came back and was Army Chief of Staff. He died of cancer, too, you know. It's been about ten or twelve years ago. He was a major on Bataan. You've heard of Fuzzy Knight [actor] at [?] trail sometime, you ever hear that?

S: Yeah.

A: I met him [Fuzzy Knight] sitting there drinking at the Brown Derby [famous restaurant] in Los Angeles. People never did, what you call, make an impression on me because I'd seen so much death and I'd always looked at everybody as an equal. There was no status, upper or lower. Everybody looked the same to me. Once you've been in a certain predicament, you can't look up to nobody because all of them look the same. I met so many people. Tojo, I talked to him there before they hung him. He couldn't speak English. I'd just go by his cell and [made a sound] do like that. I'd just kind of rouse him a little bit, just shake him up a little bit before they hung him.

There's one that spoke English there, and I said, "I told you one day things would change. Now you're here and I'm out here." I think he understood that. I'll tell you, if the Americans hadn't invaded Japan and had been a problem, hey, they'd already estimated a million casualties. A million! They had suicide boats all along the coast there. They still had kamikaze pilots, they still had men, women, and children ready to die, just like there was in Vietnam. A lot of guys in Vietnam, the reason they won't talk about anything and stayed screwed up, they keep it tied up in them. I tell them, "You've got a release valve. You've got a valve just like a release valve." I said, "You have to release certain things inside of you so you won't blow your top."

Going around making talks doesn't bother me when I go to different places. I go out to a military school, go out there and have a good time with those kids. See, these guys come back and say, "Hey, man, I don't want to talk to nobody." I say, "That's what wrong with you. You've got to release. What you know, what you've got tied up in you can help somebody else. But you won't do it." I said, "You'd rather wallow in it. That's your problem." I say, "You want to hit the jug, that's your problem. I just want to forget." [But ?] I said, "You can't forget."

For me, I lay down at night, go to bed at nine-thirty, close my eyes and I'm gone. At five-thirty in the morning, I get up, put on my coffee, fix my cereal, I'm gone to work. At seven o'clock I'm down at the storefront ministry. Over 70,000 people come through that store. I find something to do to occupy my mind. I don't sit around and say, hey, that thing sure was bad. If a person interviews me, I'll tell them what I know. I don't go out and say this and say that or this or that. If somebody asks me a question, I'll answer them. If they ask me to come a high school to talk on a certain subject, I'll go. I'll go to

Oak Ridge, I know exactly what I'm going to do out there.

You have so many people who say, I don't want to talk about it. Somebody told me one day, "Don't it bother you?" I said, "Let me tell you something. It's all like a dream." Believe it or not, right today, and sometimes I will be sitting in there reading and I'll be thinking, hey, has my life really been what it was? I can't believe it, and still survive. I've said that to myself. I don't know how I made it. Like I was telling you about that sleep. I don't know how I slept.

S: You were sleeping sitting up.

A: Yeah.

S: I want you to, if you can, characterize your military experience before we get on to what happened to you after your military experience. Characterize your whole military experience and then how it changed your life.

A: The military life to me, I'd say one thing, at that time, in 1941, it was one of the best things in the world for a young man. The experience that you gained, the people that you met, the friends that you made, the places that you'd been, the things that you could see—you'd never be able to do it just as an ordinary person working for a living. That was another reason I went in—to see the world. My aims were cut short to start with, but I finally fulfilled my mission. I think that even the young men that walk the streets today, I think one of the greatest opportunities in the world—I went into the service at \$16 a month.

The greatest opportunity for young men now, I'm just like they are in Switzerland, they should have military training for every young man. It's one of the best jobs there are in the world now. A man that says he can't find a job and he's 18 years old, go into the military and the base pay is \$500 to \$600 now, and that's more than the general made when I went in there. The captain was only making \$150 a month. A colonel was only making about \$250 a month. Now, boy, if you go in there as a buck private you'll draw \$600 a month.

[End of Tape B, Side 1.]

A: There's medical, there's [health] care, there's training, there's food, there's physical, there's mental. All of these things can come, too. It will build you up. It will make somebody out of you. Then you can find your direction. I think that most of them missed their mark. I hate to say this, too. We may have a war and nobody's going. That sounds crazy. We may have one and nobody will go because they're so confused. When I went in

the service in the military, you only had about 140,000 men in the military service in 1941 altogether. That's all we had. You had no Navy. You had no Marine Corps. You had no Air Force which was the old Army Air Force. You had nothing. There was nothing. We was wide open. I can say this: If the Japanese had followed up with one division, they would have taken the Hawaiian Islands. In fact, I believe they could have took it with a couple of regiments because they [Americans] were demoralized. They were demoralized.

A man is missing a great opportunity, especially a young boy right now. A young boy out here in the service, he says, I'd like to go to Europe. If he's out here working and goes out and takes any kind of job that pays minimum wage and works half of his life and gets married and has got three or four children to support, if he would only think about hey, wait, in life, I can get married later, he can go to Europe, he can take his vacation to Rome, he can go to Istanbul. He can go anywhere he wants to at the government's expense while he's in the service. If he stayed out of it and worked all his life and saves every nickel that he can get his hand on, he'll never be able to go to Europe to spend one week.

I wanted it because geography and history was my basic in school. I loved it. I studied it all the time. That's why I used to listen to Edward R. Murrow [famous American broadcaster whose beat was London during World War II] coming from London. You could hear the bombs dropping. You could hear them dropping doing the air raids. Eric Sevareid [famous American broadcaster in World War II], he was up in Helsinki. You know when the Finnish was fighting, the Russians were there. Then that's when Mussolini was down in Ethiopia [Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in October 1935].

Mussolini was more of a strutting peacock. He wasn't a leader. The Italians have never been what you call a first fight. They went down and fought those Ethiopians down there and they had nothing but bamboo spears and everything else. Then they went on to Albania and did the same identical thing. What he was doing was just trying to conquer the Adriatic across there into Albania. He had a little outlet. Hitler was using him when they made that "Pact of Steel" [pact signed May 22, 1939, between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy]. They were using each other. When they strung Mussolini up, him and old Clara Petacci [Mussolini's mistress; died at age 33] [both hanged April 28, 1945], General [Pietro] Badoglio, right by the big tomb there of [Victor] Emmanuel, I used to walk right by. Mussolini, he was something else. The equipment they had was no good. They had a good Navy, though. The Mediterranean fleet, the battalion of the Mediterranean had a good fleet.

S: Getting back to how this changed your life, it must have changed your life in many ways.

A: It gave me a better outlook on life. It gave me to where I appreciate things, where a lot of

people don't appreciate anything. I appreciate everything. For most people it would take \$1,000 to entertain themselves, I can make me a cup of coffee and a sandwich and enjoy it as much as a person with \$1,000. It's just where their priorities lay. I never was a person that wanted things. I had no desire for them.

As far as spiritually, I think I have a better insight than most ordinary people about what could happen to a person, how they can survive, and how things will change your life. Certain things will change your life completely around. It will make you more humble. It will make you understand people better. It will make you have a feeling for other people. You know, there's something that is hard to understand. A lot of people says, I like so-and-so but I hate so-and-so. That word "hate" is a terrible word because when you talk about hate, it's kind of like a cancer inside of you. You're saying something you don't really mean.

I feel for people. Some of them I can't help, but I feel for them because there are things that I know that they can't have, and they're really missing out on life altogether, things that are really enjoyable. Like I said, it don't take much for me to be happy. As long as my family, I have a daughter and two grandsons in Virginia Beach, and she lost her husband five years ago and his daddy too, at one time. Both of them got killed in a boat accident off of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. He was a businessman in Greensboro, a vice president, Mr. Walden. Russ, he was a bodybuilder, going for [title of] "Mr. America." He married my daughter. He got up that morning and you know where Lynnhaven Marina is?

S: Yeah.

A: He had a thirty-three-foot boat there. They were going down to Cape Hatteras to pick up some businessmen from Texas. They got down and had a storm off Cape Hatteras. The next day my daughter calls me up and was crying and all and said [that] Mr. Walden's body had washed ashore, but my son-in-law never had. There was a problem there. I knew she was tied up and I knew everything was frozen. Kathleen Griffin worked over here at Southern National Bank BB and T. I gave her \$5,000 and told her to send it right to them. The next week, I carried her \$18,000 more. That was until we got things settled.

She worked for Virginia Power and Newspaper Company, travels all over the state talking to school's young people. They never did find Russ's body. My wife at that time had cancer and had a kidney removed. I was traveling between the hospital and Norfolk. I never did let things, what you call, get to me. You've got to keep an even keel. An old Navy man says you've got to keep an even keel. I held them off for her, I carried money and put it in the bank, I went to see her lawyer with her and all of that. She finally got everything straightened out. Before that happened, they moved up there, he was just

getting ready to go in for "Mr. America."

He ran a health club in Athens, Georgia, and one in Decore [Decatur, Georgia ?] Coming home one night a big Mack [truck] come out and hit him head on and had to amputate his right leg. He died three times. Then they brought him from South Carolina up to his mother's in Greensboro. He took physical therapy. Then he went to New York after that and won a gold medal. He took his wheelchair down to Miami and pushed it all the way to Norfolk. Him and this other boy got shot in the back in Grenada. He pushed that wheelchair all the way to Norfolk. They had cameras on him taking pictures all the way. I saw it on "CBS News." He was determined. He said there wasn't such a thing as a handicapped person. He pushed that thing all the way from Miami to Mount Trashmore [first landfill park in U.S., located in Virginia Beach]. Mount Trashmore is where they had the celebration five years ago.

[Break in tape.]

A: In 1953, when I came out of the service, I lived with my sister here in Mayodan, which is Missouri's Francis Barrem. Her husband was Rut Barrem, head of Southern National Bank. He died a few years ago. I met my former wife here in Mayodan. She was the former Ethel Moonie. I married her in December 1956. We'd been living in Mayodan ever since 1956. I did little jobs here and there. I'd make talks here and there.

The last eighteen years, I've been running a store-front ministry for the Meridian Church. What it is, this store, I've had around 70,000 people from Eden, Ridgeville, Ridgeway, Ellisburo, Stoneville, and all the surrounding areas of Rockingham County, even some down in Sanford to come up here. I had furniture and food and clothes. That's for people that have been burned out, have lost their job, or are in the hospital and don't have adequate funds. We, at one time, bought all and paid light bills and phone bills for them.

That's what I've been doing now for the last eighteen years. This year, I was planning on giving it up. Then my wife says, what are you going to do after that? I says, "Well, I'll stick with it a little longer." So I've been down there working today. So I think I'll just stick with that. I used to play golf, but I'll tell you what. When my daughter was born, I made a commitment, that if I was going to raise a child, that I had to be a father, and not a golfer. The last game I played was before she was born. I've never played another game of golf since. I hung up the golf club, I've never went back to the golf course, which I should, but I made a commitment when my daughter was born that it took two to raise a child and not one.

That's been my life. I've been with the Meridian Church, I joined the Meridian Church forty-three years ago. I've sung in the men's chorus for the last forty years. I've taught

Sunday school, I've been on the Board of Elders, I've served the town of Mayodan for fourteen years as the town councilman. I've been mayor pro tems [pro tem] for eight years.

S: Are you still serving?

A: No, I came off this time, fourteen years. My life has really been involved right in this community. Somebody says, why don't you sometimes go here or go there? I says, "I've already been." What gets me, and this is something I'll have to add. My wife said she'd always like to go to Israel. I said, "Honey, we'll go anytime you want to." She said, "I'm afraid to fly." I said, "Oh yeah?" She said, "I'm afraid to [go by] boat." I said, "When you learn to walk on water, we'll both go." That's what's been my whole life, has been involved in this community.

S: Since 1953.

A: Yes, I've been involved in it.

S: Did you work for any particular company?

A: No, I worked for this company down here, Tolatex, which was when I was in customer service for a while. I wasn't making anything but money. That didn't appeal to me. I needed something constructive. I needed something that I longed for, not for something I wanted in material things. I needed something in an outlet about the way I felt about things. That's when I started the storefront ministry. I wanted something that I knew those people who come in that door, that I'd already been there. When they came in without shoes, I didn't have no shoes. When they came in and they were naked, hey, I was naked. When they come in hungry, I was hungry. I knew what they were doing. I knew what they were going through.

I wasn't in there as somebody that had had everything handed in life to me. Then I took it up and went down and tried to tell somebody. You've got to experience something before you can feel it. Those, I felt for them. Only by the grace of God, that could have been me again. You have to look at it like that. Some tried to tell me stories about things when they come in. That wasn't the point. I did what was right. What they did was wrong. If they asked for something and told me a story or something like that, that was all right. My conscious was clear. I gave it. What they did, that was their business.

I've had the sheriff's car pull up and let people out barefooted. No shoes. The sheriff's car would bring them, dump them in front, clothe them. I got an enjoyment out of it. I helped somebody. That's what life is all about. You've got to help somebody along the

way. I'd hate to go through this world saying that I've never helped nobody. The only thing I was ever tied up was my own self. That's selfish. There are certain things that you have to do that you know is the Christian right way to do it. You have to do it because you know that it's right. That's why I've been down here so long, eighteen years. If I'd stayed in the service there, eighteen years down there, I'd be older than MacArthur when I come out. When he addressed Congress [April 19, 1951] and said, it's been forty years, if I'd stayed there I'd say, I've been here fifty years.

S: Do you have anything else you'd like to say?

A: No, that's all I'll tell you now. I think we pretty well covered it.

S: I think we did, too.

A: You know, like I told that newspaper reporter, to cover my life, to really cover it, a man would have to take shorthand, would have to come here for a whole year, and then we'd have to take it day by day. Somebody asked me one time, "Why don't you write a book?" I said, "That's when life ends." They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "People who are getting close to the end of their life start writing biographies." I said, "I'm not ready. I'm not ready to write no book."

S: On that note, we'll close our interview with Damon Conrad Alberty today, May 1, 1998. Thank you, Conrad.

A: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]