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Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald Marcello

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: Frank Fujita

Date: 11-9-70

Oral History Collection

Mr. Frank Fujita, Jr.

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello Date: November 9, 1970

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. Frank Fujita for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on November 9, 1970, in Fort Worth, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Fujita in order to get his experiences when he was a prisoner of the Japanese during World War II. Mr. Fujita was a member of Texas' famous Lost Battalion during that war. Mr. Fujita, to begin this interview, would you give us a brief biography of yourself, where you were born, your education, so on and so forth.

Mr. Fujita: Well, I was born in 1921 in Lawton, Oklahoma, and lived in Oklahoma until I was a sophomore in high school, and we moved to Abilene, Texas. And I went to high school in Abilene, Texas, and also joined the National Guard then. And then I mobilized with the National Guard there from 1940.

Dr. Marcello: Let's just go back a minute. I assume that your parents are Japanese-Americans. Is this correct?

Mr. Fujita: My father is full-blooded Japanese. He was born and reared in Nagasaki, Japan. My mother is an Oklahoma girl, English-Irish descent with a smidgen of Indian. And so it's about four

ethnic derivations in me.

Marcello: I see. When were you born?

Fujita: 1921.

Marcello: 1921. Why did you join the National Guard?

Fujita: Well, at the time, I had a very good friend that belonged to the National Guard. And he painted a very rosy picture of it, and of course like all teenagers I was full of fire and vinegar, and that sounded like a good life so I decided I wanted in on it. And so I signed up for it or tried to, and there was a squabble came up. They didn't know whether I could join the National Guard or not, because they didn't know whether I was a citizen or not. So we had a big squabble in the school, and all teachers divided up on two sides, and some said well certainly I was, and the others said well, he can't be. And it turned out that certainly I'm a natural born American.

Marcello: Well, you'd been born in this country, so obviously you were an American. What was your function in the National Guard?

Fujita: Well, I . . .

Marcello: What were you trained for?

Fujita: . . . went in as a chauffeur. I went from there to truck driver and then I went into the instrument section, surveying instruments. And I was surveying instrument sergeant in the First Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, of the Thirty-sixth Division. At the time, they decided to send one battalion of

this regiment overseas. Well, they were going to send a battalion that I wasn't in--I was in the First Battalion--they were going to send the Second Battalion over. So I decided they weren't going any place without me. If anyone was going over, I was going over with them. So I had to transfer down, and the only position I could get as a sergeant was a machine gun sergeant. So I was machine gun sergeant for E Battery.

Marcello: Did you have any inkling at that time that the country was going to get into war?

Fujita: At that time I made a lot of statements that I was a fighting man. I joined a fighting outfit, and we were going overseas, and everybody thought we were going on a vacation, that we would get to see the world, and everything would be rosy.

Marcello: You were nineteen at this time.

Fujita: I was nineteen and I kept telling them that they're crazy. It'd be years and years before we'd get back, and those who did were going to go through a war before they'd get back. 'Course this was maybe a precognition or a hunch. 'Course you'll have to remember at the time papers were all full of the status quo and the situation in the Pacific and Europe and whatnot. So I couldn't see any way that we could go overseas and get back without getting into a squabble and sure enough this is how it happened.

Marcello: Now your unit was headed for the Philippines, isn't that

correct?

Fujita: We were headed for, what they told us at the time, was code destination of "PLUM." And we didn't know. I don't even know whether anyone but the highest officers knew. But we found out later that "PLUM" was the code destination for the Philippine islands.

Marcello: Well, perhaps then from this point you can relay to us the events as they happened, let's say from the time you embarked from the United States on your way to the Philippines, or on your way to "PLUM."

Fujita: Well, the whole aspect took place there. 'Course we left Camp Bowie, which was our base camp down at Brownwood, Texas. We left there on November 5. That is that's when I transferred from the First Battalion to the Second Battalion.

Marcello: I see. That was on November 5, 19 . . .

Fujita: November 5, 1941.

Marcello: 1941. Right.

Fujita: Alright, then on the tenth we pulled out in two different train loads. One went that night, and one the next day. I was on the latter train, and we went to Angel Island in the bay in San Francisco, and then from there after processing inoculations, and whatnot we sailed on the U.S.A.T. Republic (United States Army Transport Republic), and everyone including the captain of the ship--I say everyone--almost everyone became seasick (chuckle), and it was what we

considered in those days a mighty big ship. There wasn't a square inch on the ship, I don't guess, inside, outside, or on the side that hadn't been vomitted on. That was a pretty sickly mess, and if you were strong enough to withstand the stench, the filth would almost make you sick. Of course, I was one of them, . . . one of the few that did not get sick. I almost did when one of the sailors tore open the john door and vomitted right on me while I was in the process of relieving myself. (Chuckle) It came very near causing me to "toss my cookies." Well, we left out on our own, on the U.S.A.T. Republic, and headed in the general direction of the Philippine Islands, or Honolulu.

Marcello: I was going to say, did you stop at Hawaii first?

Fujita: Yes.

Marcello: . . . the Hawaiian Islands.

Fujita: Yes, we stopped at Hawaii, Honolulu, and . . .

Marcello: Just by way of curiosity, when you were at Honolulu, I assume you weren't there very long, did you see any evidence of any preparations perhaps for an eventual Japanese attack?

Fujita: No, we didn't. We went over there on November 28 and stayed overnight, or not overnight, we stayed about four hours, I think. At least we got four hours shore leave, and we just took on fuel and fresh vegetables and left out immediately. This was on November 28. That's a little over a week before they bombed it. We saw no indications whatever of any

preparations for war, at least I didn't. Then we had another little ship join us from Honolulu. I was just trying to look up the name of that ship in my diary. I believe it was a little converted yacht made into a minesweeper, and I believe they called it the U.S.S. Niagara, a little converted yacht, and we went on and later on the thirtieth we ran across a transport, . . . or the transport caught up with us, and this transport was called the Holbrook, General Holbrook. So then we went on to zig-zag their way . . . that is continued to cross the ocean until December 7 when everything went crazy.

Marcello: Can you describe the events surrounding December 7 or when you received the news that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

Fujita: Yes, well, as a matter of course, we had been assigned duty stations to help out in case of attack or anything. This was theoretical at the time since no hostilities existed. I being machine gun sergeant had to take my crew and take my turn on what they call a sun deck watch which had four .50 caliber water cooled machine guns on the sun deck, and we had to man these. And so on December 7, all battle stations were sounded, and the ship went crazy, and so we all took our duty stations. But we didn't have any idea of what happened for an hour or so, and then, of course, they came over squall box that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor which we had just left. And so that was quite an experience itself.

Marcello: What was the reaction among the men?

Fujita: Well, I don't know. It's hard to say. It was a mixture of unbelief and absolute terror and just plain dumbfounded, you know. It was just . . . war is something you read about. It can't possibly be happening to me.

Marcello: What were your own opinions?

Fujita: My own opinion, I felt for some reason or another before we ever left that I felt that we would get in a war, and I wasn't surprised. I really was surprised to this extent, but I didn't expect it this soon. I certainly had expected to be in war before we got back but not one week after we left the States almost or two weeks.

Marcello: Now the next question I'm going to ask is perhaps a little personal. What was the attitude of your ship mates, I guess you could call them, after they heard about the attack. What was their attitude toward you as an American of Japanese extraction?

Fujita: Well, this is a natural question. And of course most people didn't know this . . . didn't know that I was part Japanese. But then word did get around, and several days later . . . and naturally feeling was running quite high then by the time they got the news in as to what happened in Pearl Harbor and then how they were starting to throw all the Japanese people and people of Japanese descent in prison camps and compounds in the United States. Then immediately somebody wanted to know . . . they had an information program there every day on

the ship over the loud speaker. Somebody wanted to know did they have a Japanese on board? That they heard that they did. I felt that I had better answer this myself. So I told them that they didn't have a Japanese on board, as far as I knew there was nothing but Americans on board. But they did have one sergeant on board that was half Japanese of ethnic descent if that made any difference. Then I never heard any more than that.

Marcello: Very good. Well, continue the story. Where did you go? Apparently the course of the ship was diverted once word of the attack had reached you.

Fujita: From that point on, we followed a zig-zag course. I'd been trying to "guesstimate" all the way across by our direction that we were going as to where we were going. But when we hit a zig-zag course then that threw me off and I had no way of even guessing where we were going.

Marcello: Well, this was apparently the same reaction that Carter and Killian . . .

Fujita: Uh-huh.

Marcello: . . . had. They both tried to guess in which direction they were going also. As they put it, the ship was going in circles at times.

Fujita: Well, the thing seemed to, yes. But we did stop in the Fiji Islands, our next stop. And that was a storybook name to me. I had heard of the Fiji Islands and the tales of the South

Seas and whatnot. And so we pulled up . . . we weren't allowed off the ship. These native policemen guarding the ship came alongside, and they were in sarongs and huge bushy hair that served the purpose not only hair but also as a sun shade the way they had it fixed. So I managed to throw a pack of Lucky Strikes overboard and made a sign as to why they . . . not only made signs, they spoke English. So I told him I'd trade him a pack of cigarettes for any kind of coin or any souvenier so he threw me back a "suva" or Fiji penny which I still have.

Marcello: How long did you stay in the Fijis?

Fujita: We just took on fresh fruit and water and left immediately.

Marcello: And your next destination as I recall was Australia.

Fujita: And we zig-zagged . . .

Marcello: . . . is that correct? Brisbane.

Fujita: . . . down and we went across the International Date Line and then the equator and the usual ceremonies that they have for this which almost beat you to death and whatnot, you know. Converting you from a "Shellback" to a "Pollywog" or from a "Pollywog" to a "Shellback" rather. And we landed in Brisbane, Australia. And they had given us up. They had word evidently prior to this to expect us. So, seeing that we were a day or two over when we were expected, they had really thought we were sunk or something.

Marcello: Do you recall the date that you landed at Brisbane?

Fujita: I have that here, just a minute, we arrived in Brisbane on December 22.

Marcello: That was 19 . . .

Fujita: 1941.

Marcello: 1941. Right.

Fujita: And so they decided they wanted to impress the localities so they made us get off and march into a bivouac area which was the Ascot Race Track. So we marched through town out to the track and naturally we had a goodly number of onlookers and gapers who had never seen Americans before. Well, in fact, we were the first American military force ever to land in Australia other than the navy goodwill tour that they sent usually once a year around the world. But we were the first ground troops to ever hit there, so we stayed there . . . and of course we had to unload our ship, and then I spent Christmas day there on guard. And so it was rather funny having such extremely hot weather for Christmas. Their seasons are a little different from ours.

Marcello: Just how well prepared was your unit for actual combat?

Fujita: Well, at the time we left we were supposed to be the best equipped unit in the United States Army, in the world for that matter. We were supposed to have the new type helmets which the army now wears. We were supposed to have the carbine rifles, which before artillerymen never carried rifles. But we were supposed to have carbines. We were supposed to have

105 millimeter howitzers. At that time they were all of six in the United States Army, and we didn't have them. So we got over there, we had instead of new helmets we had World War I helmets, we had World War I .03 Springfields with five rounds of ammunition per man. I was machine gun sergeant. We got over there with thirteen tripods. We were authorized thirteen machine guns per battalion. We got there with thirteen tripods, not a single gun, not a single round of ammunition. Instead of having a 105 howitzers we had French .75's. World War I vintage. And we had plenty of ammunition for these, but also we had quite a number of English 3 inch field pieces. And we unloaded these and we had training gas masks. We had . . . well, we looked like fresh out of World War I instead of the best equipped unit in the world. (Chuckle)

Marcello: How about the training itself? Do you think that you had adequate training aside from the obvious lack of equipment?

Fujita: Well, we had gone through some quite rigorous training even though it was a mock-up affair in two years of maneuvering in Louisiana. Now I was in a provisional antitank battalion which the army didn't have at that time. We were supposed to give the idea a try at having an antitank battalion in Louisiana. And so we had chassis or driveshaft cowlings off of old discarded trucks mounted on an axle with two wheels on it. We called these guns. So they had umpires too, scorers.

So we'd holler "bang," you know, (chuckle) and that was supposed to knock out a tank, and those umpires would tell us whether theoretically we would have gotten a tank or not. And so this was mainly what we would do . . . kind of a broomstick toy soldier training. However the training was good. I think that we made a good showing for ourselves.

Marcello: How long did you remain in Australia?

Fujita: Just about a week. Let's see. I have here we had boarded the Dutch ship, kind of a luxury liner, called H.M.S. Bloemfontein on December 28, 1941. And then we left on that, so we evidently left on the twentieth. So we went around between the Great Barrier Reef and the mainland and up to the Gulf of Carpentaria. And since I was on guard . . .

Marcello: I hope you have some of these names in the diary.

Fujita: Yes. Yes, they're all there.

Marcello: Very good.

Fujita: But everybody started going berserk again on the ship. We ran across a whole bunch of ships up ahead. And evidently some of them were fighting ships, and no one bothered to pass word around, so everyone conjectured immediately we'd ran across the whole Japanese Navy. (Chuckle) And finally the ship slowed down like . . . well, they didn't know whether to stop, turn around, sink, or what. But finally they proceeded slowly and come to find out it was American ships up there. Well, that was quite a relief. But then we went to Port

Darwin, but out of this group there were several cruisers and destroyers that joined us. Also, I have all those like the Marblehead and the Boise and Houston and whatnot joined us to go . . . I believe the Houston was with us. The Houston was sunk in the Java Sea battle and maybe the memory of our Lost Battalion with us. I was just trying to see here . . . I had the Marblehead and the Boise listed, but I don't have the Houston, so maybe they came later. Anyhow, we laid around a short while after that. I forget. It seemed like it was several days.

Marcello: Now where was Port Darwin?

Fujita: That was over on the northern tip of Australia, northwestern tip, up close to the Dutch East Indies right in there. And so anyhow they wouldn't let us off the ship so they decided, well, once again we would go on. So we left there and we went to Java but we went through the Sumba Strait which I think the normal sea lanes was between Java and Bali. But we went between Bali and I believe it might be Lombok. I won't take the time to look it up in the diary since you are going to take the diary with you.

But anyhow we went through the Lombok Strait, I believe it was, and I never will forget that it was real beautiful as we were going between Bali and the next island. I don't remember if it was Lombok or Sumba. Anyhow as we were going around the island the sun was behind the island, and the mist

was swirling around the island. It was really beautiful. But we had an alert because a submarine was following us, trying to catch up with us. And at the same time, being an artist, I couldn't help admiring the beauty in all situations. No matter how dire the situation was, I always appreciate nature and beauty. So while all of this was going on I noticed we had about three whales out there coming up and spouting. There were about three or four water spouts way off in the distance. All this beautiful scenery and it just didn't seem real that a submarine should be chasing us and trying to sink us.

Marcello: It definitely was a Japanese submarine?

Fujita: Yes, it sunk a ship either just ahead of us or just behind us. I was trying to see here. I believe it was the Liberty. Yes, the tanker just in front of us. This was on January 10, and it was called the SS Liberty, and they did sink that, but they missed us. And we pulled into Surabaja on the eleventh, and they had just had an air raid, and evidently one plane had come over and dropped two or three bombs, and smoke was still swirling up when we landed.

Marcello: Two questions come to mind at this point. First of all, why did they send you to Java? Do you know at all?

Fujita: Well, the only thing that we knew occurred during the last Louisiana maneuvers in 1941. The First Army theoretically battled the Third Army, and out of the two armies they were

going to score the individual units, and the best artillery outfit out of the two armies was to be sent to the Philippines on the nucleus of a new artillery unit. And so since the Second Battalion of our regiment received the highest score, they were it. Now whether this is true or not . . . this is the way that we had it at the time.

Marcello: Apparently you weren't sent there to protect any oil fields and so on.

Fujita: No.

Marcello: I don't think there are too many oil fields on Java are there? Most of them are on Sumatra, I think.

Fujita: Well, there are quite a number. In fact, you name it and you can find it on Java. It is a small, densely populated island that has just about everything in the world you can name on it. Fantastic island.

Marcello: I see. Could you describe the port where you landed, Surabaja?

Fujita: Oh, well, I don't know. The only thing that impressed me . . . of course I'm an old land lubber and all ports look about the same to me since I wasn't used to any port. But what impressed me there was the native sampans and barges and whatnot highly decorated and painted up like dragons and gay colors and whatnot. This impressed me more than anything else, and the fact that these people live on these things. And I understood at the time that some people were born and

died on these little ships, and they never got off. Well, they would get off to go into town, but that was their place of existence for an entire lifetime. This was amazing to me and also beautiful and strange.

Marcello: What did you do upon landing at the port?

Fujita: Well, there again . . . we were taken off the ship, got all our gear, and a bunch of Dutch trucks were waiting for us. And we loaded immediately on some trucks, and then they took us up in some mountains to a place called Malang, a little town called Malang. And there was a military air base, a Dutch airfield, just outside of this little town, and that's where we were to bivouac. So we pulled in there at night and they had donuts or pasteries and hot coffee waiting for us. But on the trip up there was one of these wood burner trains, narrow gauge railroad, and they would get up a big head of steam and really take off until the steam and fire ran out, and then they would slow down until they got all the ashes out and build up another fire and here we would go again. Then of course any time I ran across strange country I had to keep my eyes glued to the scenery, you know. So we were passing what looked like a bunch of fields, and here it looked like a couple of haystacks running off across the field by themselves. And I pointed this out to a bunch of guys who were looking out the window, and it was coming right up by the tracks. So when the train came up, the haystack stopped, and out walked a

little old man, and we came to find out it was what we call a yoyo pole he had over his shoulder, and on each end of it he had a big haystack. Looked like two great big haystacks moving across the country by itself, you know. And then we passed a river. This was another thing that caught me . . . my attention immediately was the fact that this muddy, filthy river . . . looked like half the population was out in the river. One guy would go out there scrubbing his carabao down. Another person just below him would be relieving his bowels, you know, and another just below him would be taking a bath, and below them a bunch of women would be washing clothes, and the same was repeated up and down the river. So everything went in the river, you know.

Marcello: What was the countryside itself like?

Fujita: Beautiful.

Marcello: Speaking from a geographical standpoint.

Fujita: From a geographical standpoint it was a beautiful place. I love beautiful scenery, and the most picturesque . . . probably the most picturesque country I've seen outside of Japan. Japan itself was storybook picturesque type of country. There is not another place in the world like it. Pure storybook, picture-like. When you look at it, it just gives you the feeling that you are in a little fairyland or something.

Marcello: You wouldn't be prejudiced a little bit, would you?

Fujita: No, this is strictly just from the standpoint of beauty. Now

I like all beauty. I can find much beauty right in the New Mexico deserts and I love them--the mountains and everything else. But I don't know, the way the trees grow there in Japan is just all like a Walt Disney cartoon, you know. Like something somebody dreamed up instead of an actual place. But anyhow the country was very beautiful, and the rice paddies, of course, struck me. We had never seen anything like all these terraced rice paddies.

Marcello: How long did this trip take?

Fujita: Well, it took . . . I don't recall offhand, but it took several hours. I'm sure I have it here in the diary.

Marcello: I see. You got from the port to the base in the same day.

Fujita: On the same night.

Marcello: On the same night. Once again what did you do upon arriving? You said they had donuts and coffee waiting for you.

Fujita: Well, then they had some what they called barracks. They looked to us like what in the horse-drawn days were stalls for the horses, but evidently this was where the troop was supposed to sleep. Well, there was nothing to sleep on except the concrete, so we immediately had to go out and get a bunch of hay and build some semblance of a bed. They had straw ticking and whatnot. We had to stuff them and fix us up a bed. And then everyone was ready for a good shower, you know, after trying to bathe on the ship in salt water. One thing you want when you get off is a good shower. So we . . .

as soon as we could we made a mad dash for the shower, and they had no heaters. Well, you wouldn't think we would need hot water 10° off the equator, but this was up in the mountains, and that water was icy cold, I tell you. But that was sure good.

Then we got organized and had the camp situated, and in the meantime what was left of the Nineteenth Bomb Squadron from Clark Field in the Philippines were there. And they were short men, and so we immediately had to furnish them crews. So we furnished people not only to go on airplanes, but we had to load their bombs and belt their ammunition, service their planes and everything else. So for an artillery unit, which is basically an artillery unit, we functioned as a navy going over there; here we were functioning as an air force; and finally when the crap hit the fan we functioned not only as artillery but infantry too. So we pretty well filled the whole bill. (Chuckle)

Marcello: By this time did you have very much contact with the Dutch?

Fujita: Of course, we had . . . they were all Dutch here. And the only contact we had with them was that we could get off . . . which wasn't easy to get off cause we had so much work to do of our own, plus having to take care of the air corps that, boy, there just wasn't hardly any time off at all.

Marcello: Did you and Killian get away very often?

Fujita: Ah, yes, man. We'd take off and get drunked up and sop up a

lot of that stuff. We went over to Dutch canteen. We decided, well, we had to have something to drink, so they didn't want to open up the canteen to us because we weren't officers, most of us. They said, well, they were going to have to let us in anyhow since they only had one canteen. So I remember, I think Killian and I and about four or five others, we went on into the canteen. And these Dutchmen . . . had some Englishmen R.A.F. people sitting around, and they were very ceremoniously drinking their whatever it was they was drinking with little thimble size glasses with great pomp and ceremony, you know. And they made a production out of drinking this little drink. So we . . . a bunch of us Texans stomped in there, and we got us a bottle apiece, a whole bottle apiece, and we sat down at the table and threw the cap away and started drinking out of the bottle. And, boy, these Dutchmen and Englishmen their eyes liked to popped out. They never seen anybody who could drink like these Texans did. (Chuckle)

Marcello: Well, from this point on can you describe the events leading up to your initial contact with the Japanese themselves? Or am I getting too far ahead of the story here.

Fujita: Well, here we had . . . course, at any one particular point in here there's going to be a whole lot of the story that's left out. Just from the very nature of it, you can't cover three and one-half years in two or three hours time. And so

naturally there was a whole lot left, but anyhow we performed our guard duties and kept the air force . . . even furnished crews. And we lost our first man out of the battalion. We got in a new type B-17, had tail guns in it, a B-17D I believe it was. The tail was a blind spot on the other B-17's. And so they sent this over. The guns were still in cosmoline. They were just going to take it up and get the feel of the plane. And they asked if any of our guys wanted to go with them. So we had two of our boys who wanted to ride . . . take along for the ride. And they did and they were shot down. So we lost our first two men. One of them was from my battery . . . Jack Bingham and a twin from Lubbock. So we lost two men on that.

And we had various raids. And being machine gun sergeant I was assigned to help guard the runways. So I picked the spots for my four guns and placed them around where I wanted them, and I had mine right out in the middle of the airdrome, you might say. And that soil over there, you can dig holes in it, and the dirt doesn't cave in--so much rainfall or something. So I had me a five-room apartment, you might say, dug out of the ground by a bunch of the natives right there by my gun pit, so I didn't have to leave my guns. So I had my buddy Ben Keith, he and I would stay out there, and we'd stock it up with food and drink, and we'd just stay right on our gun, you know. I couldn't stand to stay around the camp 'cause

everyone's always walking around on pins and needles and one ear cocked and . . . always got our air raids about right around noon. Seemed like every time we'd sit down for lunch then here the sirens would go. So it got to where our people were afraid to eat, and you'd never hear a plate rattle or a knife and fork clang on . . . sounded more like a funeral parlor when they sat down to eat 'cause everyone's waiting for this siren to go. Often, sure enough it usually would and then they'd jump up and take off.

Marcello: Were these air raids a daily occurrence?

Fujita: A daily . . . almost daily, yeah.

Marcello: About how long did each one of them last?

Fujita: Oh, they'd just make one pass over and that was it.

Marcello: Did they do very much damage?

Fujita: Not really. Only one . . . one raid they knocked out one of the supply houses and hit two or three other things, burnt up two or three trucks and whatnot. That was the most damaging one we had.

Marcello: In other words they really weren't raids by huge formations of planes.

Fujita: No not by standards that were later set . . . hundreds of planes, nothing like that, no. The first raid that we had . . . I remember I dug a hole out. This was before I got my gun placed out in the airfield, so I was just right at the edge of camp. And I dug a foxhole, and I was standing there,

my buddy and I, and here we got the air raid sirens and here we watched these flight bombers come over. I don't remember how many, weren't very many, seemed like there was about six. And we watched and thought it was so beautiful, you know, and how irredescent they looked up there, almost like ghosts. And so we watched the bombays open, watched the bombs come out. It didn't even dawn on us that this was really wartime, you know, until we heard this sh-sh-swish-sh-sh, those bombs falling and then it dawned on us right quick what was happening, and we were too far away from our foxhole to jump in so we just flattened where we were. And then they hit all around us, and the edge of the closest crater was about 25 feet from my guns. Well, I didn't . . . we were in a pit the next time bombers came over.

Marcello: You took them seriously after that.

Fujita: (Chuckle) Yeah. Well, we had quite a number of raids, and one of the most destructive raids we had was from Zeros not bombers.

Marcello: Now Japanese Zeros are single-engined fighter planes . . .

Fujita: Right.

Marcello: . . . correct?

Fujita: We had a radio report coming in that there were eleven P-40's coming in, eleven Zeros coming in. So they gave the alert. Then they gave the all clear and said "never mind they're eleven P-40's." So everyone went about their work, but when

the eleven P-40's got there they were right to start with. There were eleven Zeros. And they shot up quite a number. I think they got seven B-17's, which we didn't have too many to start with, but they wiped out a good number of them right then. In a way I was glad 'cause then . . . we got the guns out of the B-17's. Until then I was machine gun sergeant without a machine gun. (Chuckle)

Marcello: You still didn't have any machine guns . . .

Fujita: No.

Marcello: . . . up to that point?

Fujita: No. So we had to rig our own deal to set these machine guns onto jeeps and make a tripod make-shift. Well, we had the tripods though. But they wouldn't fit. They weren't made for that type of mounting. But it was simple enough to rig them up. And I had to put twin .50's on the back end of my jeep to take them out to try them out, and I liked to dismantled the jeep (chuckle) when I cut both guns loose. (Chuckle)

But anyhow that's the way that happened. We had one of our fellows that . . . he come running into camp when these eleven Zeros came in and he had blood all over his leg. And he came in and someone asked him what happened. He said he didn't know. They pulled down his pants and he'd been shot through the hip. He didn't even know he'd been shot. But he was working over loading these gasoline drums over there by

the planes when the Zeros hit, so he was going to take shelter and he got in underneath one of these gasoline trucks. (Chuckle) And then after they left, he high-tailed it over to camp. But somewhere on the way he got shot. But he didn't know it until he got over there and had time to calm down a little, and someone else noticed the blood on him.

Marcello: I assume that up to this time then you had no contact whatsoever with Japanese soldiers, with any land force . . .

Fujita: Absolutely not.

Marcello: . . . you hadn't even seen a Japanese really.

Fujita: No. These were strickly planes. The first raids that we had was bombers which was very demoralizing 'cause we had no way of fighting bombers whatever. We did have machine guns that we could shoot at low flying fighters but that was all. But in order to try to get these bombers . . . the gun crew dug holes for these field pieces and sunk the trails for these .75's down in the ground where they could get some high elevation. And they'll start shooting at these bombers. (Chuckle) Well, we heard that they hit one and it exploded and knocked down several more, but whether it did or not, I can't swear to that. Well, at least we tried with what we had.

Marcello: Well, I think from here then perhaps we can start talking about the events which eventually led up to your capture. Would you care to continue your story from here?

Fujita: Okay. Since we were there and we were only one battalion,

they . . . I gather that they'd decided to put us under control of the Dutch which they did, for what reason I don't know. We heard that it was just to make the Dutch feel like that they were really playing a part in this or what. But anyhow, we were under Dutch command almost literally, and it was decided then that the probable point of landing of Japanese forces would be at the other end of the island. So it was decided that they would move the battalion up there at the other end of the island from Surabaja. We were in . . . the biggest port from Malang Surabaja. So they moved the battalion up to Bandung, all except my battery which was "E" Battery. One battery had to stay behind and store everything the battalion left behind. Well, that happened to be my battery. So that's the last we saw of the battalion 'cause we never got back with them.

And so they went on up there and the Japanese landed before we could get everything stored away and join them. And . . .so we moved into town then. We took up positions outside of town along the river guarding approaches to the city. And I being machine gun sergeant I had to go around and guard another approach to the city which was about . . . oh, about 3 miles around to the right flank from the main battery. We had two .75's up there with me. And I was out way out in front of them. And I had a nice field of view guarding one of the approaches to the city.

And the Japanese landed and it took them seven days to go from one end of the island to the other. But the way we found it out that they'd landed, I was . . . laying in the pillbox they had built up there, and it was so hot and the Dutch marine sergeant who could speak English . . . and he was roaming around outside . . .he brought me a beer, and I was laying there drinking this cold Dutch beer, it was real good, you know. And he came back in, and he said, "Sergeant, there's a bunch of American troops coming down the road." So I jumped up and didn't even put my guns on. We had hot rumors that we were going to get 20,000 people, troops to reinforce us. Well, that was the Japanese army out there instead of American troops. As I said, I didn't put my guns 'cause we'd felt the Americans that we'd been hearing about were there to relieve us. So I ran out and I looked at them and I put on my breaks and hollered "Americans hell, open fire." So I had two men down on the gun pit out in front of the trenches and they squeezed off . . . had one, had twin .50's up there but one of them was torn down because it was corroded. They had to clean the ammunition and guns twice a day down there, or they just corroded. We had metal belts to hold the ammunition, and they would corrode over night. So you had to clean 'em everyday and oil them."

Marcello: This was simply because of the humid climate?

Fujita: Humidity and the heat. But anyhow, we had one guy who got

five rounds out of the other gun, and it jammed. So I had a Mexican cat on my gun crew and he froze. I mean, I've heard of people freezing with fear, but he froze just as solid as a piece of rock, and he couldn't even hear me. I mean he was glassy-eyed and everything, so, I took his gun. Well, I really wasn't too concerned, I mean, I was glad he was scared, because when they get close enough for me to use my .45 on 'em, they were entirely too close. So I got his gun, but as it was, they were about 100 yards from us when we first saw 'em, so you could hit 'em with a rock then. Anyhow, they had a creek on one side of the road, and a river on the other side. The road was built up, so as I said, it was an ideal approach, so, but they was coming down the road in three groups. The first group had about fifteen in it, the second group had about twenty-five, and the last group, I guess, was the entire Japanese Army back then.

Marcello: Up to this time, let me interrupt just a minute, up to this time, what was the general rumor going about or among the troops with regard to the Japanese soldiers? You know, the usual stories like they never took any prisoners . . .

Fujita: Well, there is one thing that, I don't know, it seems like everybody got wind of, including me, and it seemed like everyone was telling me. Now, who started the story or where it came from, I don't know, but there's one thing they don't do, they don't take anybody that is Japanese. You know, they

figure a person, no matter what fraction he is Japanese, he's a Japanese citizen. That's the way they consider him. And if they catch one of 'em fighting against them, they kill 'em. So, it didn't take too much convincing or to convince me, that is, because I felt like if I ever run across one of 'em, my days was numbered anyhow, you know.

Anyhow, we opened fire on this first bunch. We got . . . I don't think we got any of 'em on the first volley, so I got out there and lined up with this .03. By that time, our firing alerted the two .75's back there, so they started firing, bore sighted. They were hitting trees right along side of us. Man, their shells were exploding anywhere from on down the road to right next to us, you know. Things were really poppin' there, but anyhow, we made about five shots at one of these guys. About five of 'em were sitting along the fence right in front of us, and about one out of every five here had . . . there wasn't but about four or five rifles in the first platoon. So I made about five shots, my heart was beating, and whatnot, and finally I calmed down and asked myself, "Well, you know, shooting a man . . . you've shot rabbits, jack rabbits, and cotton tails, and whatnot, well that's entirely something different." My heart was running away from me. I really didn't know what to expect, but I know one thing--I missed him, and if I kept it up, they gonna start shooting back. (Chuckle)

Marcello: They hadn't been shooting back at this time?

Fujita: No, they didn't fire back at that time. I don't know whether they had any ammunition, or if he was caught off guard, or what, but anyhow, I finally plugged this one. The first one, he rolled off in the creek and so, we said shooting and we got five of 'em. I got five of 'em right there. And then we fired into the main bunch down there. When the firing started, the rest of 'em ran back and got off the road into a village over there. So then this .75 started blasting the village there, and there's no telling . . . we had rumors we killed 1,500, thirty-one of us up there, but later on this guy I was telling you about, the Air Force historian who was going to write a book on it, he got a grant and went over, interviewed the generals, the Japanese, who were on the other side. We did kill 500 though. Thirty-one of us, at least, did our part.

But anyhow, we got over there and run out of ammunition. So I went back to one of these guns and was gonna get some more ammunition, and they were loading one gun--the crew had already left--and they were loading up on a bren gun carrier and were going to leave, so they said, "By golly, you are just in time for the battery is running off and leaving us." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "They're on the ship, and gonna leave." The captain said, "Yeah, so come on." So we got on and sure enough, we were the only people on the island--

Americans, thirty-one of us. So I was up in the front trenches, and nobody told us, "Goodbye, come go with us, kiss my fanny, or nothing." If we just hadn't of run out of ammunition when we did, we'd never have known it (chuckle). But, anyhow, they decided, well, since we were there on our own--the captain left word that every man was on his own--and so they left these two guns back set up so they wanted to go back and destroy all the detonator for them, dismantle all the guns. One of the lieutenants stayed there, Lieutenant Allen from Jacksboro was there. He decided he'd go, I'd go--I'd ride shot-gun--and we'd take a driver with us, and we were going up and destroy those . . . bring this truckload of detonators in. So we went out and picked up this truck, and we could see the Japanese on the other side of the river . . . this road run right beside the river. I figured, well, it was a scouting party or two out there, you know. If we had known at the time--we didn't find out until this historian interviewed these generals--there was an entire Japanese division sitting in those trees on the other side of the river. So as I say, ignorance is bliss, and we didn't know this. We got the truck and left, and we hadn't got 30 yards from where the truck was sitting when the whole place went up in smoke. They'd had a mortar zeroed in on that truck. They just waited too late to fire it. We got the truck back in and destroyed it.

Lieutenant Allen wanted us to stay together as a unit so my buddy and I decided, "Well, no we're not staying there. We're going to go up in the mountains. If we're going to be captured, they're going to have to pull us out of the mountains because we stand a better chance." We decided we'd leave him, so it was getting close to dark so we left and said, "Well, maybe we'd better get an early start in the morning." So we just pulled up to a house, or walked up to the house, and knocked on the door, and I asked them if they would let us stay all night. They said, "Oh, are you English?" I said, "No, we're Americans." "Oh, come in, come in. You're just in time to eat." About three women and two little girls. They said, "Yes, we can feed you and you are welcome to stay all night." So we did and the next morning they were knocking on the door saying, "Please, please you must leave. Hurry, you must leave or you will get us killed!" So we didn't know what was coming off . . .

Marcello: These people could speak English?

Fujita: Yes, they could speak English. They were Dutch, but they could speak English. So, we said, "What's the matter?" "The Japanese are here!" We looked out the window, and there were Japanese all over the yard. One was at the front door. They were all sitting all over the porch, all over the front yard. It had so happened we had picked a house that was directly across from the railroad station, and several trainloads of

them had come in and convoys of trucks of the whole Japanese army, and we're right in the middle of them. And these gals said, "Get out! Get out! You're going to get us killed!" Well, we knew that we were jeopardizing them. But I tell you what--of all the hard things a person might be called on to do in his life--you know it's safe on one side of the door and know you have to go on the other side of the door, knowing full well that the minute that you step through that door you're dead. That takes a lot of nerve. I sweated blood going through that door. And boy, I tell you, I couldn't hardly get my legs moving to go out that door. So, we decided, well, if we had a chance at all, and if I stepped through that door with my gun on, we were sure enough dead. I went back out in the garden and dug a whole, wrapped my gun up in an oilcloth, and buried it, my .45 automatic. But that was another hard thing to do because now my last chance . . . if I do go down I can't go down fighting, you know. So, that broke my heart to bury that gun, but in the meantime these women were getting frantic. Oh, you can't blame them.

Marcello: The Japanese hadn't come into the house?

Fujita: No, no they didn't come in, but they were sitting all over the yard and on the porch. So we took a deep breath and said, "Okay, here goes, let's play it cool." I was telling my buddy, Ben Keith, to play it cool and act calm just like

we were going out for a Sunday stroll or something. And you've heard of this where your head says walk, but your feet say run, you know. Trying to get that information down to your feet is hard, you know, because they are still wanting to run, but we walked through this first bunch on the porch, and they just looked up out of idle curiosity, you know. In the meantime our hearts . . . I swear you could hear them three blocks away because they were pounding so. We got out to the front gate . . . they just moved out of the way and let us by, and by that time we decided, well, we might have a chance of getting out of here. So we did. We walked straight on out, finally got out of this mob of them . . .

Marcello: Why do you think they just sat there and didn't do anything?

Fujita: Well, they were all probably peons. Figured if there was anything to be done about it the officers would do it, you know. They figured well, rank can take an interest, you know. But anyhow, we got out of them, so we sure were hesitant. "No, let's keep walking." And after you got out of there, it was even harder to try to keep from running then. So we started going for the edge of town just as hard as we could go.

Marcello: Now by this time you were away from the Japanese?

Fujita: Yeah, we were away from this main group.

Marcello: And they didn't do anything?

Fujita: No. . . . they were congregated around the depot, you know. So we started out the main road towards one of the gates, and here are a lot of people coming back, and we hear gunfire going on down there, so we kept asking everybody that's coming along. "What's going on? What's going on?" And nobody would answer us. And finally one old boy said, "Are you English?" I said, "No. We're Americans." And he said, "Don't go. They're killing everybody. They're paying the natives five gulden a head to point out anyone trying to get out of town" . . .

Marcello: How do you . . .

Fujita: . . . "with civilian clothes."

Marcello: How do you spell gulden for my secretary?

Fujita: I think it's G-U-L-D-E-N. We called it gliders.

Marcello: G-U-L-D-E-N.

Fujita: G.I.'s are always going to take an easy road out, so we called them gliders. So they was giving them five gliders apiece for telling them about anyone that had been in the service and was trying to sneak out in civilian clothes. Well, five gliders to those natives over there was several months pay. So they were pointing out everybody. They was shooting anybody that tried to get out. We figured, "Well, if those gooks can't get out, we don't stand a chance of getting out." So we turned around and went back.

And so we ran across the International Red Cross

building. So we decided, "Well, let's go in here. He'll tell us how to get out of here." So we went in and he was madly throwing gear together in suitcases, fixing to blow the joint, you know. (Chuckle) So we asked him how to get out of town. And he said, "Oh, are you English?" We said, "No, we're Americans." He said, "Get out of here! Get out of here! I'm not talking to you. They'll kill me if they see me talking to you." I said, "What the hell are you talking about? You're International Red Cross. We're American soldiers. You're supposed to help." "Oh, no. Get out of here!" He was plum nasty about it. He wouldn't tell us how to get out of town and wouldn't help us in any way. So I said, "Okay, you son-of-a-bitch, if you're not going to help us, at least take a letter. We'll write a letter, and you take it and mail it so our folks back in America will know, at least as of this date, we were safe." And he wouldn't even do that. And he can thank his lucky stars I'd just got through burying my pistol because I'd have blowed his damn head off without blinking an eye.

Marcello: Now what nationality was this man?

Fujita: He was Swiss. Swiss Red Cross. International Red Cross. And that was the story of my great anti-love affair with the Red Cross. So anyhow we couldn't get out. And so we didn't know what to do. So we just started ambling off and saw a big crowd of soldiers gathered around a little building. So

we said, "Well, go and see what's going on." And a bunch of Dutchmen were out there. So every once in a while some Dutchmen would come out of this building and make an announcement, and there were a bunch of "oo's" and "ah's," and then he'd go back in. So we asked these guys by us, "Hey, say what's going on?" Seemed like all of them wanted to say, "Are you English?" Said, "No. We're Americans." And, boy, he said something in Dutch and just like that we were standing out there by ourselves when before there was hundreds around us. Well, we felt bad enough to start with. When something like that happened, (chuckle) it didn't exactly make you feel any safer, you know. And so everytime we'd try to walk up to somebody, they'd just scatter, you know. They didn't want us close to them. So finally the old boy came out and made another announcement, and everybody started leaving.

So one of the Dutchmen then came over and said, "Oh, you're Americans, huh?" "Yes." Said, "Well, these people are afraid of their own shadows. They're afraid that if they get caught talking to Americans, they'll be killed." He said, "They just told us to go home and come back at eight o'clock in the morning." So he said, "Where are you going?" We said, "We don't have any place to go." He said, "I'll take you home with me tonight. And I'll feed you and give you a drink. I got some American cigarettes. You stay at my house and I'll give you a Dutch wife apiece, and we'll all

come back here together in the morning." My buddy and I thought, "Boy, you can't beat that, for openers." So we go down to his house and they fed us. And they keep their cigarettes in an oven. The humidity is so high they mildew, so they have little ovens built in the wall just especially to keep cigarettes. So we drank some Scotch and had some cigarettes. So at time to go to bed, he excused himself and had a bed made down for us, and he said goodnight and started to leave us. I said, "Hey wait just a minute." He says, "What?" I said, "Aren't you forgetting something?" He said, "What?" I said, "You said you said you were going to get us a Dutch wife apiece." So he said, "Oh." He laughed and pointed to two round pillows on the bed, long pillows and round. "Well, that's a Dutch wife. That's what we call a Dutch wife." Down here in the tropics, if you sleep with your legs together, you sweat and get galled. So they wrap their legs around these to keep their arms and legs apart so they don't sweat. So they call them Dutch wives. (Chuckle) So that was a letdown. But anyhow we went back to the police station the next day, and they rounded us all up and put us in the Jaarmarkt where they hold the fair, annual fair, down there. That was the start of prison camp.

Marcello: Well, now wait a minute. When you say "they," the Dutch rounded you up?

Fujita: No. The Japanese.

Marcello: Oh, The Japanese had gotten . . .

Fujita: Yeah, the Japanese were there . . .

Marcello: . . . into town by this time.

Fujita: Well, they were there at the police station.

Marcello: I see. And the police station is where this Dutchman had told you to gather the next morning . . .

Fujita: Right.

Marcello: . . .at eight o'clock.

Fujita: Uh-huh. Right.

Marcello: Now one other question comes to mind at this point. Why apparently, the friendly attitude toward the English but the same time . . .

Fujita: I don't know. They . . .

Marcello: . . . the unfriendly attitude toward the Americans?

Fujita: They were mortally scared to death of Americans or to be caught with Americans. I don't know what they had been told or what rumors they had heard, but they didn't want any part of Americans. That's for sure.

Marcello: When you congregated at the police station, I assume that there were not only Americans but also Dutchmen there?

Fujita: Almost all were Dutch.

Marcello: Were there very many Americans besides you and your buddy.

Fujita: Well, there were only thirty-one of us all total. All the rest of them except five were there, were already there, when we went down the next morning. The lieutenant and his

bunch that wanted to stay all night with them stayed together as a unit. They were already there. Five of them decided they were going to hold out. And sure enough, they stayed out for about five months. They couldn't get out of town, but they stayed out of prison camp for about five . . . we'd go out on work parties and we'd see them. And they couldn't wave, you know. They get caught waving at us, well, they then . . . run too big a risk, you know. So we never would wave back at them, you know. We'd let them know that we saw them and . . .

Marcello: Well, what was this fairground like? You called it Jaarmarkt?

Fujita: Yeah.

Marcello: How do you spell that?

Fujita: Well, it's Dutch and it means "Year Market."

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: And it's, I think, J-A-A-R-M-A-R-K-T. I think.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: Which literally means "Year Market," or annual place for a fair or what not. And so around the edges were stalls where at fair time the people who had booths had these stalls set up for them. Then they had this vast open parade ground out in the middle. Well, I happened to be in one of the first bunches they took inside, and when they dismissed us, everybody, of course, started eyeing where they were going to stay, you know. So we saw a place and we made a bee-line for

it. It was a little room just about the size of this one, about 12 X 14. And so about twenty of us (chuckle) piled into this room. Most of them were Dutchmen, about four of us Americans. So finally we got in a big squabble about who was going to stay in there. And finally we got all the Dutchmen out, and the four Americans stayed in there. Lieutenant Allen, myself, and Ben Keith and Pete Evans all from Abilene. And anyhow it turned out they was pretty lucky because we had a shower in there. And it was one of the few showers in the whole set-up. But it had a cement floor. We had nothing to sleep on.

Marcello: What were your impressions of the Japanese by this time?

Fujita: Well . . .

Marcello: Did you have much contact with them?

Fujita: Well, we had almost no contact with them there because the Dutch were giving the commands. They were telling the Dutch what to do, and they were giving us the orders what to do until they got us in prison camp, inside the Jaarmarkt.

Marcello: Do you think there was just as much confusion among the Japanese . . .

Fujita: Probably . . .

Marcello: . . .as there was among the Americans?

Fujita: Probably, at first, yeah. Especially around the depot down there. The typical GI situation: sitting around, not knowing what's going on, and hurrying up to wait. (Chuckle)

I'm sure it's the same in every army. Anyhow, once they got us inside, then they . . . before they let us go they gave us this big pitch that if you didn't cooperate, they'd kill you, you know, and whatnot. So . . . then they let us go. So we didn't have long to wait to find out. They told us you just bow to every Japanese, you know, or salute them. If you had a hat on, you'd salute them. If you didn't, you'd bow to them.

Marcello: This means Japanese officers and . . .

Fujita: Any Japanese. No matter what, you bow to them or salute them.

Marcello: Were there any other orders or instructions that they gave you at this time?

Fujita: Well, at that time this was the main thing. They weren't organized themselves at that time. They said, "You'll do this or you'll be killed." So I'm glad I wasn't the first one that they tried it out on because they was kind of hard for somebody when over here in Texas you grow up by your knuckles. Back when I was a kid, everyone fought, not because you're mad, just because that was the thing to do--to just get out and go up and have a big bout of fisticuffs because you didn't bow down to anybody. So that was kind of hard to take--to bow down to them. But we didn't know whether to or not, you know. We had a big discussion. Was we going to bow to these devils or not, you know. We didn't worry too long about making up our minds because somebody

just . . . The guard troops came around and before they got to us somebody decided he wasn't going to bow, you know. And so they really beat him up, tied him to a pole out in the parade ground, shaved his head, each one of them beat him up with a club, and then came on around. Well, they didn't have any trouble from then on. Everybody bowed or saluted, you know. And so I'm glad it wasn't me to be the first one because that would have been me out there on that pole. (Chuckle) Anyhow . . . that was the start of it. Every time they changed guards each guard beat this guy. He lasted about three days and died.

Marcello: What did they have you do while you were at the fair grounds? I mean during the day? Did you just sit around?

Fujita: They didn't have us doing anything. They did have work details but on a voluntary basis. You could go or you didn't have to. But it was soon apparent that if you were going to eat you had to get outside because there wasn't much to eat inside. Oh, however, we say there wasn't much. Not what we were used to eating. To the natives that was probably good eating. And we look back on those days and, man, that was feast and plenty, you know. But it was just something completely strange to us, rice and native type food over there, but there was plenty of it. And only later did we look back with fond memories on all that food they were eating, although it wasn't as much as we would normally eat.

But in order to get food, if you went out on work detail, you had a chance to barter for some outside, and then you would bring it back into the camp and make fantastic prices off it, you know, to keep yourself and your buddies alive.

Marcello: What sort of work detail did they put you on at this time?

Fujita: Oh, at this time they were mainly trying to build up what the Dutch destroyed. They started destroying all the docks and the oil refineries and whatnot around the port area there. That's what they were doing--rebuilding those back. And so you had to get out on one of those crews if you wanted outside.

Marcello: About how many Americans were captured by this time? How many Americans were captured from your camp?

Fujita: There were only thirty-one of us.

Marcello: There were only thirty-one of you? Now after this, eventually other members of the Lost Battalion were captured, is that not right?

Fujita: Right. We all was captured but the people of the rest of my battery that got on the ship and left, they were also captured, and they were later put back in camp with us, but they were all over on the next island called Madura. They got on this Dutch ship, and they started to leave, and the Dutchmen themselves, so they told me; the Dutchmen lowered their port gun on them and told them to pull over to that island or they would sink them. So they did, they pulled

them over there, and my understanding was that they got the Americans off the ship and held them under machine gun guard until the Japanese got there and turned them over to the Japanese which were their allies.

Marcello: Well, apparently the impression that several other members of the Lost Battalion gave me was that the Dutch were quite willing to cooperate as much as possible with the Japanese in order to save the island. Isn't this correct? To save their property and things.

Fujita: Well, call it islands if you want to. There is just a plain old GI hard terms that's just "save your own ass," and that's just exactly what they did. Now if the Dutchmen had the guts that those women did we would still be fighting over there, I guess. Those Dutch women . . . man, I have admiration for them. They would come up there and try to get food to us and see their husbands and whatnot. And they would stand out there and beat them unmercifully. They would be by day after day after day like this. If you even looked like you were going to hit one of those Dutchmen and then they were long gone. The yellow-bellied devils.

Marcello: They didn't have much of an army on the islands, did they?

Fujita: No, and the Dutchmen themselves were used to having everything done for them. Just like each one of them was a king more or less. He was God Almighty as far as he was concerned. And the natives were usually made to look up to them. And so that's the type of people they were. And they didn't know

how to act when it come down to just being a plain human being with no fleet of servants around.

Marcello: How long were you at this fair ground? You weren't there too long, were you?

Fujita: Well, it seems to me, lets see, this was in March, and I believe we were there until the following November.

Marcello: March to approximately November of 1942 this would be.

Fujita: Yes. Well, it might not have been. Well, we stayed there until the following October.

Marcello: March to October of 1942.

Fujita: Then they moved us up to the other end of the island where the rest of the battalion had been. Most of them had been shipped on either to Burma or Japan or Singapore.

Marcello: Is there anything else from your period or from your time at the fair ground that you think ought to be part of the record?

Fujita: Ah . . .

Marcello: Were there very many British prisoners at the fair ground?

Fujita: Well, there were quite a number of them, yes. Now where they came from, I don't know that. They had a whole lot of R.A.F.'s in, they would come and set up guns right close to mine out in the aerodrome down at Malang. And this burned me up because one bomb could get both of us. I kept telling them, "You stupid limies, move farther on out. There's no point in both of us going on one bomb." They weren't

interested. All they were interested in was how they could get out to Australia. This same outfit had evacuated out of Dunkirk, out of Crete, and into Singapore, and out of Singapore into Java. And now they weren't thinking about fighting a war. They were thinking about how to get to Australia.

Marcello: What was your opinion of the British at this time?

Fujita: Oh, I tell you, at the time, my opinion was that if we were to declare war on the British and the Dutch, I would be the first volunteer.

Marcello: Why the animosity against the British?

Fujita: They were absolute deadbeats. They just didn't strike me as the type of people I would want to associate with, let alone have as an ally. Well, they didn't . . . fortunately later on . . . the Air Force may have been different from the ground troops because I was never around any of the ground troops. But, of course, they have made some mighty good history for themselves throughout the ages. But this group we were with certainly didn't make any history for themselves.

Marcello: Apparently they weren't too clean either.

Fujita: No, they were filthy. And the Dutch were filthy. This was fantastic. We had people from all walks of life over here in the National Guard from poverty families on up to rich people. And, but even the poverty families, maybe they don't bathe as regularly as us, but they were nothing compared to the filth of the Englishmen and Dutchmen. It never dawned on us that

people were that filthy.

Marcello: This opinion of the British and the Dutch is apparently unanimous among the members of the Lost Battalion that I have talked with. They all felt the same way especially about the British, I think.

Fujita: Yeah. Well, see, later on after they moved us . . . when we moved here in October up to the Bicycle Camp there were still a few stragglers left there.

Marcello: Now, at the Bicycle Camp was where the bulk of the Lost Battalion eventually ended up.

Fujita: They were already gone by the time we got there, except maybe there were fifteen or twenty still there.

Marcello: The Bicycle Camp was an old army barracks wasn't it?

Fujita: Right.

Marcello: An old army camp.

Fujita: And I had dysentery there, and I'd lay there, and when you take about twenty-four craps a day with all that accompanying pain and cramps, I was just about dead.

Marcello: Now where was this?

Fujita: Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: You already moved from the . . .

Fujita: From Surabaja now we had moved by train in October to Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: To the Bicycle Camp. What was the train trip like from the fair grounds to the Bicycle Camp?

Fujita: Well, I don't remember much about that except that I was about dead. I was so far gone with dysentery that I was just about on my last leg.

Marcello: Did you have any of the other usual ailments besides dysentery? Did you have malaria?

Fujita: Oh, yes. Now, I didn't have malaria, but I had everything else but labor pains. And pellagra and scurvy and beriberi.

Marcello: Beriberi?

Fujita: Pellagra, I had this pellagra where all the skin between your fingers and your toes and around your nose, corner of your mouth, and under your ears was all split open. Every bit of the skin came off of my scrotum. And . . . oh, it was terrible!

Marcello: What sort of medical facilities did the Japanese provide?

Fujita: Well, they had what they called rice polishings. They would take the rice and then polish the brown hull off of it, and they keep the white rice. But the rice polishing was what was left and this was what they used. So, you would go in with a headache or a split throat or a broken arm or what have you and you would get rice polishings. That's all they had, so that's all you got no matter what the complaint was. So at least down there, in those days they were still concerned with trying to take Australia, and they didn't pay too much attention to the prisoners of war. Things really got rough after they found out they couldn't take Australia,

and they started getting clobbered down there, and then they really started getting mean.

So they sent us to Singapore then. They put us on a tramp steamer.

Marcello: Well, how . . .

Fujita: . . . from the Bicycle Camp.

Marcello: How long did you stay in the Bicycle Camp?

Fujita: Oh, just a few days. Just a few days.

Marcello: Apparently that was more or less a way station . . .

Fujita: Clearing station, yeah.

Marcello: Clearing station until they could find some place to send you where you might be a little more useful to them . . .

Fujita: Right. Well what they did here . . .

Marcello: . . . as part of a labor battalion or something.

Fujita: What they did here, they called everybody out, every able bodied man out, in the compound. Then they went and split them right half in two--separated them. Well, one group they gave a red string. I still have my red string. So we didn't know what they were for. But the other group didn't get one. We learned later though. The group that got a red string was sent to Japan. The other group was sent to Burma. So I was in the group that got a red string. And maybe this was fate, irony, or whatever you want to call it, because I wound up in the group going to Japan. And the irony of it is --where we landed, when we got to Japan--is the exact spot

where my father left Japan.

Marcello: Nagasaki?

Fujita: In 1914, yeah.

Marcello: In Nagasaki.

Fujita: It's 1916, yes. And it's right where he came from.

Marcello: Now how long were you on Java altogether?

Fujita: Well, let's see . . . November . . . about eight . . . about thirteen months, I guess. Yeah.

Marcello: You were there about thirteen months. And for the most part, you really didn't do a whole lot of work while you were on Java, did you? Just odd jobs here, there, and yonder?

Fujita: You mean as a prisoner of war?

Marcello: As a prisoner of war, yeah.

Fujita: That's right. Just odd jobs and whatnot. But still they weren't making us go out. Well, yes they did too. They started putting us on a roster basis before we left Jaarmarkt down there. And we had to go out like it or not. But we usually managed to swap off. If you didn't want to go, if you had moral objections to it or something, there was always someone hungry enough or willing enough to go out so he could get a chance to buy something on the black market. So you could always get out of it on this basis.

Marcello: At the time you were at the Bicycle Camp, were the thirty-one of you still together yet?

Fujita: Oh . . .

Marcello: Had you lost anybody?

Fujita: Well . . .

Marcello: Either due to separation or due to death or . . .

Fujita: Well, now just before we left the Jaarmarkt at Surabaja, they put us over in Tandjungpura, which was right on the water's edge. And there was the rest of the battalion, that part that was on the ship.

Marcello: Right. Which is what was left of the Lost Battalion?

Fujita: No. This is what was left of E Battery.

Marcello: Oh, I see, of the thirty-one.

Fujita: No, we had about 105 or something of E Battery.

Marcello: I see.

Fujita: But this was the outfit that was left behind to store all the gear in Malang when the battalion moved to the other end of the island. But we were split up because the main part that wasn't up in the front line got on the ship and left. They didn't tell us (chuckle) they were going.

Marcello: I see.

Fujita: So I looked forward to this with a kind of dread because I've never seen any more murderously mad men in my life than the people that were left there behind . . . not so much the fact that they were left but the fact that they weren't told that they were going to be left. (Chuckle) This can kind of tee you off.

Marcello: As you look back on your stay on Java, could you summarize it

very briefly? What exactly was it like?

Fujita: Well, here again . . .

Marcello: What were your feelings at the time?

Fujita: Here again . . .

Marcello: Your emotions?

Fujita: I usually, no matter what the situation, I still have the habit of viewing life through the eyes of an artist. And so I find beauty in everything, even in death, you know. I always find something that's worthwhile. And even when we were starved to death--most of us down to 80-90 pounds or walking skeletons--then instead of me sitting around thinking how horrible a shape we were in and "Oh, woe is me," I thought this was an absolutely marvelous opportunity to study anatomy. (Chuckle) So then I learned to study all these walking skeletons and see how the system works, how the bones work, and what muscles they had left worked. (Chuckle)

Marcello: How much weight had you lost by this time? Let's say from the time you were captured until the time you left Java.

Fujita: Well, I guess when I had that siege of dysentery, I got down to about 90 pounds.

Marcello: What was your normal weight?

Fujita: My normal weight is 145 pounds. So then we went from there, the Bicycle Camp, to Singapore, Camp Changi. And having dysentery was the only thing that saved my life here. They put us on a tramp steamer to go to Camp Changi. And I was in

a hold about four times as big as this room here. And there were a thousand men in this bunch that they were shipping.

Marcello: Now this was in Singapore, is that correct?

Fujita: No, this was in Bicycle Camp . . .

Marcello: Oh.

Fujita: . . . taking us . . .

Marcello: . . . to

Fujita: . . . to Singapore.

Marcello: . . . Singapore. Right.

Fujita: So in these holds, they had five hundred men, and there was no room to lay down. You had to sit down with your legs straddled, and somebody else sat in between your legs. That's the only way you could get in. And it was next to the boiler room, and so it was terrifically hot. I just sweated several towels full, and then I quit sweating, and I was so weak I could hardly move. And then, of course, I had dysentery so I had to go to the toilet. By that time they decided that everybody who had dysentery had to stay up on deck. And that's the only thing that saved my life. Two more hours down in that hold, and I'd have been among the deceased.

Marcello: Apparently those who had dysentery had to stay back down in that hold. Is that correct?

Fujita: No. The ones with dysentery they made go up on deck.

Marcello: Right. The ones that did not have dysentery . . .

Fujita: Right. Right.

Marcello: . . . were still down in the hold.

Fujita: Now we had several people who died from this trip. But we were only on there seven days. We had another . . . identical ship, identical setup, same number of men in the same type holds. They stayed on thirty-one days. And out of 1,000 men, I believe it was something like thirty that lived. The rest of them all died in the hold.

Marcello: Like you said, you can't explain any of this really other than by fate.

Fujita: That's right.

Marcello: I mean that could have very easily been you in that other ship.

Fujita: That's true. What caused the other ship to delay landing and kept them on there for thirty days?

Marcello: Did you ever have any encounters with the Americans by this time? Did any American planes ever strafe the ship or anything like that?

Fujita: No. Not where I was. Some of these ships they had sunk trying to get out of Java and going back up. And we lost some of our prisoners of war on some of these ships. But I never saw any of this. And . . . when . . . speaking of the R.A.F.'s before, we had a big run in with them here on Java, I mean on Changi there in Singapore. This was the nearest we came to starving to death. We had five hundred men, a thousand men. They wouldn't put us in the main camp with

everyone else, which a lot of the battalion was still there. They hadn't moved on up to Burma yet. But we couldn't get over there to them. Once in a while some of us could get a pass and go over and visit them. We were guarded by Sikh Indians instead of Japanese. But anyhow, they bivouacked us in a coconut grove. And they said we couldn't eat the coconuts or we'd be punished. So they built a jailhouse inside the prison camp, so anyone caught stealing coconuts would be thrown in jail. (Chuckle) Which was pretty stupid. But anyhow here we only had . . . they had no salt whatever. So in order to get salt they would send a detail down to the ocean and bring back 55 gallon drums of ocean water. Okay, they would boil this up. They had sweet potatoe fields out there. And they'd cut the vines off of one sweet potato plant and chop it up and throw it in this ocean water. And that's what we were eating. And if you were lucky, you got a piece of leaf in your boiled sea water. Otherwise, you had boiled sea water.

Marcello: They were using salt water?

Fujita: Uh-huh. Just to get salt, because they had no salt. Even the Japanese army didn't have any salt. But anyhow, under this setup, we were eating anything that we could get our hands on: snails, bugs, insects, snakes, anything. And one day at "tenko," what they call a "tenko" is roll call. They had roll call twice a day and once in the evening.

Marcello: That's T-E-N-K-O?

Fujita: T-E-N-K-O.

Marcello: T-E-N-K-O.

Fujita: And so you had to answer. And, boy, if anyone didn't answer then they immediately started a flap, you know, to find out where they were. So one evening just at "tenko" we started . . . they called . . . blew the bugle, and then we started running . . .and here was a little dog out here. They had this open slit trench, and the flies would blow this slit trench, and the maggots would be crawling all over. It looked like snow around it. And birds would come down and eat the maggots. Well, here's a little dog trying to catch one of the birds, you know. And so, boy, that was meat on the hoof. We never saw that much meat in one whack in a long time. So Saylor and I decided, "Well, we are going to eat that dog," you know. So we flipped to see who was going to take the dog, and I lost. We had a garbage pit, and I grabbed the dog and went down to the garbage pit. And he answered for me at "tenko." So he came back, and we were going to kill the dog and eat him. It was hard to do with this dog looking you in the eye and wagging his tail, you know. But hungar willed out, so when it got dark enough, you couldn't see his eyes, and I knocked him in the head and killed him and we ate him. Well, this next day this Englishman came around, R.A.F. came around, hunting for a little dog, you know. So he described

him and somebody says, "Oh yeah, go in and see Sergeant Fujita." (Chuckle) So he came over and asked me did I see his little dog. And I said, "Yeah." And this very pompous English sergeant-major, bristly mustache and carrying a little riding crop, you know. And, oh, he was the "cock of the walk," you know. And he wanted to know about this dog. And we said, "Yeah, we've seen him." He said, "Well, where is he?" We told him, "Well, we ate him." And, boy, he got mad. We came to find out this dog was their mascot. He'd evacuated out of Dunkirk with them, out of Crete with them. And here he was in Singapore, and the dog had over 2,000 hours flying time, and he was quite a mascot. And we said, "Blanking almighty, that sure was a good little ole dog." I says, "Sarge', I just got to agree with you. (Chuckle) That sure was a good little ole dog." And, boy, he got mad at us and called us cannibals. Next day he came down and had a whole bunch of the R.A.F.'s and they was going to clean us out. They never did come to blows. (Chuckle)

Marcello: What was this camp like in Singapore?

Fujita: Well, it was . . .

Marcello: Describe it physically.

Fujita: It was the dregs. It was just an open coconut grove with some of the old discarded, what we would call, pyramidal-type tents that the Army used to have so many of, which sleep six men in a tent. And they were just utterly rags, just shreads.

And this is what we lived in. And the food was ocean water and one plant.

Marcello: What were your own physical conditions like at this time?

Fujita: Well, this was the worst. We all got down . . . most of us got down in to the 80's and 90's. I think . . .

Marcello: How . . .

Fujita: . . . I was down to 89 pounds.

Marcello: I was just going to ask you here. Now you said you had pellagra and all these other diseases which opened up your skin.

Fujita: Uh-huh.

Marcello: Apparently this salt water didn't do it any good.

Fujita: Well, I don't know. I don't have any recollections of that being too bad. I remember when all the skin came off of my scrotum. I couldn't walk because my legs would rub on this raw bag, you know.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: I made me a little cloth sack. I thought, "Boy, this is a smart thing to do . . . to keep my legs from rubbing on it." But then, of course, all that moisture and whatnot that leaks out, seeps out of the raw meat, you know, and it coated this sack, this cloth, and just turned into scab and then in trying to get that thing off I suffered all the tortures of Hell. Well, once that I got it off I never did that trick again. Well, for about six months I had to walk straddle-

legged and I didn't wear anything . . . wore one of these G-string type things like the Japanese wore, but I had it hanging way down low where it wouldn't touch me. And I kept all this rawness until we got to Japan and got a different diet.

Marcello: Did many of the men suffer from tropical ulcers?

Fujita: Oh, most of them did. Now that's something else I didn't get, but the biggest percentage of them got tropical ulcers.

Marcello: Was this also a dietary deficiency? Of course, plus uncleanliness.

Fujita: Well, I think it's caused from worms or something over there, but it's also caused . . . it's aggravated by a dietary deficiency.

Marcello: What sort of cure did they have for these things?

Fujita: They had no cure for them. Like I say, they gave you rice polishings for everything. We never had any medical treatment at all until we got to Japan, and they had a regular infirmary.

Marcello: What sort of work details did they put you on at this camp in Singapore?

Fujita: In Changi they had us cutting down rubber trees of all things. You would think they would want to hoard all the rubber, but they were clearing out rubber plantations. For what reason I don't know.

Marcello: What sort of discipline existed among the prisoners at this time?

Fujita: Oh, well, at best you can say it was pretty shipshod, you know.

Marcello: Was it the case where every man was for himself? Had it degenerated to that?

Fujita: No, it hadn't degenerated to that because we still had semblance of command.

Marcello: I see.

Fujita: Still at that stage of the game everyone thought they were going to get out. And no one dared stray too far from military lines because they didn't want to have to face court martial after they got out. Later on, it did kind of get to where it . . . "what the hell we're not going to get out anyhow."

Marcello: Were there ever any escape attempts?

Fujita: Yes. Now like down in the Jaarmarkt people would escape. Well, they would go out and try to find them. And finally if they couldn't find them they would find their relatives and bring them in. And if they didn't . . .

Marcello: Apparently these are the Dutch you're speaking about?

Fujita: And the natives.

Marcello: Right.

Fujita: And if they didn't come back in they would shoot their family. So then they decided, "Well, we won't even do that." They said, "Well, if anyone wants to escape, go ahead. We won't hunt for you, but we'll kill ten of your nationality." If

one American escaped they would kill ten Americans. So then what kind of guy does escape when you know you're going to take ten other guys lives?

Marcello: Even if you had escaped there was no place to go.

Fujita: There was no place to go. You can go to the ocean. I think, though, if I could have ever got to the mountains that I could have held out, but I don't know.

Marcello: Were there ever any suicide attempts?

Fujita: Well, I'm sure some of the deaths were suicide. I don't know any personal accounts of suicide. I know that we'd had many self-mutilations to keep off the work party, especially after we got to Japan when work was so hard, food was so bad, and you just got down to where you didn't feel like you could go on. So they'd break each other's arms and legs so they wouldn't have to go to work. Now they had a setup there in Japan.

Marcello: Before we move on to that stage, why don't we just stay here with the deal in Singapore for the time being?

Fujita: Okay.

Marcello: What sort of discipline did the Japanese impose upon the prisoners?

Fujita: I never saw a Japanese the whole time we were in Changi. Sikh Indian guards--they were with the British until the Japanese took over, and they went to work for the Japanese. The British life style had changed very little. They still had their white houses, and right across the road from a coconut

grove was a big mansion that about six British officers had. And it had this huge mango tree just loaded down with fruits.

Marcello: These were prisoners now?

Fujita: Yeah, they were prisoners. Man, they would send their carts into town every day and bring back their mutton and their drinks and whatnot. They wouldn't share it with Americans. No, this was strictly for the British, you know. And so we got to where we would raid their carts and their junk. We would steal their stuff. And we would go over there and knock mangoes out of the tree and they would come out. Well, they were going to court martial us. And we're going to contact the United States government. "How dare these starving Americans eat their mangoes." (Chuckle) And, of course, this endeared them to us even more, you know.

Marcello: Apparently outside of the work detail you almost had your run of the countryside, you might say? Just so you were back in at a certain time--such as when they had roll call?

Fujita: No, they had barbed wire enclosures. In order to get out of this barbed wire, you had to have a pass. And you had to have a good reason for it.

Marcello: They would issue you passes?

Fujita: Yeah, they would issue you passes from one compound to the next for so long--to visit, to see a doctor, or whatever.

Marcello: Apparently there weren't too many . . . there couldn't be any atrosities committed by the Japanese soldiers because you

didn't see any at this camp, is this correct?

Fujita: Well, I didn't see any in Changi, no. We had quite a number of them in Jaarmarkt. For instance, in the early days where maybe they caught two guys doing something they stood them against the wall and beat them and kicked them, and they would get rocks and wedge them in their mouth as wide open as they could get them and drive those rocks in, and then they would hit them under the chin with a rifle butt. Well, this broke all their teeth and jaw bone and all that. They would stick their lighted cigarettes into their skin and prick them with a bayonet and things like that. And they had these sharpened bamboo wedges that they'd make you kneel down and cross on your shins. And, oh, it was terrible. It just cuts right through your skin.

Marcello: Did you find out that there were differences between individual Japanese soldiers. In other words, were there some whom you might describe as compassionate, while there were others who were sadistic or cruel?

Fujita: Well, yes. Usually the meanest ones were the Koreans because they weren't much better off than the prisoners of war because the Japanese despised them. They considered them subhuman. But they were still in the Japanese Army. And so everybody in the Japanese Army could beat them up, but they didn't have anyone to beat up except each other until they got a chance to be guards over prisoners of war, and all of

a sudden here is someone they can beat up. And so they really took advantage of it too. They were mean.

Marcello: Were there any individuals who stood out among your captors? Surely, you must have had nicknames for some of your guards.

Fujita: Oh, yes. All the way through there we had one . . . they put a sergeant in charge of these 1,000 men to bring them from Java to take them to Japan. A sergeant, mind you! Can you imagine the American Army putting 1,000 men in charge of a sergeant? They would have had a lieutenant-colonel or somebody, at least, you know.

Marcello: Now from Java to Japan . . . you didn't go from Java to Japan. You went from Java to Singapore to Japan.

Fujita: From Java to Singapore to Formosa to Japan. But we were under this one sergeant all the way. And he looked like an ape and was great big. We called him "The Bull," you know. And he was just a bull of a fellow, you know. And he was mean as hell, but he was fair. What I mean by that is, if you goofed up you knew you had it coming, because you knew you goofed up. And he didn't let anything pass. But if his own soldiers goofed up, I saw him line his own soldiers up out there in front of all the prisoners of war, and he beat everyone of them unmercifully just because one of them goofed up. He wasn't having any of that in his outfit. His word was law - period!

Marcello: Now, were these Japanese soldiers or marines?

Fujita: They were soldiers.

Marcello: They were members of the Japanese Army.

Fujita: Right. And so, anyhow, he was in charge of us all the way. And he hung around there in Changi as long as we were there, but when we left again, he and the same crew were in charge of us.

Marcello: Did he ever associate with you,with any of the other prisoners?

Fujita: No, he couldn't speak English, but he would come around and try to make conversation. By that time we had bastard dialect that we could kind of talk. We might say one sentence in half English, Dutch, Javanese, and Japanese all in it, plus a lot of grunts and sign language. We got to where we could converse fairly well.

Marcello: By the time you left Singapore how would you describe the morale among the prisoners?

Fujita: Well, still this was comparatively early. We'd already had second thoughts . . . when we were first captured, there wasn't a one of us that thought that it would not be two months later until we would be out of there. Now where was I?

Marcello: We were talking about the morale among the prisoners.

Fujita: Oh, yes. It was still fairly early. We had changed our original estimate that we would be out in two or three months. Now it had dawned on us that we might possibly be there two years or so. Only later when we got to Japan did it finally dawn on us, "Hell, we may be here for twenty

years," you know. And, of course, you always hear rumors, and you always take the best sounding ones, of course, which weren't always . . . usually they weren't the ones that were true. And the morale was pretty bad, but it wasn't as bad . . . it hadn't reached the depths that it got to later on when they finally had to face up to the fact that, hell, they may spend years and years in there.

Marcello: What was the thought that was most constantly on your mind at this time? What did you think of the most? I'm speaking of the time up to Singapore. We haven't moved to Formosa or Japan.

Fujita: Okay. Now, for the first year we still had hopes of getting out. Just like all GI's we would start talking about women or leading up to them. After about a year of this and a year of starvation, the women dropped out of the picture, and we started talking about food. And everyone was sitting around taking down everybody's favorite receipe, you know, and trying to memorize them. And all we could talk about was food, and so this was the main topic from then on out. For the rest of the time it was food. Women never entered into it any more after about the first year.

Marcello: One other question comes to mind at this time before we leave Singapore and move on to Formosa. What was the opinion of the Japanese soldiers of you personally as a Japanese-American?

Fujita: They didn't know this yet. They didn't find this out until I got to Japan. Why, I don't know but there my name was as Japanese as you can get, and it was right there on the records all the time, but they were still interested in taking Australia, and they really hadn't been kicked down on it yet. So they still hadn't got rough on us until after we got to Japan. But all my buddies by then wanted me . . . they said, "Hell, they are going to kill you. Change your name. Say you are a Filipino or Mexican or anything. For God's sake don't tell them you are half Japanese. Change that name." So I was scared. Believe you me, I was scared enough that I thought, "Well, hell yeah, they are going to kill me as soon as they find it out." I didn't have any doubts about that. I got to thinking, hell, if I change my name to Joe Martinez or something, well, when they kill me anyhow they might have me listed as Joe Martinez, and then my folks would never know what happened to me. So I figured hell, I was born with this name, and I might as well die of it, so I kept it all the way through.

Marcello: Were you ever able to get out any mail at this time or receive any mail?

Fujita: No, I got some mail, oh, about a year and a half or two years later . . . long toward the end of the war.

Marcello: Did you receive any news at all from the outside world?

Fujita: We got . . . funny thing after we got to Japan we got all the

news, but we got so many rumors with it that we never knew what was fact and what was fiction. And always the fiction sounded so damn much better, and we wound up taking that as the gospel only later to be dejected and find out well, hell, we accepted the wrong information. But it seemed after it was all over and we found out how things went that we did get the information. How we got it, I don't know. The grapevine came through with it. We seemed to always get it.

Marcello: Is there anything else from your stay at Singapore that you think we ought to have as part of the record?

Fujita: No, nothing that I can think of that would be of much importance here. My buddy and I, we had to split ways there. He had pneumonia, and we had to leave him there, so we split. He lives over here at Grand Praririe now. I guess that's about all, but then we didn't know where we were going from there until one day they came and issued a bunch of British winter battle dress. Then we knew where we were going it was going to be cold. So they put us on the sun deck of this Hino Naru, which means "Circle of the Sun." And so they put us on the sun deck of this ship, and we thought, boy, this sure is nice up here on this sun deck down here in the tropics. It felt so nice. But we weren't feeling so nice by the time we got to Japan. That old Siberian wind blowing down there about froze us to death. We stayed on this deck until then. After we left Singapore, the same

sergeant and his group was in charge of us. We went almost straight to Japan. We stopped off at Formosa briefly to let some officers off. Evidently they had an officers' camp here, higher ranking officers. But we didn't get off ship, so we went straight on in from there to Nagasaki.

Marcello: Can you describe the details of the voyage from Singapore to Formosa to Japan?

Fujita: Well, there's really not much to say except that this one trip took us ten days from Singapore to Japan, and I hardly even, this many years after . . .

Marcello: From Singapore to Formosa?

Fujita: From Singapore to Japan. And we stopped off in the meantime.

Marcello: I see, at the Philippines . . .

Fujita: At . . . no, at Formosa.

Marcello: I meant Formosa. I'm sorry.

Fujita: But we only had one canteen of water for ten days.

Marcello: For how many men?

Fujita: That's per man.

Marcello: Per man.

Fujita: But they didn't tell us we weren't going to get any more. But even today, this many years after, I never take a drink of water without remembering. Ten days without . . . with one canteen of water. Now I always pour a little . . . pour . . . pour myself too much so I can pour some down the drain. And I just think how wonderful that water is that I even have

enough I can pour down the drain. (Chuckle)

Marcello: On what day did your water give out?

Fujita: Well, . . . it was about . . . mine lasted about three days until I . . . I didn't completely . . . I didn't completely drink it until I found out that we weren't goiong to get any more. Well, then we started just really sipping. And I think I went the last two days with no water at all. And, like I say, that leaves a vivid impression on you. At different times of your life, depending on circumstances, some things . . . your values change. And you suddenly realize that really, after all, the most important things in life are really free, like water, salt, easy enough to get. You know, things that you have always had and never had any reason to think that they would never be there. All of a sudden you find yourself without them, and it's an entirely different light.

Marcello: Did you have any close calls with American submarines or planes during this trip to Japan?

Fujita: No. I had never seen any Americans whatever--surface or aircraft at all.

Marcello: Can you place this so far as chronology is concerned or so far as the date is concerned? When did you leave Singapore?

Fujita: Okay. We left Java on October 28. We left, I believe, on November 28--the same 1,000 men--boarded the Kamakura Maru. So we left Singapore on November 28. We stayed there . . .

Marcello: It was 19--

Fujita: . . . not quite a month.

Marcello: . . .'40 . . .

Fujita: 1942.

Marcello: 1942. At that time you probably wouldn't have seen too many Americans. I guess the Americans by this time were just kind of recuperating and just beginning to fight back.

Fujita: Yeah. They were not anywhere close to there either.

Marcello: Right. Right. That's exactly right.

Fujita: They were on the outer fringes.

Marcello: Right.

Fujita: And so we got into Nagasaki on December 7.

Marcello: Of 19--

Fujita: Of 1942.

Marcello: . . . '42. What was your own physical condition at this time?

Fujita: Well, at that time I was still in pretty bad shape because when I got to Changi I was just wasted away to nothing because of dysentery. And the diet that we got in Changi didn't give me a chance to build anything back up, so I was in pretty bad shape when we got to Japan.

Marcello: There is one thing which I think we should make clear so far as your diet was concerned. The Japanese apparently were not deliberately starving the Americans by withholding food. Is this correct? Were you getting about the same diet, let's say, as the Japanese soldiers were?

Fujita: No. Absolutely not.

Marcello: You were getting less?

Fujita: Maybe in the first camp--we didn't know at the time--but in the first camp, well, I figure that maybe the quantity was about the same because there was plenty. It was just food that we weren't used to. So we considered it slop. (Chuckle) We changed our minds later and wished we had some of it.

Marcello: But by the time you moved on, they had been putting you on short rations?

Fujita: Yeah. But when we got to Changi, we had starvation rations. No one can live on that. If we hadn't stolen the coconuts and killed the snakes and ate these big old jungle snails and anything else we could get, we would have starved to death. And, so when we got to Japan it was still . . . we never got rations that were equal to their fighting men, but the Geneva Convention said we should have had them.

Marcello: What were your first thoughts when you found that you were going to Japan? Did you know that you were going to Japan before you got there?

Fujita: No, not until I got there. We knew it was some cold place. We started conjecturing whether it would be Japan or Korea or Manchukuo, or somewhere cold.

Marcello: Could you describe Nagasaki from what you could see of it?

Fujita: As well as I remember, it was very foggy and cold as hell. And, oh, I remember pulling in there and all these picturesque

little islands you could see through the mist and the fog and about to freeze. That's the only memories I have in pulling in there. I didn't know until we got into our camp where we had come to. Then it immediately struck me. What a quirk of fate that after all these years that one member of the family comes back where the original member of the family left from--in the identical spot. There is probably a message there somewhere, a psychic message that I failed to appreciate.

Marcello: So what happened upon embarking? Disembarking, I mean.

Fujita: Well, disembarking they put us in . . . they made us march down the coast line to a camp where they were reclaiming the land. They were blasting down these mountains and building land out in the water. So this camp was built out on some of this reclaimed land. So it was always wet--the land and so . . .

Marcello: Did wonders for your health, I'm sure.

Fujita: Yes, they put us in these rooms that had no ceilings, no doors, no windows. They had windows in there but they didn't have windows put in there--had the spaces for them. The concrete never dried out the whole first winter we were there. And it was absolutely miserably cold. We had two blankets. They issued us two blankets apiece. First, they issued us one, and so many people darn near froze to death that they finally gave us two. And the work here was working

in the shipyards. We had to go down and build ships. But life in the camp . . . we had a death rate of about five a day. There were about . . . oh, I would say about 5,000 people in this camp. And right at a hundred Americans and the rest were British and Dutch.

Marcello: Did each nationality more or less stick to its own?

Fujita: No, usually the group that you got captured with or started shipping with you pretty well stayed with them. We were with mainly Dutch and English, and we stayed with that group--my thirty-one. Even when we ran across other members of our own outfit they didn't drop us off with them. We had to go on with this bunch that we were with.

Marcello: Of those thirty-one that had been captured how many were left by the time you hit Nagasaki?

Fujita: By the time we hit Nagasaki . . . let's see. I think we only got to Nagasaki with twenty.

Marcello: You were down to twenty?

Fujita: But I don't think . . . we only had one or two deaths that I know of.

Marcello: I see. A good many of those had been split off.

Fujita: Yeah, they had dropped off along the way for various reasons. And we did have some deaths, but this was another thing that made me appreciate the American system of living. In growing up, no matter what your circumstances in life, the Americans always seemed to hold up better than any other

nationality. The Dutch and the English went to pot. For instance, even though you were sick, had dysentery, the Dutchmen . . . these individual guards, these Korean guards, would stand out there between the "benjo"--that's Japanese for toilet--and the barracks. And they would beat up everybody that would go to the toilet, you know. Well, almost everybody had . . .

Marcello: Dysentery . . .

Fujita: . . . green apple quick-step, you know. (Chuckle) And so these Dutchmen and Englishmen, rather than to get beat up going out there, they would take a crap in their mess tins, you know. We had no sanitation whatever, no facilities for sterilizing anything, you know. They would just get up the next morning and rinse it out and go get their food in it. I don't care how poor a family or background Americans came from, I can't imagine Americans doing something like that. But the Dutch and the English didn't have any hesitations about that.

Marcello: You said that while you were on Nagasaki most of you worked at the shipyards. What specifically did you do?

Fujita: Well, they divided us up into crews. They usually had some prisoners of war on every crew whether as riveters or welders or stage builders. My crew was stage building. That's when they build a new shell. Before all the rivets and things get in, they build angleiron frameworks out there and lay planks

on it for other workers to work on. Well, my job was building the scaffoldings for the planks. We called them stage builders. And so, every so often we would see two holes, and once the shipyard started working with all these thousands of riveters going wouldn't be any good if you could speak the language because you could get right in somebody's ear and scream, and they couldn't hear you.

Marcello: You were with a mixed crew with prisoners and Japanese?

Fujita: Yes. Well, yes, we had to work with them. When we got to the dockyards then we worked with a Japanese crew. But then we had to memorize certain . . . we had different colored chalks . . . every time we would see two holes marked with a circle with this Japanese symbol by it we knew we were supposed to put up a bracket on those two holes. It was the same way with the torch cutters. Every time they saw a yellow chalk line with a certain symbol on it they were supposed to fire up the torches and cut this. Well, I made a little game out of it because my job carried me all over the dockyard, you know, from one ship to another. And so I tied me some chalk on the end of a string, I mean, on the end of a stick. And when we would carry these planks from one ship to another they'd have these ribs of these ships laid out on the ground. Oh, hundreds of them. So I dragged this stick of yellow chalk along and every once in a while I stooped down and wrote a symbol down there. Well, the POW crew would come

along, and they would see that yellow line, and they would just fire the torch and cut all these ribs in two.

Marcello: Did the Americans do anything else to sabotage the work?

Fujita: Oh, we were always doing things like that. I'm sure each crew had their own way of getting back. We carried on our own little war there. I killed one of them there.

Marcello: How did you do that?

Fujita: Well, he almost killed me to start with.

Marcello: Was this a civilian?

Fujita: Yeah, this was a coolie there. And these huge bolts that they had for these huge rivets that they rivet these big steel plates on with. I got hit in the head with one of them one day, and I looked up on the scaffold just above me, and there was a Japanese worker up there, and he was looking down at me just grinning something fierce, you know, like he thought, boy, that was real funny hitting me on the head with this rivet. I got a <u>good</u> look at him. I knew that since I got all that dockyard, my time would come. So sure enough, about two days later I saw him. So I worked my way up above him, except I got about six scaffolds above him. I got one of these great big bolts they used before they put the rivets in, then loaded it down with great big washers and put about two or three nuts on the thing, and it weighed about 15 pounds. So I took aim and dropped it on him and hit him right in the head. And he never even kicked. He never even let out a

kick. (Chuckle) But it didn't take me but about one minute to get clear on the other side of the dockyard.

Marcello: Nobody saw you do it?

Fujita: No. At other times we were putting . . . had this one ship almost completed. And they usually from the outside they'll stick a telephone pole, a big pine pole, you know, lean it against, and wedge this plate to help hold it in place so they could get bolts and rivets in it. Well, that's here on the fantail--right at the top of the deck, at the tail end in the last place. And it was way off of that cement deck down below, so they had to have two pine trees bolted together in order to reach that high. So they had an angleiron with a pole in it and we're supposed to jockey this pole around and stick a bolt from the outside through that angleiron into one of the holes, through the plate, and into one of the ribs on the ship and bolt it down. Well, we couldn't get it on there. And boy, one of these Japanese just kept raising hell. Finally, he made motions that one of us should get out there and ride that pole from the outside and stick it in. So I was working with a little Irishman. (Chuckle) I made the mistake of calling him English one time, and he (chuckle) liked to jump all over me. The Irishmen don't take kindly to being called Englishmen. And so we kept saying no, so finally his boss was looking at him, so he got out there. He was going to try to belittle us now. He said, "Okay, you chicken, I'll

show you how to do it." So he got out there on this pole. It was . . . I bet that thing was 120 feet off the floor and . . . so he was out here riding this, and the only thing that was holding him was us holding this log, you know, with him on it. Well, this little Irishman, he looked around and he didn't see anybody looking, so he just gave this guy a shove. And so he rolled the pole down. He was doing some tall screaming. You could tell by his facial expressions, but of course, you couldn't hear him. And it was summertime, and I had my jacket hanging up below on the deck, on the floor of the dry dock. Well, he rode this pole down, and of course his body weight pulled him around on the bottom. By the time he hit, he fell on a stack of steel plates and the double telephone pole on him and he burst like a paper bag, you know. So they gathered what was left of him up. And my jacket was hanging there, so they pulled what was left of him in my jacket and run him down to the infirmary and see if he could be helped. Of course he couldn't. So they brought my jacket back. And that night when we were going home, I couldn't put my jacket on. So they got mad and threatened me, and I wasn't about to put that jacket on with all the blood and brains and guts all over it, you know. So they beat me up. Two or three times they beat me up. And I still wasn't about to wear that jacket. Finally the interpreter told me I ought to be proud to wear that jacket with a

Japanese on it, you know. (Chuckle)

Marcello: By this time did they know that you were Japanese?

Fujita: No. Not yet.

Marcello: Still didn't know.

Fujita: But it was in this camp when they found it out. So I guess if they had known it by then, it probably would have gone a lot different for me. It wasn't very a short time after they found out. Anyhow, I got back in camp, and they beat me up two or three more times in camp for coming in without my jacket--different group in camp. So finally, they gave me another jacket.

Then we had one little guard. He'd go around checking all the rooms. And I was in charge of one of the rooms. I wasn't supposed to be. I had a sergeant in there who outranked me but he begged me to take it over. He never controlled any man, he didn't know how to do it; he was medic and all this. I took it and I liked to got killed in the process because when anything went wrong the room chief got beat up as well as the culprit if they caught him. I must have been baldheaded way back past here. There wasn't even a fuzz left. My hair just came out en masse until I got off of this job, and it all grew back in.

Anyhow, this little guard was going showing off how he could read English. So he was reading the roster--had a roster up in front of every room. So he'd go in and call attention and make everybody listen to him, and he'd go down the

roster reading them out and grinning, you know, like, boy, he's really, really doing something big. So then he came to my name--we call it Fu-ji-ta, but they call it Fu-ji-ta. He came to my name and said, "Oh, my God, what's this? This is Japanese!"

Marcello: So you thought you had it.

Fujita: Yeah. He got all excited and wanted to know where this Fu-ji-ta was. I knew what was going on. I was there in the room back at the other end. So I ducked down and hid behind the table just looking over the top of it, you know, (chuckle) waiting to see what was going to happen. No, I was standing there when he said this. He asked me where Fu-ji-ta was and I said, "Well, he's gone to the 'benjo'." You know. So, he said, "Okay." He'd wait. So I ran back to the back of the room and got under the table, you know. And he kept asking everybody that came in, "Where is Fu-ji-ta?" Finally one guy come in, and he happened to see me back there. He said, "Where is Fu-ji-ta?" He said, "There he is." (Chuckle) Well, boy, that was the end of it. And, boy, he got all excited, and he got pawing me, feeling of my skin, and feeling his, and pointing to his coloring and my coloring and his hair and my hair. "Oh, that's fantastic." So he had to go tell the camp commander what he'd found. So then I was quite the topic of conversation around there for awhile. All the prisoners . . . everywhere I went by then they knew what

I was. But the Japanese never did know until that time.

Marcello: What did they do?

Fujita: Well, he didn't know what to do. He was just excited. He thought, "Man, that's fantastic--to find a Japanese as a prisoner (chuckle) in Japan!" So he went and told the sergeant of the guard. He told the officers of the camp. So then, boy, they came and got me out with the interpreter and everything, and they wanted to know all about me. So they kept me in off of work the next day. And the camp commander interviewed me and decided, well, he'd just make me his private servant.

Marcello: What sort of questions did they ask you?

Fujita: Oh, they wanted to know what I was doing in the American Army, and were they mean to me, and did they make me join the army, you know.

Marcello: Could you speak any Japanese at all?

Fujita: No. Well, let's see now. I'm leading up to this. So I couldn't speak Japanese, so they thought, "Well, that's terrible. A Japanese that can't speak Japanese." So this camp commander decided he'd make me his private servant. I had to cook all his meals. Well, that way I'd stay in camp. And he assigned an English-speaking sergeant, a corporal, an English-speaking corporal to teach me Japanese during the day. And so I figured only one thing--nothing but trouble if I learned to speak Japanese. So I figured my best bet is to

keep my head where it belongs--on the shoulders--and not to learn anything. So I kept playing stupid which wasn't too hard to do, you know. (Chuckle) And he would get exasperated because they were always on him because I wasn't learning anything, you know. They figured, well, then he's stupid because he couldn't teach me Japanese. They had a little book called Japanese in Thirty Hours. So I was supposed to learn in 30 hours what it took them 2,000 years to learn. (Chuckle) And so, finally, I realized he was in a hard position because they'd take him out, work him over because I wasn't learning Japanese. I guess he figured one day that, hell, if he's going to go down the drain on account of me, he's going to take me with him, you know. (Chuckle) So he got his cheese knife out, you know, his samurai sword they carry, and backed me up against the wall and he started swinging this thing just as hard as he could and, boy, he was furiously mad. And of course I was as flat against that wall as I could get and, boy, he come so close I even felt it once, you know, but I just feel the breeze of it every time. Just a little miscalculation and he'd split my throat open or cut my head off, you know. And he was so mad. And this just went on like this--all this threatening to kill me and whatnot. And here's another thing. A person never thinks that he . . . well, when it comes down face to face with death . . . you're still . . . you're always going to care, you know. You're

going to hang on, no matter what it takes, to hang onto life. But the position I was in, I'd been threatened with death so many times and each time I was so certain that they were going to kill me that I finally got to the point that it didn't bother me. I said, "What the hell. If they do, okay; if they don't, okay." Yeah, you actually get to that point when it's repeated so many times. Anyhow, I never learned Japanese. And I'd brag to them, you know, and now hell, I killed five of their people down in Java and shot down one of their planes, you know--shared honors with shooting down one of their planes.

Marcello: What would they say when you told them this? You were getting pretty brave, weren't you . . .

Fujita: Yeah!

Marcello: . . . saying this sort of thing?

Fujita: And they said, "Well, you're Japanese!" I said, "No, I'm <u>American</u>!" They said, "No. The Americans are enemies." I said, "No. <u>You're</u> the enemy." They said, "Well, what are you doing fighting for America?" I said, "I'm American." They said, "Why do you fight Japan?" "Because you are the enemy of America and I'm American. You're my enemy." And they couldn't digest this and . . . or they didn't want to. But the "higher-ups" never bothered me. Of course, this just burned the little guys up--the privates. They were just waiting for the day they could get me without them "higher-ups"

being around and they did.

Marcello: What did they do?

Fujita: Well, I was coming to that. So I'd tell them. I'd laugh at them. Every time they had a dignitary or anyone come into the area, well, they'd bring him out and put me up on display and say, "Look what we got here. A Japanese that didn't want to be a Japanese. He's a prisoner. He can't even speak Japanese." (Chuckle) Their exhibit "A". They'd sit there and oh . . .

Marcello: Just let me ask you this. Did your food and so on or treatment improve any when they found this out?

Fujita: No. Mine didn't.

Marcello: You were still getting the same sort of rations?

Fujita: I was supposed to eat . . . well, I didn't. See, I had to carry . . . when I was made the camp commander's personal servant, I only got to cook enough for him. They made sure I didn't cook any more than just enough for what he wanted. But they started making me carry all the food for the guardhouse out there and then also taking it back to the galley when they were through.

Marcello: That was kind of risky, I guess, when you went to the guardhouse, wasn't it?

Fujita: Well, yeah. Well, no, as long as the wheels were there they didn't bother me. But I knew that they were just waiting for the day that they could catch me out--so to speak, you know.

But, anyhow, they never did eat all their food. So I'd eat some of that, and then I'd take it and I'd go down the hall, and if there were no guards in the hall, and I took it . . . I knew where the real sick people were--the ones that were about to die . . .

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: . . .and if I could I'd give it to these people first.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: And then what was left I'd let that room share everything else that was left. Then the next day I'd take a different room.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: And keep on going like this but always insisted that the ones about to die get the food first. But then this made the rest of the Americans mad because they figured well, hell, I ought to give them <u>all</u> the food because I was an American and they were American . . .

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: . . . the hell with the English and Dutchmen.

Marcello: Yeah.

Fujita: So I didn't look at it that way. Hell, a dying Dutchman, even though I didn't care much for them, well, he's in as bad a shape as a dying American.

Marcello: Sure.

Fujita: And after all I had a lot of Dutchmen and Englishmen in my room. Like I say, I'd give it to the sick first and then try

to share it with the rooms . . .

Marcello: Right.

Fujita: . . .as far as I could. And of course you're always . . . any time food is involved, you're going to have hard feelings if somebody doesn't get some. And of course there never was enough to go around. I was taking a chance on my life . . .

Marcello: Sure.

Fujita: . . . to start with to even give it to them. And then that created hard feelings because they thought well, hell, I ought to come in there and make out my own roster and dish it out to them, you know.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: But I couldn't do that. I'd just dump it out and let them fight over it, you know.

Marcello: Right.

Fujita: When I didn't learn Japanese, then they put me back on the dockyard. (Chuckle)

Marcello: I see.

Fujita: They figured, "Well, anybody that stupid . . ." Hell, they didn't want me to be Japanese anyhow. (Chuckle) They offered me high rank in the military and offered me as many concubines as I wanted and property and anything to join the Japanese Army. I just laughed but they said, "Why?" I said, "Well, you're going to lose the war." Oh, well, you can imagine how that went over. They said, "Well, what do you mean? We're

winning." I said, "Maybe you're winning now, but you're going to lose the war." Then they'd beat me up and work me over. And they figured well . . .

Marcello: You keep referring to being beat up and worked over. What was the usual type of beating -- with the fists or anything that was handy?

Fujita: Well, usually with a rifle butt . . . or the fists. Now, when all the wheels left one day--just nothing but the little guards were there--and that day they came around, "Fú-ji-ta. Fú-ji-ta." They went all over camp hollering for me. And we had one Japanese there who was a nice guy. And he couldn't do anything for us. He was just buck-private in the rear ranks, but he had a heart in him. He was human, and he knew what these other Japs wanted me for. They were going to beat me up. So he caught me first and he tried to tell me. Oh, he was a horrible looking thing. He picked up an American hand grenade somewhere and (chuckle) tried to inspect it, and the thing blew up and blew him all to pieces and tore his face off. So all their guards there, they were crippled up soldiers--most of them Korean.

Marcello: You still had Korean guards . . .

Fujita: Yeah.

Marcello: . . . for the most part at this time.

Fujita: Yeah. So well, he was Japanese but all . . . we had two or three Japanese, but most of them were Koreans.

Marcello: Were the Koreans the ones who were waiting to work you over?

Fujita: Yeah. Yeah. They were the ones that <u>really</u> worked me over. So they finally caught me. So he tried to tell me what was in store for me, and he wanted me to know that he was sorry for me, and there wasn't anything he could do about it, and he just hoped the best for me, you know. Anyhow, they got me and pulled me out in front of the guardhouse, stood at attention, and then they started beating me and . . .

Marcello: With rifle butts?

Fujita: No. With their fists, you know. So then they found out they weren't doing any good that way and . . . so they made me bend over and grab my ankles. So one of them got behind me with a rifle butt and started beating me across the buttocks and the back. And they ruined my back. I still draw disability on it. But another one was up in front, and he was upper-cutting me with his fists and then with his knees and then kicking me in the face while I was bent over. So finally they got tired of that and stood me up and started at me again with their fists, you know. Every time they'd hit me, they'd knock me back a step. I knew that if they ever got you on the ground they'd almost kill you. Most of the time they would kill you. But eventually they'll respect you if you'll keep your feet. And I was bound and determined those sons-of-bitches weren't going to get me on the ground. I was going to show them that I'm better than any of them, you know.

And of course just shear will power kept me on my feet because I was out long before I finally fell down. But they beat me up to this cliff about 50 feet high and turned me around and beat me back to the guardhouse. They finally decided they weren't going to knock me down on the ground because they told me I could go. Well, I couldn't see, you know. My face was all swelled together, couldn't even tell where my eyes, my mouth or anything else was, just one big puff, you know, a bloody mess. They turned me toward the door, so then I marched off at what I think . . . (chuckle) must have been at attention. I don't know what kind of shape I was in. (Chuckle) I walked . . . as soon as I got in the building, well, then I heard the GI's talking there--the prisoners of war--then I passed out, and that's all I knew. It sure liked to finish me off.

Marcello: Did you have any broken bones?

Fujita: Well, I don't know. They wouldn't give you any treatment, you know. But I missed about three days work because, hell, I couldn't see. All my face was just puffed up. My eyes were swelled shut.

Marcello: What happened . . . what did the higher-ups think when they came back and saw . . .

Fujita: Well, they . . .

Marcello: . . . you in this condition?

Fujita: . . . they . . . they didn't . . . I don't know whether they

did anything to the guards or not. If they did, I never knew it. But the old man--the camp commander--he was an old man, too old for active duty. So that's the reason why they had him there. He seemed like he would probably be a decent sort of person. He was old. And he was thinking more about retiring from the war. The war, to him, was probably something he reads about. (Chuckle) It's nothing real to him. He was probably so old that he probably wasn't all there for several years. In old age, your mind comes and goes--at least that's the way he struck me. A sergeant-major was the next in command, was the highest enlisted man. He was about 7 feet tall. Well, they say Japanese are little people. The biggest people I've ever seen in my life were in the Japanese Marines. They'd get up to 7 feet and better. I never saw such big men. (Chuckle) Course most of the army are little devils. But the marines are all big son-of-a-guns. Anyhow, they put me back to the dockyards. Then one day they started shipping them out.

Marcello: What was the attitude of the Japanese civilians toward these American prisoners?

Fujita: Well, . . .

Marcello: Toward prisoners in general.

Fujita: Well, they'd spit on us as we'd march to work and whatnot and these . . . and here again . . . the depths of these Dutchmen and Englishmen . . . stoop to . . . of course we were all

hungry, naturally, but there are some things my personal pride won't let me do--that I will actually starve before I do it. Now I'm in a qualified position to say when I will die rather than do it because I've been there. For instance, we'd be marching down the road, and these Japanese running around . . . seemed like every one of them had colds with long, yellow snot running out of their nose, you know, and they'd always seem to have plenty of tangerines. So they'd peel these tangerines, and they'd blow their nose on these orange peelings, you know, and throw them down, and these Dutchmen and Englishmen would fall out and fight like dogs over that and just gobble it up. And you just . . . all this is sickening to me to see how low that a human being can stoop. It's always surprising to find out just what a thin veneer all these thousands of years of evolution have produced. We finally arrived to the state that we are only just like a coat of paint that can disappear over night. Let the circumstances change and he's once more an animal like he was to start with. Then later on they finally gave us . . . put some windows in . . .

Marcello: This is windows in your barracks.

Fujita: Yeah. In the barracks. And finally put some doors on.

Marcello: Apparently it gets pretty cold in Japan. Does it not?

Fujita: Yeah, and that Siberian wind comes down off there, and it gets pretty cold. Well, it probably wasn't as cold as we felt

because we didn't have anything to build body heat with.

Marcello: Is it a damp climate also?

Fujita: Yes, very damp all the time. With all these little islands settled right down in the water the humidity is about 90 per cent all the time. Finally in summertime we had wide cracks in the ceiling between boards, and the mosquitoes were terrific. Well, we had lice, fleas and bedbugs as if life wasn't miserable enough. These maddening bedbugs and fleas would just eat you up. Lice didn't eat you; they just tickled you. Can you imagine them crawling on you all the time. Well, that bothers you; it doesn't hurt you. These darn fleas and bedbugs, they felt like they'd bit a chunk out of you every time, you know. (Chuckle) And you couldn't catch them to save your life. It was a constant battle with fleas and bedbugs, and then the summertime came, and the mosquitoes came in swarms and hordes. So we kept bitching to the Japanese to do something to keep these mosquitoes out. Well, finally somebody got the idea that we could cut up old newspapers and paste them over all these cracks, and that would keep all the mosquitoes out. So they did that. So they gave us newspapers, and we spreaded them all up. It was all Japanese so we couldn't read them. But then they made all this paste out of wheat flour, rice flour, or something. Anyhow there was just one bucket per room. So we go in there, and, man, everybody dips in and starts eating that

paste. Oh, that was good! You can't imagine how good that stuff was. So maybe we got up one or two pieces of paper, you know, and then go back to the galley and say, "Well, I've got to have some more paste." Well, they would grumble about it, and then we would go back and, boy, eat that paste up. And finally when we went back a third time they began to get wise, and then they started beating everybody up for eating the paste up, so they didn't give us any more paste. And to be sick . . . they had it worked out. They had a hospital. You could be in the hospital, or you could be sick in your room in bed, or you could be sick in your room not in bed, or you went to work. So you had to be at death's door before you could stay in. And you would have to be gasping your last before you could be in the hospital. In any case just to be able to stay in off work you were darn near dead. But in order to stay in off work and in bed, you had to catch fifty flies in order to have the privilege of being sick in bed. And to be sick in the room without being in bed, you had to catch 100 flies. This was every day. If you didn't get your flies to turn in, then you went back to work no matter if you were going to die in the next 30 minutes.

Marcello: What was the reason they did this?

Fujita: I don't know. They just couldn't stand seeing wasted manpower, I guess. And so, that's the way it was, and then the hospital . . . once you got in the hospital well, hell, there

was no hope. Almost everybody that went to the hospital usually died. We had a Dutchman there in charge of doctoring, and I think the prisoners of war were trying to kill him when hostilities were over. He'd go around and grab these guys up by the ears or something and look at him and say "Isn't that son-of-a-bitch dead yet?" And then he would say, "Bring his food over here to me. There's no point in wasting that food on a man that is going to die anyway." He was fat because he was always eating the food of these sick people. Of course, they literally . . . the difference between a piece of bread might have meant the difference between life and death. They were down to that point.

Marcello: This brings up another very interesting question. Were you keeping score of all the people that you were going to get even with when the hostilities were over?

Fujita: Yes, I've got paintings I made of this beating here. I'll show it to you in a minute. But then they started shipping different technicians out to these different camps, and I come to find out . . . well, they jerked up some mechanics--one of our guys was a mechanic--and nobody knew why. So we figured out, "Well, he's a mechanic." Maybe that has something to do with it. So then they shipped out some other people to different camps, and we found out what they were. It seemed like they were calling for different skill levels for different camps. One day they came in there at me. They

usually sent a group of them. He came in there--one of them we called "Sergeant Teeth."

Marcello: "Sergeant Teeth?"

Fujita: Yeah, he was all teeth. (Chuckle) A little scrawny fellow who was all teeth. His teeth stuck out like he had been eating pumpkin through a rail fence. (Chuckle) Anyhow, he came in there and in his bastard dialect, you know, and sign language and grinning and showing off all that mass of teeth, you know, a mass of teeth. And he told me, "Well, Fú-ji-ta--Tokyo." They were going to send me to Tokyo. He did like this--like he was going to cut my head off, and then he just laughed. So I began to believe it. I figured they'd tried every way in the world down here to make a Japanese out of me, so I finally figured out that Tokyo had heard of it, and they were going to get me up there, and they were either going to make me or break me. I was convinced so I went and told my officers and everybody I knew and gave them all the facts of the case. I said, "Keep a record of this date, when you last see me." So I told my officers--there were some of them there with me. They told me, said, "I'm going to be a Japanese or they're going to kill me." So I told them what they told me and I figured that's what they're going to do--just take me up there, and I'll either . . . as the saying goes, "Shit or get off the pot." (Chuckle) And . . . so they said, "Well, by golly, you'd be stupid not to." They

said, "Hell, there's no way you could help 'em." They said, "Join 'em if it means saving your life. You're no good to the United States Army either if you're dead. You might learn something that could help them." I said, "Well, if that's the case, then you've seen the last of me because I ain't joining those guys." They said, "Well, you're stupid if you don't." I said, "Well, we'll see how it works out. I'm not going to because it's probably the last time you'll see me." Then word preceded me all the way up the line. Every time I stopped all the Japanese that were out gawking. They wanted to see this Japanese prisoner, you know. And so then every time I got a chance, every place, I'd contact the commander, American senior officer, and tell him who I was and what was happening and where I came from and what I thought was going to happen.

Marcello: Apparently, you were the best known American prisoner in the Japanese camps.

Fujita: Oh, I guess I was. Man, they knew me all over Japan, I guess.

Marcello: A real celebrity.

Fujita: As far as I know, I'm the only person that was part Japanese that was a prisoner. There may be more, but I never heard of another one except myself. So I was in a unique position really. (Chuckle) Between a rock and a hard place they say. They had both sides against the middle, you know. (Chuckle) I was trying to keep my head on my shoulder where it belonged. Sometimes that wasn't easy. But anyhow, the first stop was

another camp upon Kyushu, same island that Nagasaki is on. And I came to find out it's a steel mill, and they had a bunch of prisoners up there. Well, we picked up an American merchant marine.

Marcello: How did you get up there? By truck?

Fujita: By train.

Marcello: By train.

Fujita: By train. We picked up a great big old American merchant marine and a big Dutchman. I said, "I don't know what in the hell you guys have done, but I know what they mean by 'misery loves company.'" I said, "I'm never so damn happy in my life to have company. (Chuckle) At least I'm not going by myself." Until then, see, it all made sense. I thought "To hell," they're just going to take me up there because they took me . . . only me out of that camp. And I was sweating blood 'til where they put that merchant marine with me and whatnot. They didn't even know why in the hell they were going. So we got to trying to figure it out. We couldn't figure it out. I told them why I was going. So they figured well . . . they got to thinking over all the things they'd . . . that they could possible cut short for. And they figured well, hell, they'd done something that they're going to kill all of us. So then they stopped at another camp and picked up five Englishmen. Then we got to thinking, "Well, hell, maybe there's something else to this." So then we got to

talking all among ourselves and find out where we came from, and that was no help. Find out what we did and come to find out they were writers and newspapermen and radio broadcasters, had experience, except me and I'm an artist. Then we figured, "Well, hell, this must be something to do with propaganda." So then we stopped at another camp and picked up two or three more, and they were writers or newspapermen or radio men. Then we figured, "Well, hell, they're surely not going to take us all out there and kill us. It's bound to be something else. It's bound to be a propaganda deal." So they put us in Omori camp up out in Tokyo Bay when we got there.

Marcello: That's Omori?

Fujita: Omori, uh-huh. O-M-O-R-I. That's another man-made island built out in the bay.

Marcello: I see.

Fujita: And so they put us on this. And immediately they found me out and of course they found out I was Japanese, and they'd make me exhibit "A" again. Going over there and looking me up and down and punching me, "What kind of freak is this?" I don't remember now what happened. One of them punched me or something like that, and then they just beat the hell out of me. (Chuckle)

Marcello: Once again.

Fujita: (Chuckle) I hadn't been in camp five minutes before they had me on the deck or had me beat up. So they beat me up about two or three times that first two or three days and

then they left me alone. They put us in a special barracks away from all the other prisoners of war.

Marcello: You were still on this man-made island in Tokyo Bay?

Fujita: Yeah. Uh-huh. But there were about two or three more guys in this one barracks. Then they started coming in a few at a time, all put in this one barracks. And then it fit a pattern. Every one of them had something to do with broadcasting or newspapers or magazines or something. And so I was pretty damn certain that they were going to start some kind of propaganda deal. So then, sure enough, they decided, well, they was going to move some of us to another camp down in Tokyo. So then we, twenty-five of us, . . . not twenty-five to start with, there was about twenty of us. It's in the diary.

Marcello: I see.

Fujita: It wound up at the end . . . there was twenty-five of us. There were twenty-five of us. So we got down there, and it was this old school building, an American school. That is, they taught English at this Japanese girls' school here before the war. So they stored all the school stuff in this bottom floor and made a prison camp, prison quarters, on the next two floors. And so they called us fellows out and told us that there . . . they were going to start some sort of radio program and that we would all cooperate or lives would not be guaranteed. Well, this was over two years in prison camp,

and we already knew that they didn't usually talk too lightly. They weren't usually joking when they meant they'd kill you. They usually meant it. So they said that anyone who didn't care to cooperate . . . well, we had a little Englishman there. He was Governor of one of the islands, British islands down there. And he figured if he ever cooperated with them--even under duress--his civil service for the British Government was ruined, so he said he'd rather face death. So he told them no. So they immediately beat him up and grabbed him and carried him out to the guards. So then they told us afterwards that they took him out and shot him. They didn't, we found out. I saw him a couple years later. But that was a good hammer. They told us they took him out and shot him. And we didn't have the least bit of doubt that they did because we'd already seen them shoot so many people, you know, and kill them.

Anyhow, they decided they'd have this radio program, just strictly a radio program. So then I figured, "Well, I could see where everyone else could fit into a radio program, but how in the hell are they going to use an artist on a radio program?" (Chuckle) Television wasn't out in those days. I still didn't figure it out. No one else knew how they were planning on using an artist. So they started everybody out, and they'd assigned a topic, and everybody had to write on this topic. They said, if you would not cooperate,

your life would not be guaranteed. So everybody was writing sloppy, something like a first grader would try to scribble out. Well, they knew that all of them were not that stupid. So by the time they worked us over two or three times, well, then they made their point and people started writing. But I never could bring myself to it because I'm not a writer to start with. And I didn't know what to write about, and what they wanted you to write on was political. And politics hadn't entered my head at the tender young age of twenty, you know.

Marcello: That's right.

Fujita: That was the farthest thing from my mind--was politics. So I'd try to write out something. I'd deliberately make it as bad as I could. And they already . . . I guess my ignorance had preceded me too. "Well, this stupid guy can't even . . . this freak can't even learn Japanese." (Chuckle) So that went over. They decided well, hell, they couldn't use me on the program so they made me the janitor, and I had to clean up the toilets. So I spent the rest of the war cleaning up the toilets, you know. (Chuckle)

Marcello: You were still on this man-made island?

Fujita: Yeah. No. They moved us off of that, . . .

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Fujita: The twenty-five of us, and right into town, eight blocks north of the palace.

Marcello: Well, now by this time did you experience any of the air raids yet? Had the air raids started?

Fujita: No. The air raids hadn't started. But after we got to this camp they did start. I forget when the first air raid started, but I remember that was quite a thrill. That just tickled me to death when finally we got planes . . . got close enough to where we could get a plane over Japan. When they were so far away and they couldn't even get bombers over there, it kind of made you feel left out, you know. But even one B-29 which had such a long range . . . even if they could get close enough to get one of those over there, that meant something, you know.

Marcello: I see.

Fujita: Well, I guess here in November of '44 . . . the first of November we had our first raid. I got all the raids down, and how many planes and the damage that was done, and everything else in the diary. Finally they wouldn't . . . we had no place to go when the bombs would hit, and so we'd get out . . . our shelter was directly below my bed which was the entrance to the toilet, and it was only two steps deep. Well, that's no protection for twenty men, and besides that was only about 6 feet square. So you couldn't get twenty men in that hole anyhow. So if you were down on the surface of the ground, you might as well stay up in bed. So there was two of us that finally decided, "Well, man, these raids kept going

on and you never got any sleep," and they wouldn't let you sleep during the daytime. I said, "Well, hell, I'm not going to stay up all night for this because if a bomb gets you in this bed up here they're going to get you down right below me." So why be stupid and go down there? I'd just go ahead and stay in bed. So two of us, we never did get out of bed. So the rest of them they'd get up every night, spend all night up, and they were just worn to a frazzle, you know, afraid to stay in bed and afraid not to go down into this place, just like there was something to keep them from going in there.

Marcello: How close did the bombs come to your barracks?

Fujita: Well, we were there . . . we saw every raid on Tokyo except Doolittle.

Marcello: That was the first one.

Fujita: Yeah.

Marcello: That was probably before you'd come there.

Fujita: Yeah, that was before we got there.

Marcello: And that didn't do very much damage anyhow.

Fujita: No, it was psychological . . .

Marcello: More like a token.

Fujita: Yeah, psychological thing. When we got there it was the world's third largest city. When the bombing was over, all that was left, as far as the eye could see, was just massive rubble and smoke stacks and safes. Seemed like every little

old hut had a great big iron safe. (Chuckle) He might not have had anything in it, but he had a safe. And all these smoke stacks, and that's all you could see. Looked like just a forest of smoke stacks.

Marcello: Now obviously most of this was due to the fire bomb raids.

Fujita: Fire bombs.

Marcello: Could you describe what those fire bomb raids were like?

Fujita: Well, yes. Now they destroyed the whole town right down within one block on each side of us, two blocks on the other two sides of us. So there was just a little bitty island right here in the middle of Tokyo that was left.

Marcello: How do you explain that? Just fate again?

Fujita: Well, they put us in after the war started coming to an end with all these shot down flyers; they kept us away from them before then. But they put us in when they saw it was all over. So I congratulated these boys and said, "Man, got to congratulate you boys on your accuracy for not burning us down." They said, "Where were you?" So I showed them on the map, drew a map and told them where we were. They said, "Hell, we didn't miss you on purpose. We didn't know you were there." They said, they knew where some of the camps were, but they didn't know that one was there. So they didn't miss us on purpose. But there's just one little spot there they didn't burn out. But there were two or three hospitals there, and maybe that's part of why they didn't burn that out. I don't

know. But usually, the way things burn, they had no control over what burned. They just burned and just swept like a wave.

Marcello: I've read one account where sometimes the heat from these fire bomb raids was so intense that it actually boiled the water in the canals in the streets of Tokyo.

Fujita: Uh-huh. It'd form its own updraft too, kind of like a volcano or a tornado, all on its own. The updraft was so violent. So we saw all of the big raids, every one of them, every one of them in Tokyo. Saw it just completely demolished. Each raid would take a little bit more.

Marcello: Most of these raids occurred at night?

Fujita: Most of them, yes.

Marcello: Then I guess near the end, they were day and night?

Fujita: Yeah, near the end they were round the clock. (Chuckle)

Marcello: As the raids increased and damage increased and as more Japanese lives were taken in these bombing raids, how did the attitude of the Japanese change? Did it become more harsh . . .

Fujita: Well . . .

Marcello: . . . if that was possible?

Fujita: Yeah, well, they kept telling us . . . they'd have a news meeting, they'd call every morning--call the prisoners in--and they'd . . .

Marcello: This is still this group that was in Tokyo?

Fujita: Yeah, yeah, in this radio program. So they'd call us in, and we'd be briefed up on the situation so they'd know what to write and how to write, you know. Of course it was all the Japanese version. (Chuckle) But they knew that when even smaller planes than B-29's started coming over, well it doesn't take any real smart person to tell that they are pretty close somewhere. (Chuckle) But they told us one thing, "The closer the Americans come to Japan the closer you come to death. We're not leaving any prisoners behind us." And they made that quite plain.

Marcello: And you took their word for it?

Fujita: Well, we knew they wouldn't. I figured you would have had to kill them out to the last man if they had ever landed. I'm glad they found that bomb even as horrible as it was because, my God, there would have been a fantastic loss of lives on both sides if they had had to land and fight their way through.

Marcello: Did you see Nagasaki at all after the bomb had . . .

Fujita: No, but the rest of my battery was still there when they dropped that bomb.

Marcello: I was just going to ask you how you can compare the damage of the Nagasaki bomb with the sum total of the fire bomb raids on Tokyo.

Fujita: I wasn't there because I had already been sent to Tokyo, but these guys in E Battery were still there and they can tell you

about it. They were nine miles from ground zero, but they can tell you all about it. I wasn't there, and I can't say that I'm sorry that I wasn't there either. But, I decided that they were going to land, but we had no way of knowing about the bomb. They were goiong to land, and I figured that then the populace down to a man would become fanatics.

Marcello: You were convinced that the Japanese would fight to the last man on the basis of what they said and the basis of their actions.

Fujita: Yes, their fanaticism . . . then the military would play up to the God, you know, the Emperor who was the son of God to them. The Emperor was actually a pawn of military, I mean, he had no powers really. They let him do as they told him to do. They kept him sheltered, I mean, they didn't keep him . . . they kept him in prison, you might say, because they kept him in his palace and wouldn't let him out. But the military ran it, and they had their dictatorial powers making the people . . . of course, the Japanese always looked to the emperor as their son of God. And so they could play that up real big and have every last soul be a fanatic and die. You would have to kill them . . .

Marcello: In other words the military obviously told the Japanese people that if the Americans did land and if the Japanese did resist the emperor would be killed.

Fujita: Yeah, I don't know what they told them, but I'm sure the

military would play it up to the advantage where everyone would be a fanatic.

Marcello: At least that would be the end of the imperial line, the imperial regime.

Fujita: And so they had some Kempe Tai which is equivalent to a German SS. I mean nobody fooled with the Kempe Tai, Japanese Kempe Tai. For instance, a sergeant in the Kempe Tai could physically beat up anything in any military service, no matter what branch he's in, all the way up to Colonel. And so we had . . . by the time to get up to a captain in the Kempe Tai, you can beat up anybody in Japan you want to, and they can't do nothing about it. They were just all-powerful. And so they assigned a first lieutenant in the Kempe Tai to us. He was our camp commander. And he was just my size. In the meantime, I would ride into town . . . every once in a while I'd go to . . . once a month they would allow us to broadcast a message home, so I would go down and broadcast my own message home. And my parents got letters from all over the world from people picked this message up and wrote to them saying, "Maybe you heard it, but just in case you didn't we took this message."

Marcello: I assume you were accompanied downtown to where you . . .

Fujita: Oh, yeah. They took us down, and we would have to bow at the palace every time we passed it.

Marcello: Also, I assume that in Tokyo it wasn't safe to go downtown on

your own even if you could.

Fujita: There were occidentals running around down there. I mean, going through town, we could see occidentals every once in a while. Not many, but they might have been Germans or who knows, since they were allies of the Germans. But the people on the streets, they just looked at us out of curiosity like the Japanese did at the train station there in Java, you know, what kind of odd people are these. I lost my train of thought now. What was I talking about?

Marcello: Talking about the Japanese SS, the Kempe Tai.

Fujita: Yeah, oh well, this one officer was the same size as me. And I figured, man, the wheels started turning. With that Kempe Tai insigna on, there's not anything but the highest ranking generals dare stop me, and also, by going to town I would see the different high-ranking cars and how they were designed. Each one of them carried a flag. I think it wasn't Tojo, but one of the big generals, one of the big wheels. I saw his car one day, and I copied his flag. So I made me a flag like that. A taxi came up every day to bring officers to the front building. They had a Japanese office up there. And so I knew they had most any kind of vehicles for a taxi. They didn't come up in the same kind all the time, even high-ranking generals. And so I figured, I copied this, and if I make that flag and when the time is ripe, we'll commandeer a taxi, stick this flag on it, me with a Kempe Tai uniform on, no body would

ask me so I wouldn't have to speak. All I would have to do is reach out and grunt, you know, and everybody would back off. So I figured, "Well I'm going to have to escape." So I finally hit up the only one I trusted, an American major, a flyer who had been shot down. So I approached him and he said, "By God, yes." He didn't like this lash-up any more than I did. Damn right he would go with me. Then we got to talking it over and said, "Well, should we take anybody else?" And it was our collective opinion that there wasn't anyone else we could trust. (Chuckle) So, we didn't let it on. So we had laid in little odds and ends of food that we could manage to get. And I managed to get one of these hari-kari knives. So I had that, and I had these flags made up and whatnot. So we had it all planned. We were going to kill this guy, bloodlessly if we had to, if we possibly could, to keep from getting blood on the uniform. And I was going to get his uniform. And we were going to get in this damn taxi and get the hell out of there. Also, I had a map and I drew an escape route. I still have it now.

Marcello: Where were you going to go?

Fujita: Going to the mountains. Way back in the rough part of the mountains. Way back on the other side of Mt. Fugi. And we looked on the map to see where they were most sparsely settled. We were going to go up into the most rugged part.

So finally, when they dropped the bomb, they called a

news conference. So, we were always used to them and they said, "Ah, those Americans, cutthroats, brigands, no good," all that, you know. A bunch of capitalists, no good. Everybody said, "Oh, yeah, that's right. What's new this time?" Well, this time they said . . . they would go through all this procedure . . . a bunch of murderers and cutthroats. So after so much of that they said, well today one plane dropped one bomb and killed . . . I forget what he said. I've got it written down here . . . hundred thousand people.

Marcello: Now, we're up into 1945, August of 1945.

Fujita: Yeah, that's when they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima.

Marcello: Yes.

Fujita: So we just laughed. We were used to these wild tales. They would tell us about their own pilots when they would run out of ammunition they would use their rice bowl to knock the American pilot out of the sky, and one gallant eagle chased the American round and round a tree in his Zero until he finally caught up with him and shot him, you know. (Chuckle) Such stuff of this. So then we figured, "Well, this is another one of those." We said, "Yeah, okay. So what else is new?" And they got mad. "That's right. That's right! One plane killed a hundred thousand people with one bomb." So we just all laughed out loud, you know. We said, well, hell, this is going too far, you know. (Chuckle) So that made him mad, and he ran back over to the front office and came back with a whole stack of telegrams from all over the world. So

he started thumbing through them and letting us read them. And we weren't laughing after that. Sure enough one plane dropped one bomb and wiped out their whole city, you know. And so I told this major, I said, "Okay, it's time for us to make our move." He said, "No. By golly, after something like that, hell, that's fantastic. That's bound to scare these people enough where they're going to quit." I said, "Major, these damn people ain't going to quit." He said, "Yeah, I'm sure they're going to quit." So we argued back and forth two or three days, and then we got it through the grapevine that the Americans gave the Japanese ultimatum, that if they didn't kick in by midnight of a certain night they would destroy Tokyo, not with just one, but a number of atomic bombs. He said, "No, they're going to kick in." I said, "Hell, let's sweat it out in the mountains, I'd be a whole lot . . . feel a whole lot safer sitting up there and seeing whether they kick in or not." So we argued hot and heavy, back and forth. And he wanted to go, but he was just sure they were going to kick in, and I was equally sure they weren't, you know. (Chuckle) And so finally, it got down to the point that there was so little time left that, well, hell, we didn't have time to get out of the blast area anyhow. I said, "By God, I hope you're right major because we can't even get out of the danger zone now. I <u>sure</u> hope you're right!" Sure enough, they kicked in, but we sweated blood for those

last few hours, I'll tell you.

Marcello: Did you ever witness any of the fate which may have been dished out to American pilots?

Fujita: No. Because most of us had been prisoners so long, they wouldn't dare let us have contact with anybody freshly captured. They knew at least one more year or two more years of news that we didn't know anything about. They didn't want the older prisoners getting any late information. So they never would let us have any contact with the pilots or any of the air crews.

Marcello: Well, it was about this time, of course, that you were finally liberated. What were your first thoughts when the war was over?

Fujita: Well . . .

Marcello: First of all, describe the events . . .

Fujita: Well . . .

Marcello: . . . starting with the time when you heard about the outcome of the war or the Japanese surrender?

Fujita: Well, they called us out . . . formal parade and says they have an important announcement to make. So one of the Japanese interpreters came out and said, "Now don't make any facial expressions or anything. Just stand at attention and be stonefaced when they make the announcement." (Chuckle) So he came out, the camp commander then . . . or no, not camp commander, some big wheel from the war department, I

guess, came out and told us that the emperor had . . . whatever--I've forgotten the exact words, but it's written down here,--but the emperor has conceded, or whatnot, and the war was over. Of course we were all just bubbling over inside and just as stonefaced as we could be, you know. (Chuckle) And so it was hard to keep the jubilation down but then they left. They told us that in two or three days they were going to move us back to Omori, that we couldn't take any written material with us, that it would be a death penalty. So that's when I . . . right up to the last day I kept this diary, and then I tore a panel out of the wall and nailed it up into the wall and memorized what panel in what room it was, you know. Fortunately, I remembered well enough to draw a diagram of it a year later, and the Army got it back for me. But then one of these twenty-five in this prison camp . . . right when it looked like it was all going to be over, we were either going to get blasted off the face of the earth or they were going . . . the war was going to be over. I would like to read my comments on that day, August 11, 1945, which was on Saturday. We had all kinds of raids that day: "Two sorties in the morning. I think by the end of next month we'll be blown to hell or on our way home." Eleven-thirty a.m. Everything . . . all the information I got that sounded like just hot poop . . . in case they did find my diary I wrote it . . . I worked me out a skrit using Javanese skrit down

in Java, made a phonetic alphabet and the FBI over here couldn't even break it. They can break all codes, but they never did break mine. When they had it they had all their notes and whatnot when they came down . . . deciphered everything I had in there, but this they never did. So anyhow, this was hot news and says, "I just heard some real hot dope. American and Saipan radio . . ." I never did . . . couldn't remember what those words were, but ". . . if Japan does not kick in by Monday midnight, Tokyo and its near vicinity will be destroyed with atomic bombs. The 72 hour armistice was declared last night. The Japanese have sent terms and are awaiting answers." So then my comment there is:

> Well after almost four years our fate is to be decided within the next few hours. We become free men or dead men in two days. If we are to be free, we will emerge emaciated, weary fragments of humanity, into a strange world endowed with nothing but a few measly dollars, an unsurpassed knowledge of human nature, and such a morbid philosophy of life that it will serve to ostracize us from society could we put it to use. We will be easy to please and hard to fool. We will be products of 1941 coming into a world five years in advance of us--the world of "Buck Rogers." Most of us will be utterly lost, bewildered, and cannot or will not fit into the new way of life and thus become the next generation of criminals, human derelicts or philosophers. Yet on the other hand, a small percentage of the "Horios" (which is Japanese for prisoners-of-war) shall fit into society sufficiently enough to enable them to live out their span of life as a bourgeois. And yet still this smaller percentage, in years to come, will join the rank of America's foremost men; men of medicine, men of science and government, men

> that become world famous in the aesthetic arts--or --we shall end our "horioship" (or prisonership) as we would have been better off to have begun it--in death. To bring my meandering thoughts to a focus closer to home--what a lash up this has been; this "Humanity Calls" and "Postman Calls" programs (that was the names of these two radio programs and it's twenty-five duressed (and otherwise) prisoners-of-war captured at Java, P.I., Wake, Guam and Singapore, New Guinia (sic) and Rabaul. One could travel to the ends of the earth and live three lifetimes and never could twenty-five men such as these be gathered together. The little group's intelligence ranges from ignorance to genious; we have traitors, confirmed, suspected and potential; education from grammar school to university graduates; erratics, erotics, queers, mental cases, cowards, brave men, good men, no accounts, artists, writers, play writes, actors, typists, journalists, newsmen, type setters, farmers, cotton pickers, Americans, English, Australians, Scotch, Dutch, soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, suck asses, dog robbers, civilians------WOW! If that's not a hell of a lash up to be connected with, I throw in. (Laugh)

Marcello: Well, I think that sums up your thoughts fairly well. Now let's go back just a little bit. I think we need to get the story of the diary in this record. Can you start from the beginning . . .

Fujita: Well . . .

Marcello: . . . when you first conceived the idea of starting a diary and how you went about doing it.

Fujita: I started off keeping a diary from the day we left the states . . . .

Marcello: I see.

Fujita: . . . or from the day we left Camp Bowie in Brownwood. I kept it right up until the time that we were captured, and then I stowed it or hid it . . . stowed it away in a building with

all my personal gear. I thought, well, I'd pick it up later. I had no idea we were going to be captured. But then I lost that diary. But everything . . . not too much had transpired then, so still mostly everything was still fresh on my mind. And so after we were captured, I began to write these things down and try to keep current, as briefly as I could, because I had no way of keeping them except sewing them up in my clothes because right from the start it was almost the death penalty to be caught with any written material.

Marcello: Now at first you were apparently keeping this diary on scraps of paper.

Fujita: Right.

Marcello: You hadn't found the book yet that you used.

Fujita: I didn't find this book until we arrived in Tokyo.

Marcello: Okay, now where did you get the pen and the ink or the pencil . . . where did you get your writing utensils and implements?

Fujita: Well, now after I got to Japan, when they sent me to Tokyo . . . well before then I guess pencils. We always managed to get pencils somewhere, even though they were illegal, we always managed to get them somewhere . . . and paper. But after I got to Japan, when they put me up on this propaganda program, then I being assigned as an artist, still it's a mystery to me how they intended to use an artist on a radio

program, but anyhow, they assigned a Japanese artist to work with me. And he couldn't speak English, and I couldn't speak Japanese, and he hadn't been around prisoners enough, so he couldn't even speak our bastard dialect that we used. So we didn't have any means of communication except that he was an artist and I was an artist and . . . well, he did give me a lot of drawing stuff--inks, pens, and things like that. Well that's where I got the ink and stuff to write this with.

Marcello: Now you might also explain for our records where you got the book that . . .

Fujita: Okay, in this camp . . .

Marcello: . . . these passages are written in.

Fujita: In this camp called Bunka--it was a girl's high school called Bunka, and it was an area called Gakuin Kanda, which is an area right north of the palace.

Marcello: I'm not even going to ask you how to spell that.

Fujita: Okay, well, it's all in the diary. It's B-U-N-K-A G-A-K-U-I-N K-A-N-D-A. So GI-like or American-like they can't ever call anything by it's real name, so it was Bunka and it was on a hill, so immediately we referred to it from then on out as "Bunker Hill" camp, which was a girl's high school prior to the war, and they'd stored all the school supplies in the basement. Later on we broke in to this room, and this is where I found this ledger book and also different clays that they had. They evidently had had an art class, and so I had

a time sculpturing some of the prisoners and whatnot then.

Marcello: Now, while we're on this subject, and then you copied . . . I assume you copied these scraps . . . you reproduced these scraps of paper into this book . . .

Fujita: Right.

Marcello: Is that correct?

Fujita: Right. From time to time as I'd get better paper, and as the old notes began to get a little frayed, I'd recopy them . . .

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: . . . so I'd have fresh notes. Then when I got to this camp and found this book, I had also ink and pens then. So I transferred everything then into ink into this book.

Marcello: Where did you hide it . . .

Fujita: Well, I . . .

Marcello: . . . so that the Japanese wouldn't find it?

Fujita: . . . tore up the floor boards under my bed, and I kept it during my stay there under the floor board of my bed. Of course they never searched us there like they did in all the other camps. They'd dig . . . tear up all the boards and dig holes under the foundation--everything--to try to catch you with something you weren't supposed to have.

Marcello: I assume they would conduct these periodic raids.

Fujita: They would. They are singularly one-track minded. For instance, they had many articles that were death penalty to

have--pencils was one, paper was one, a knife was one. Anything with a sharp instrument . . . could be used as a sharp instrument was a death penalty to have anything. And matches, they were horrified of matches. As we later found out, the way Tokyo burned completely, you can see that they were justified in their fear of fire. So matches was absolutely, unequivocally a death sentence to be caught with a match. So every once in a while, they'd pull a sneak raid. For instance, one time they were going to check everything for matches. They told them to hunt for matches. So they'd tear through everybody's gear and dig up the dirt under their beds, under the floor boards, and everything else. They might find knives and pencils and paper and everything else, but this didn't dawn on them. They were hunting for matches, you know. (Chuckle)

Marcello: That's fantastic.

Fujita: So it is. It is fantastic to have them because there's many times they'd run across, on these sneak raids, something that they weren't hunting for.

Marcello: Did they ever find the diary?

Fujita: They never did.

Marcello: Even when they weren't hunting for . . .

Fujita: No. They never did find it.

Marcello: . . . pens and paper?

Fujita: Well, when I got there and got this ink, then I transferred

everything into this. As you can see now, it's been handled quite a bit since World War II, and it's about to fall all to pieces.

Marcello: One other question, you mentioned this a while ago but I want to make this definite for the record, you mentioned that in certain places in the diary you did not write it in English.

Fujita: Right.

Marcello: Would you repeat again what you did do.

Fujita: I had several types of codes that I'd learned as a kid--most school kids know these codes--but, possibly the Japanese didn't. I'm sure their cryptographic teams or their G-2 section would be able to break most any code a kid could take up, but this Javanese writing was such a <u>beautiful</u> thing from an artistic standpoint . . . was such a beautiful writing . . . I said, "Well, I'm going to learn Javanese so I can utilize this alphabet." Well, it was fantastically difficult for me to learn this Javanese language because I was trying to learn about six different languages all at once. I was trying to learn Dutch, Japanese, on the sly--this was before the time that they tried to make me learn Japanese--and I was trying to learn French as well as Javanese. And so I never did learn it, so I decided I wasn't going to loose that alphabet. It's so beautiful. And I'm going to work out my own phonetic alphabet, which I did. So I just combined all

these various symbols, and it's still, as you can see, it's a beautiful type of writing.

Marcello: It surely is.

Fujita: So I finally worked out something that I could write and I could read. But nobody else could. I tried other people, but they never could read, you know. Well, most of the prisoners didn't know I kept this because I took it out when I was alone and write into it. And particularly one of the guys who slept next to me and who was tried for treason later. His name is Sergeant John D. Provoo. And it was found out right off the bat that he and one other were very definitely traitors. And so I was wanting to kill both of them in prison camp, but the major wouldn't let me. (Chuckle) And it was quite a stink made of it. So when it looked like the war was about over, the Americans gained the command from the Australians, and then we placed this Provoo under guard. And this Streeter, a guy from Idaho, he was avidly for the program, and he was very vitriolic about America and calling the American flag a dirty piece of rag, and he couldn't say too many bad things about Roosevelt, you know. He was strictly a Japanese boy. Come to find out, I didn't know anything about communism in those days, but now after all these years, I can look back. That guy was a communist. But a communist didn't mean anything to me, as I said, in those days.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: But anyhow, when they were going to move us back to Omori we put these two under arrest. And I was assigned as sergeant of the guard. So when they moved us back to Omori, I was guarding these two, and other prisoners came up and tried to talk to them from this other camp, and I'd have to run them off. Told them they can't speak to these people, because they're prisoners. And so they left them alone. So finally I got this Captain Ince who was assigned as officer of the guard. And he was assigned as officer of the guard, so American planes started dropping food to us in camp. So everybody started going over the wall. They'd get this stuff and go over the wall and go in Tokyo and trade it off, you know, for whatnot. I thought, "Well, everybody's getting in on the loot but me, and I have to stand here and guard these two traitors." Ince said he'd watch them and let me go over the wall if I wanted to. So I was going over, and I was wanting to get me one of these samurai swords, you know. I loaded up a ditty bag, and just as I started to go over the wall, somebody said, "Hey, there's some torpedoes." It was right out in the bay, you know. And I looked out on the horizon there, and sure enough here was about five sprays kicking up out there. "My God, they're going to blow us out of the water!" And they kept getting a little closer and finally somebody said, "No, they're not torpedoes, they're

boats." So then I jumped off that fence and run over to the other side and crawled up on that fence. And finally somebody said, "By golly, seems like those boats are PT boats." We had a bunch of sailors in town. They said, "Well, those are PT boats, American PT boats!" So then boy, this bunch of us, that was all we needed to hear. I put down this goody bag, and a bunch of us jumped in the water and was going to swim out and meet them. And here's a bunch of starved POW's trying to swim. I don't know whether any of them drowned or not, but I damned sure liked to. I swam as far as I could, and I was going down for the third time, I guess. One of these PT boats pulled up to me. And they made us cut our hair so short. They couldn't grab me by the hair, they grabbed my by the ears and pulled me out of the water and put me up on this PT boat, carried me back in. Sure enough, it was five American PT boats. And so they started hauling out the stick.

And that was quite an experience. You asked me what the reactions were. Well, when they first came over and started dropping food to us, . . . first boys over were fighter planes. And they'd come in . . . they couldn't carry much, but they'd come in and waggle their wings at us, you know, maybe they'd throw their own pack of cigarettes out with a note on it that said, "Hang on boys. We're here!" And so we'd get on the roof, you know, and I was going to shout to them when they

come over. Couldn't make a sound. Just had so much emotion and just felt like a watermelon. Just try like hell to scream and holler at them and couldn't make a sound. (Chuckle)

Marcello: Did you ever take out any reprisals against any of your captors?

Fujita: Well, here's the sad thing about it, most of us begin to live on hate. You asked earlier, did we ever have any of them singled out. We had them, yes.

Marcello: You think that's one of the things that may have kept you going?

Fujita: Yes, that's one of the things that kept us going. Finally when we realized that maybe we won't ever live _____, but there is going to come a day we can get back at that S.O.B.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Fujita: So I think this is one of the things that kept us going. Once you've lost all hope or interest in getting even or hope of living then . . . well, in a matter of hours these boys would die. That's how much difference the will to live meant. It's just a matter of hours.

Marcello: Well, did you take out any revenge.

Fujita: No, but the funny thing, right up until the last, everybody had their own. Boy, they were going . . . then they were going to . . . everybody wanted one, and they were going to have to have big round robins or flip to see who was going to

get him, you know. Well, when it was all over all this went out. One or two of them they did kill but . . .

Marcello: Now you mentioned at least two cases of collaboration.

Fujita: Uh-huh.

Marcello: I assume this was the exception rather than the rule.

Fujita: This was the exception, yes. But usually every camp, every place, you have a bunch of men together, no matter what the nationality, you're going to have what the army calls "suck asses" and "dog robbers." You're going to always have somebody try currying favors for his own benefit. And this was no exception. You might not be outright traitor in thought or feeling as they just . . . a natural . . . like I say, you find it in any nationality. It's just hooray for me, to hell with you, you know. Save yourself first.

Marcello: Okay now, getting back to the diary again, you mentioned that even after the surrender, the Japanese had warned you that you were not to carry away any written material. Isn't this correct?

Fujita: Right.

Marcello: Well, then what did you do with your diary?

Fujita: Well, I picked a wall, an upstairs wall in one of these buildings in this prison compound in "Bunker Hill," and I tore out a panel and I put this diary in there plus a lot of paintings that I had done. I did some wonderful, I consider, really, highly technical and intricate anatomy drawings in

water color, beautiful art work. Not to be blowing smoke at myself, but they were, from an artistic standpoint. I had plenty of time to do them. And so they were quite good. So I wanted to save these. I thought someday, who knows, there might be a chance of me getting these things. But also, I wanted to leave a record of everything that transpired since we were at that camp. I wanted the authorities, if they ever got a chance, to show what went on and who did it. So I had copies of almost every program we had ever made while we were there and piled these all in there too. And I nailed them all up behind this wall. And so after we got back . . . immediately when we were liberated, they started asking us if we kept diaries. Did we keep diaries. But for some reason, I wasn't interested at the time. All I could think about was getting something to drink, you know. Most of us thought about getting something to eat, but I . . . to hell with eating. Once these planes started coming over and dropping food, even though I'd thought of nothing for two and a half years but food, once they started dropping food, psychological effect, I knew from then on out food would always be there. So food from that moment on was no longer a problem to me.

Marcello: You were talking about the diary and the fact that they asked you if you had any.

Fujita: Oh, yeah.

Marcello: And you said you'd more or less lost interest in it.

Fujita: Uh-huh. Yeah. And they asked me where I was captured, and I told them Java, and they said, "Look, we're not horsing around. I want to know where you were captured." I told them Java. They said, "What the hell, we didn't have any troops in Java." So it'd make you feel real good after all, you spent three and a half years in prison camp, and your own army didn't even know you were there. (Chuckle)

Marcello: You can see why they would call you the "Lost Battalion."

Fujita: We were literally lost. We didn't call ourselves that. They started to call us . . . the mothers here started calling us the "Lost Battalion." The Fort Worth Star-Telegram or something here started calling us the "Lost Battalion." When we were sure enough lost, it was over a year before they had any official news of us. So for a year, we were officially lost, even though they'd begin to get trickles of word here or there from one or two of them.

Anyhow, after I got back home I went off on about a year's drunk. (Chuckle) I tried to see if I could drink more whiskey than the distilleries could put out, and I found out it was a losing battle. They got the best of me. Anyhow, after I began to sober up--I was running out of money and was forced to sober up--I realized, well, my God, I took a great chance for all those years keeping that, and I sure would like to have this diary back.

Marcello: Why did you take that chance? I mean obviously you knew that if you got caught it was all over.

Fujita: Well, yeah . . .

Marcello: It took a lot of guts to keep that diary it seems to me.

Fujita: Well, it did. It did. But then too, I guess . . . I don't know why. It was a challenge, I guess. But then also, since I was in a unique position, I kind of wanted to leave a record in case they ever did chop my head off . . . that maybe that much would get out. I don't know. Many things could enter into it. Most of it psychological. Anyhow, I wanted this back, so I wrote the army and told them I had a diary, if they were still interested. And they wrote back that they were. I told them I'd tell them where it was. They'd have to go get it, if they would promise to give it back to me when they finished with it. So they promised they would, so I drew them a diagram of Tokyo, where in town the building was located, and it . . . in what building it was, and in what panel, and in what room it was. And asked them if they'd give me my art work and everything back, and they could keep all the programs. I wasn't interested in that, I wanted them to have them anyhow. But I'd like my diary and my art work back. So I got my diary back. I never got anything else back. I had quite a number of pictures in there, paintings I had done. But anyhow, I was really glad to get it back. It means more and more as the years go by.

Marcello: I'm sure it does. Now, you were telling me that you had left the accounts of the atrocities and cruelties out of your diary. Why did you do that?

Fujita: Well, this was for a definite reason. Now, since it was the death penalty just to have written material to start with, I deliberately left out all the accounts of the atrocities and the tortures and whatnot because just in case that I did get caught with this, I might stand a chance of living if I didn't graphically portray the atrocities . . . to have a written account of the actual bestialities that they had committed. So that's the reason why I left them out. You'll find very few records, if any, of these for that reason.