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Interview with  
Major William G. Adair  
May 27, 1971

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: William G. Adair  
(Signature)

Date: May 27, 1971

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Oral History Collection

Major William G. Adair

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Date: May 27, 1971

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Major William Adair for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 27, 1971, in Denton, Texas. Major Adair was a survivor of the Bataan Death March during World War II. I'm interviewing Major Adair in order to get his experiences and his reminiscences while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese. Major Adair, to begin this interview, would you please give us a brief biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, I'd like to know when you were born, where you were born, your education, and what have you.

Major Adair: I was born in Anniston, Alabama in 1917. I went to high school in Birmingham, Alabama. I finished at the University of Alabama in 1940 with a Commerce and Business Administration degree.

Dr. Marcello: When did you enter the Army?

Major Adair: I entered the Army at Fort Benning, Georgia in 1940--July of 1940.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you enter the Army?

Major Adair: I had taken R.O.T.C. at the University of Alabama--infantry--

and I went on active duty for one year. I volunteered active duty for one year in 1940.

Marcello: I see. At the time you volunteered, did you have any idea that the country would possibly be getting into war?

Adair: A vague idea, but not as soon as it came, of course.

Marcello: What was your specialty in the Army?

Adair: I was an infantry officer--second lieutenant in the infantry.

Marcello: Where did you take your basic training?

Adair: Well, back then you did not take basic training to become an officer. This was before the basic officer's school started. I had a commission when I came out of the University of Alabama. But we did have a three month refresher course--we called it a refresher course--for lieutenants at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1940.

Marcello: I see. When did you go overseas?

Adair: I was ordered overseas in October of 1941--about six weeks before the war started. We were the first reserve officers on active duty to be ordered overseas without our permission.

Marcello: Were you sent directly to the Philippines?

Adair: Yes. We were sent to the Philippines to train troops under General MacArthur. The Philippine Army had just been integrated--I guess that's the correct word--integrated into our U.S. Army. And we had been ordered over there to train the Filipinos.

Marcello: Now these were not the Filipino Scouts. That was a different

unit altogether, was it not?

Adair: No. That's different altogether. They had their intact units--the 45th Infantry and the 31st . . . no, I'm sorry, 45th and 52nd Infantry Regiments were Filipino Scouts. And we were there to train the Filipinos that never had any training at all. They were raw recruits then.

Marcello: I see. These were recruits. Did you perchance stop at Pearl Harbor on your way . . .

Adair: Oh, yes.

Marcello: . . . to the Philippines?

Adair: Stopped off for about twelve hours.

Marcello: I see. Did you manage to get liberty while you were there?

Adair: Oh, yes. They let all of the officers go ashore, and I think non-com's of the first three grades were allowed to go ashore for about six to twelve hours.

Marcello: Did you possibly see the area carrying on any extraordinary precautions to guard against an attack or anything?

Adair: None whatsoever.

Marcello: It was business as usual, in other words.

Adair: Right.

Marcello: So far as you could tell.

Adair: Right.

Marcello: Where did you land when you got to the Philippines?

Adair: We landed at Manila and were immediately sent out to what we called "cadre regiments"--a skeleton regiment. All they had

was a cadre there to train troops. We had one officer per battalion. I was the only American officer in the battalion. And we had Filipino Scouts--non-commissioned officers--to train the cadre.

Marcello: I see. Whereabouts was this camp located? Was it on the outskirts of Manila?

Adair: Camp O'Donnell--the infamous O'Donnell that you later heard about. That was our camp.

Marcello: I see. I'd known that O'Donnell had been a training camp of some sort for the Filipino Army.

Adair: Yeah, the 21st Division was stationed there--the 21st Division of the Filipino Army.

Marcello: I see. Is there anything from those pre-World War II days that you think ought to be a part of the record?

Adair: You mean after I arrived in the Philippines?

Marcello: Right. After you arrived in the Philippines, let's say up until Pearl Harbor.

Adair: Nothing of great interest. We were very busy training these troops because they were to be activated into a regiment within six weeks after we arrived there. We only had six weeks to train the cadre to intern to train the troops. So we were pretty busy and I had two week-end leaves out of the six weeks I was there. One of them was spent in Baguio up in the mountains which was great because it was cool, and they had American-type food up there. Everything was great. That was

probably the fondest memory I have of the Philippines.

Marcello: Was the training of these Filipinos carried on in a rather urgent manner? By that I mean was everybody pretty sure that we were sooner or later about to get into a war with the Japanese?

Adair: At the time we had arrived in the Philippines, things looked pretty rough, and we were told that we'd have to get these people trained in a hurry. And, it was very urgent to train them, of course. They had practically no Army when we arrived--only Filipino Scouts and what Americans were there was all we had.

Marcello: What sort of equipment did you have to train these Filipinos with?

Adair: That I'd rather not discuss. It was so sickening. To give you a good example, the day war was declared, when we learned of it, we did not have one round of ammunition in the entire regiment except what the cadre had in their pistols--no machine gun ammunition, nothing. We were issued, maybe the next day or a couple of days later, so many rounds, say about five rounds, per man of .30 caliber ammunition to be fired in their rifles. This was tracer ammunition, incidentally, that had come from England and was on the way, I think, from England to Hong Kong, and it was all tracer ammunition and wasn't even in clips, we had to put it in clips. And then we issued five rounds per man and let each man fire at coconuts out on the

beach. That was the number of rounds they fired when they went into battle--five rounds.

Marcello: They had five rounds of actual firing of live ammunition before they went into battle . . .

Adair: Before they went into battle. Now, they were issued . . .

Marcello: . . . right . . .

Adair: . . . when they went into battle they were issued ammunition. But they'd fired five rounds until then. That's all.

Marcello: And you had how much to train these people altogether?

Adair: Six weeks . . .

Marcello: Six weeks.

Adair: . . . approximately . . .

Marcello: About six weeks of training and they'd fired five rounds of ammunition during that time? I assume they were firing the old Springfield .03?

Adair: The Enfield rifle was what we had. We didn't have a Springfield . . .

Marcello: You were using the Enfield?

Adair: Yeah.

Marcello: And these rifles were of British origin, were they not?

Adair: I believe the Enfield was of British origin.

Marcello: And this was the extent then of the . . .

Adair: That's right.

Marcello: . . . equipment and the training that these Filipinos . . .

Adair: We did have some machine guns, .30 caliber machine guns. I



think four per company was the complement.

Marcello: In other words, all in all, then, you would have to say that you were ill-prepared to meet any enemy, whether it was Japan or whoever it might have been . . .

Adair: The word is pitiful, I think.

Marcello: . . . well, this is the consensus of everybody that I've talked to up to this time. For example, I've talked to certain Marines who were in the Philippines, and apparently they had been issued antiaircraft ammunition which was a kind of suicide ammunition. Sometimes it would fire as soon as it came out of the barrel of the gun.

Adair: That, incidentally, is what we had, was antiaircraft. It was all tracer ammunition.

Marcello: I see. And at other times they were mentioning that the shells were so old, apparently so antiquated, that when they exploded they couldn't reach the Japanese bomber. It exploded under them.

Adair: It could possibly be. Of course, we only fired at the coconuts out on the beach which was at close range, and, of course, there was no problem at that close range.

Marcello: And another one mentioned the fact that he had been issued a Springfield .03 that only had four digits, so far as the serial number was concerned. So you know how old that particular rifle was.

Adair: Well, you know, the Enfield is even older than the .03 . . .

Marcello: Right . . .

Adair: . . . so . . .

Marcello: . . . right. Well, this, I think, is an important area that has to be a part of this record--the lack of preparedness which occurred in the Philippines. And again, I think we could put in the record that this wasn't a . . . really the fault of the military. It was more or less a fault of . . .

Adair: Absolutely.

Marcello: . . . pinchpenny policies of Congress at that time.

Adair: That is exactly right. MacArthur had begged and pleaded for more and more ammunition and supplies, you know. Of course, he didn't get them.

Marcello: Is it not true that essentially the garrison on the Philippines . . . they really weren't looked upon as expendable, that's not the thing. But according to Plan Orange--and I think this was the overall plan of strategy for that area--the Army was to fight a holding action, were they not, until they were relieved by reinforcements from the sea.

Adair: Right. Pull back into Bataan was the ultimate plan. It wasn't our goal to retreat but we had to do it, though.

Marcello: Do you remember what you were doing when you first heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

Adair: Very well. I was asleep at six o'clock in the morning. It was on a Monday morning in the Philippines, and the timer on my radio was set for six o'clock. And the news came on at

that station . . . Mr. Bell, I can't remember his first name, the announcer in Manila announced immediately when he came on the air that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. And I thought I was dreaming, of course. And then I jumped up and yelled to a lieutenant in the next cabin that we were at war with the Japanese. And, of course, he didn't believe it, and I had to go and shake him and wake him up and make him believe it. And I very well remember it.

Marcello: What happened then so far as the base itself was concerned . . .

Adair: Well, we . . .

Marcello: . . . when you heard the news?

Adair: . . . we immediately went into an alert. And it was ordered, in a couple of hours, to take positions on the Lingayen Gulf, the defensive position on the Lingayen Gulf. Which we did. The decision was to move forward to the Lingayen Gulf.

Marcello: Was there any reason why you were sent to Lingayen Gulf? In other words, was this a place where . . . if there was a Japanese landing it would probably occur . . .

Adair: That's where they . . .

Marcello: . . . here?

Adair: . . . expected it. In fact, that's where it happened. Apari, I believe, was the first landing--that was north of where we were--and the second landing came down in the bend of the Lingayen Gulf where we were.

Marcello: How long was it after you heard the news about Pearl Harbor that you had your initial contact with the Japanese?

Adair: My regiment or me personally?

Marcello: Either one.

Adair: Well, the division--let's start with the division--the 21st Division actually did not have contact on the Lingayen Gulf. We were ordered to withdraw. Once they had broken through at Apari we withdrew the entire line, the whole line, of course, along the Gulf all the way in the north gulf there. We withdrew and I can't recall the next point, the first withdrawal point. But at any rate, to answer your question, we did not have contact there. It was back just before we entered Bataan, the peninsula of Bataan, when my particular regiment and division was hit. I believe on the Abucuy line was where our division was first hit, as I recall.

Marcello: Can you describe the first encounter with the Japanese?

Adair: My particular regiment was not involved. We were in reserve. I had the 1st Battalion--I was commander of the 1st Battalion--and we were in reserve for the division, our regiment was. The 2nd and the 3rd Battalions were on the front line at that time, and they were both hit. And then, of course, they withdrew within, as I recall, within twenty-four hours. But the first actual contact of our regiment was at that particular point. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions went forward--we'd been sent forward, the regiment had. In our regiment the 2nd and

3rd Battalions were forward. And the Japanese broke through. We'd gotten word that they'd broken through. And, of course, communications were terrible. It was just pitiful the way we got word of how they broke through. We had very little communications. So my battalion was ordered forward, and as they went up a trail they were fired upon and had to withdraw because it was in the jungles. And we couldn't see anything, of course, and didn't know where the fire was coming from. So we withdrew to a hillside. I believe at that time that the division sent up probably some Filipino Scouts, and anyway they closed the hole in the line so that we were withdrawn to reserve status again. And that's the only contact I personally had with the Japanese at that time.

Marcello: How did these Filipino recruits that you had conduct themselves in battle?

Adair: Unbelievably brave men considering the amount of training they had. Of course, take any raw recruits that had never been in battle, and you're going to have some of them that will panic. I'll give you a good example. We were at a road junction close to the Abucuy Line. It was nearing dark; it was at dusk. And all of a sudden we were fired upon from our left rear. Now we had the troops--the Filipinos--out in the rice paddies to sort of . . . they were sitting or at least weren't standing at the time. If they had been there would have been lots of them killed. They were probably resting for

the march forward. We were getting ready to go into the front line position. And when we were attacked by machine gun fire from the left rear . . . there were several American officers there at the road junction, and they jumped into a ditch. And in the ditch was a Filipino next to me, a young Filipino boy with a rifle. And he had this rifle up in the air, slanted at about forty-five degree angle, and he was firing up into the air, and not being able to see where he was firing, just completely berserk. And I grabbed his arm--we tried to give the stop sign--and it was just like a piece of steel. He was that tense. This was this boy's first encounter--all of us for that matter--first encounter in battle. But they'd had no training whatsoever in firing rifles, and all he was doing was just firing back at something. He didn't know what. He didn't know what he was firing at, but he was firing up into the air, and I had to finally order him to stop firing, but he couldn't hear me. Well, he could hear me, but it didn't get through to him. And I pulled my gun out and pointed at his head. I was so angry with him for doing this, but, of course, I should have known better. And I ordered him to quit firing. And I said, "Stop the firing! Stop the firing!" And that finally stopped him. But he was just wasting ammunition, of course, and he'd gone berserk. He might have hit someone coming into the ditch, jumping into the ditch. But that's an example of how those people were. All of us were tense

naturally in our first action. As these boys got a little more training and got into battle, they became great soldiers. There is no doubt about that.

Marcello: Now the Filipino Scouts, on the other hand, they were more or less professional soldiers . . .

Adair: They were well-trained . . .

Marcello: . . . and had better training . . .

Adair: . . . very well-trained and did a beautiful job. Those men were . . . well, like I mentioned, some of their non-coms were part of our cadre. They were training the Filipino raw recruits.

Marcello: So, in other words, from the time that the Japanese landed on the Philippine Islands, it was more or less a series of retreats to pre-prepared positions so far as the American Army was concerned?

Adair: With a few exceptions. We occasionally did attack. There were orders to attack when the Japanese showed a little . . . what's the word I'm trying to use? Well, I can't think of the word, but, anyhow, when they showed that they might be a little vulnerable, our troops did counter-attack and did well many times, several times, I should say, at least on our side of the battle line.

Marcello: Obviously, however, you were fighting against overwhelming odds. They probably outnumbered you and they had complete control of the air, I assume.

Adair: Complete, without a doubt. We had lost all of our planes, either lost them or they had withdrawn to Mindanao and that area down there. I recall that the last P-40 that we had, the last plane actually on Luzon . . . I saw it go into a ditch. It was right in my area. I had become connected with the Provost Marshal's office. And the last P-40 went out on a bombing mission and came back and landed and overshot the field, and that was the last of our air force.

Marcello: Were the American troops subjected to quite a bit of bombardment both from the air and from the Japanese artillery?

Adair: Absolutely, especially after we got back into Bataan.

Marcello: Okay . . .

Adair: . . . it was more concentrated back there in that . . .

Marcello: . . . describe what it was like back in the Bataan Peninsula. Now this, of course, was the last line of retreat--getting back into the peninsula.

Adair: This was a very busy place because it was a very small area, of course, for the number of troops--supply troops and what not. Of course, the front line had withdrawn back so close to Mariveles, which was the end of the peninsula. There was a very narrow road that just skirted the peninsula, very narrow, just barely room for two trucks to pass. And it was a pretty busy place, of course, and it had to be. The road was busy all the time, and, of course, there was constant bombing by not maybe large numbers of planes but two or three planes. We



were constantly harassed with this bombardment and machine gun fire.

Marcello: What was the terrain like of Bataan?

Adair: Mostly jungles, and when I say jungles, I mean real undergrowth. You hear of African jungles, and you see in newsreels and that sort of thing. In Africa it's not nearly as jungled as I had thought. But in the Philippines, in that particular part of the Philippines, Bataan was just practically all jungle back there and undergrowth, where you could hardly walk or crawl through this. It was pretty rough.

Marcello: Describe what a typical day was like in the Bataan Peninsula while you were retreating under Japanese fire, continual attacks, and what have you.

Adair: You mean one of the withdrawals?

Marcello: Right. Just describe what one of the withdrawals was like.

Adair: It was sort of a madhouse. There would always, of course, be a holding force that would, you might say, guard and keep the Japs off of your heels while you were withdrawing, fortunately. Again the roads were so narrow that it was hard to get these troops and the vehicles down those roads fast enough, you might say. Of course, at times we went overland without vehicles. Our battalion had one truck, as I recall, and my command car, and that was all we had in the battalion. The supply battalions or in the supply regiments they had many, many vehicles they had to send down that one road on one side

and one on the other side of the peninsula. Actually, there were two roads used for the withdrawal. But in between them there are no roads at all. We had trails that you could walk down. So it got pretty crowded and very confusing. And the maps we had . . . of course, I had a roadmap, and it was my tactical map--a roadmap--that this colonel had given me.

Marcello: What were provisions like during this siege on Bataan?

Adair: Provisions . . .

Marcello: How did . . . how bad did things get?

Adair: . . . well, during the worst part of the siege?

Marcello: Right.

Adair: Well, it was pathetic. We got down to one meal a day for the troops--these were the Philippine troops and my outfit--one meal a day of little old, not always but usually, a little stew made or soup, you might say, made of canned salmon. This is typical. Sometimes we got a little better rations. And we also got a rice ration for the day. We got one meal a day. It was two meals and then it was cut to one meal. I left the front lines, oh, six weeks or more before we were captured, and they were telling me it got much worse on the front lines, and there was very little food up there. Near the end there was no food. In the rear area, outposts, they had a little more food than they got up there. I don't know how, but we just happened to get it. I think that rear area troops usually get a little more food than the front lines. They

shouldn't but they do.

Marcello: When you mentioned that you were taken off the front lines, was this when you started to work in the Provost Marshal's office?

Adair: That's right. I had a near miss by an artillery shell, and it shook me up, and they put me in the hospital, and when I came back to front line duty, the colonel had me transferred back because I was in no shape to carry on up there. And they sent me to the Provost Marshal . . .

Marcello: Describe the events leading up to your capture. What exactly took place?

Adair: I personally was not captured as such. General King, as you might recall and as history will note, surrendered the force on Bataan. As I recall, I believe Wainwright had advised him to . . . better not quote me on that; I'm not sure about this. But at any rate, he went forward and rather than have all the troops completely murdered, you might say, he went forward and signed the surrender agreement with the Japanese. This was to take place on April 9th at a certain hour in the morning, and we were advised the night before that it would take place. And we were to congregate in a particular area, in fact, near Mariveles at the end of the peninsula. And, of course, we were to pile up our arms, but I threw my pistol into the brush. I wasn't about to turn it in. But no Japanese were near us when this happened. And, of course, I threw away

my radio, anything that I didn't want them to have. I destroyed all my papers and what not. And then I went forward to the airfield at Mariveles, which is where we were supposed to congregate, and that's where the Japanese took us over--at that field there at Mariveles.

Marcello: What were your first thoughts when you were told that the Americans were going to surrender?

Adair: It was to escape--my first thoughts--and I had an outside chance of doing it. Some captain--Army captain, I believe--had gotten hold of a boat. Oh, I think it was about a fifteen or eighteen foot boat. It was smaller than that--probably a twelve foot boat--with pretty good motor on it. And he had mentioned the fact that if I would . . . this was the morning of the surrender on April 9th. And he told me that if I would be back at the point where the boat was docked in an hour I could go with him and about four men, three men or four. And they were going to try to get across the China Sea to French Indochina. And I went back to clear it with my fellow officers, particularly the officers who were in my outfit. Not that it made any difference, but I wanted to tell them what I was doing and to get my gear. And I knew the Japanese were coming down the road not too far from this point where the boat was docked. So I hurriedly went back and made arrangements. And I had gotten back to within about I would say, a quarter of a mile to the point where the boat was, and the

Japanese came down on us at that time and I didn't have a chance to go with them.

Marcello: You never got a chance to get to your boat?

Adair: That's right. I later heard that they were captured in French Indochina. They actually got to French Indochina, and the Japanese captured them over there--three men in a small boat. I assume that they did get that far, and I don't know what happened to them, of course--whether they came out alive or not.

Marcello: Did you ever hear of the rumor at that time that the Japanese did not take prisoners? That they would . . .

Adair: Well, we . . .

Marcello: . . . kill any prisoners that they did take?

Adair: . . . we knew what had happened at Nanking, the rape of Nanking. Of course, this is history. But frankly, it didn't enter my mind, and I didn't hear any talk of . . . of course, things happened so fast. You know, it's hard to describe the feelings. You don't want to even think of surrender, an American doesn't. You might think what would happen and that sort of thing, but you try to push it out of your mind. I know the other guys felt the same thing. As an example, one young lieutenant mentioned the word surrender one day in talking at mealtime, I guess, and a major, who later died on Corregidor, overheard this man say the word surrender, and he jumped straight up in the air and just raised hell because this man

even mentioned the word. He was an old cavalry officer and a former enlisted man who had become an officer. He or that lieutenant never mentioned the word again because we didn't want to hear this word. In other words, that's the way we were thinking; we don't even talk about this, knowing in the back of your mind it could happen any time. But we weren't prepared because of that. We wouldn't face reality, I guess you might say. We were hoping against hopes that aid would come. But of course, on the morning, once it happened, it came so fast. We got the orders the night before that we were to surrender the next morning and just throw our arms down. It happened so fast you didn't have too many thoughts. You didn't have time to think about what you would do. You couldn't have time to think about what you would do. You . . . no one I know had made any plans to surrender or to make any escape plans because they just couldn't believe it.

Marcello: Okay, so you were on your way back to this small boat when you were captured by the Japanese . . .

Adair: Right, they came in and took us over . . .

Marcello: . . . is this correct? Describe these events as they took place.

Adair: Well, this was a very touchymoment because knowing what they had been doing, what they were capable of doing. You didn't know whether or not they would come with machine guns and blast us. They'd done this on the front lines, and it was fortunate that we were not on the front lines when it happened--

I wasn't. Some of the men on the front lines were murdered, actually murdered. They came in and just started shooting. They possibly--now I'll just have to give them the benefit of the doubt--they had not gotten word there was a surrender. White flags meant nothing at all to those people on the front lines because they were so . . . the Japanese soldiers were so--I don't know what's the word--brutal might be the word. A white flag meant nothing to them. They might have figured that if they saw a white flag it was just simply to deceive them. I don't know how or what the thinking was, but I heard many instances where our troops were fired upon when they were trying to surrender because they had already been ordered to surrender. But fortunately, as I said, we were in the rear area where the Japanese had already come through the front lines, taken those people and come on back and knew that we were service and supply people and did not shoot us at that time, you might say.

Marcello: What did they do?

Adair: Well, immediately they started taking any personal property you had like rings, watches, anything like that. And I threw away a ring and my watch to keep them from getting it. I couldn't see giving them personal belongings. And they took anything they wanted, of course, searched you thoroughly. Then they ordered you to start marching up the road immediately. There wasn't any hesitation about that--just go forward and start

marching.

Marcello: Was there any pushing, shoving, hitting at this particular time?

Adair: Right at that time, not in my eyesight where I could see it. Frankly, I didn't know what they had been doing. And by this time they had already murdered people, of course. But, no, I guess they'd had their fill of that sort of thing for the time being in that particular group of troops, and they just started pushing us. There was naturally a lot of pushing and shoving, sticking you with the bayonet slightly to get you to move.

But the first time I saw a real atrocity, you might say, was that same day in the middle of the day when a Filipino for some reason . . . I don't recall now what caused or started the incident, but when I happened to see him he was down on the ground. This Japanese had knocked him down and was stomping on him with his feet. And this Filipino rolled over into a ditch and some undergrowth there and ran off into the brush. And he was gone, he had escaped; he'd gotten away for the time being. That's what made up my mind then as to what was going to happen to us, and I got a pretty good idea. Evidently he had done nothing because I had been looking towards this man, looking forward to over where he was, and he had not tried to run off the road at that time. It was something he had done, unknowing, that caused this Japanese to hit him.



Marcello: Now I assume that they were marching you toward Mariveles, is this correct?

Adair: No, from Mariveles north. We were headed north toward--we didn't know where, of course, but it ended up toward Camp O'Donnell . . .

Marcello: You started the march as soon as those Japanese captured you?

Adair: Right.

Marcello: Oh, I had assumed that most of the people who were on the march started from Mariveles and then marched north to O'Donnell.

Adair: Well, Mariveles is at the end of the peninsula, around on the west. This is on, you might say, the east side. The side that we were going up, where we were going to march was on the east side of the bay, east side of the peninsula, excuse me. On the west side of the peninsula, those troops had to march all the way around. They would not let them come across the peninsula. They had to march all the way around on the road south and then turn north and go up from Mariveles . . .

Marcello: I see . . .

Adair: . . . north . . .

Marcello: . . . I see. But you already were on that side so you didn't go through . . .

Adair: I was in, you might say, the forward echelon of the troops back in the rear area.

Marcello: About how many people were there in this group that you were with?

Adair: Oh, there were only possibly 100 to 150 people in that group, I should think.

Marcello: And like you say then, you were more or less the vanguard of this group that was making the march to O'Donnell.

Adair: No, I wouldn't say that because many hundreds of troops were ahead of us, already on the road . . .

Marcello: I see . . .

Adair: . . . marching, but that was more or less front line troops, and, well, some rear area troops, too, of course. But this was from Mariveles west, you might say, around the peninsula. From Mariveles west I was, you might say, the first of the group at Mariveles. I was there at the time, of course. That was where I was stationed--at Mariveles.

Marcello: Okay, describe the march as it took place, let's say, from where you were captured until you got to O'Donnell . . .

Adair: Well . . .

Marcello: . . . or to the boxcars that took you to O'Donnell eventually.

Adair: As we lined up on the road to march out, we saw a pickup truck an American Army . . . well, it wasn't an Army truck. It was a civilian truck with an American driver in it over to the side of the road and four or five young officers. This was before the Japanese had actually lined us up. We lined up when we saw them coming. We sort of got on the road in line because we knew we'd better or else they'd be sticking us with the bayonets. As we lined up we saw the truck, and four or

five of us got in the back of the truck. And then we told the driver to go, and he started moving up the road. And they hadn't gone too far, maybe, oh, a half a mile. And there was such a traffic jam that it was unbelievable. The Japanese were coming in with their trucks and taking up most of the road, and a few of our trucks that were left, that hadn't been destroyed by our troops, were going up--like an ambulance. Occasionally an ambulance would pass us. And it was so crowded you could hardly move--maybe three miles an hour or something like that. Anyway, we rode a half a mile, we'll say, in this pickup truck.

And on this truck, by the way, was a case of--I don't know why it was there--a case of quinine tablets. As I recall there was 50,000 tablets in it. And there was also a case of condensed milk, sweetened condensed milk. And we were ordered to get out of the truck. The Japanese decided to take the driver. They wanted the American driver to drive one of their trucks, so some Japanese non-com made us pull over to the side of the road, and we were ordered out of the truck. And my first thought was to take this case of condensed milk. And then it dawned on me. I'd never had malaria in the Philippines, but I knew lots of people in the hospital with malaria. And I couldn't take both boxes. They were too big. So I grabbed the case of quinine tablets, which I'm damn glad of now because that milk might have helped me temporarily, but there

was no telling how many lives were saved by this. If the Japanese had gotten hold of this quinine, they'd have used it themselves. And I really didn't know what I was doing. It was a good thing I didn't know.

I took this case of medicine, quinine tablets, and jumped off the truck, and here was an ambulance, one of our ambulances, parked on the side of the road there. I went over and opened the back to see what was in it, and there was six of our men, Americans who had been supposedly wounded or sick. And I just moved them and put this case of quinine tablets in the ambulance. And I went around to the front, and there was two guys in the cab of this ambulance. Back then they had running boards, so I jumped on the running board and decided I'd ride with them. I said, "Let's go!" And when the traffic cleared a little they pulled out into the traffic stream and started. So I decided I'd stay on that ambulance.

Within, oh, a few hundred yards a Japanese officer, a non-com, took the driver from that vehicle, just took him out and told him come with him. He was going to have him drive one of the trucks. There was a man sitting on the right side, an enlisted man, a Navy man, a Navy medical corpsman. And I asked if he could drive. He said, "Sure." So I said, "Move over." And I got in the cab with him. That's how I rode out of Bataan. I didn't know at the time that I'd be able to. Being an infantryman, you know, an infantryman

likes to ride when he can.

So we had no idea how far we would have to march or how long this Death March would be. So we must have driven--I don't know how many miles--fifteen miles possibly when a Japanese guard on the . . . after about fifteen miles--this was in the middle of the day, and it was terribly hot. The sun was shining bright, of course, and it must have been 100 degrees. This was out in the open where we had . . . I'm getting ahead of myself. This was the next day. It's been a long time.

We drove until dusk, practically dusk. And knowing that these men were sick and wounded in the back, I figured we had better try to find an American doctor or a Japanese doctor because one man in particular had . . . I believe gangrene set in in his leg. He'd had a bullet wound in his leg, and it was turning a greenish color. And I, not being a doctor, didn't know but I have an idea it was gangrene. And the medical corpsman thought it was, too. He knew enough about it. And he put, on this man, he must have put some sort of a drug on there, but he didn't help him. This man was unconscious, and we decided we had better find a doctor. So we saw a schoolyard just at dusk. There was a schoolyard on the side of the road where the Japanese had taken our people, our American prisoners-of-war. And they were lined up standing in the schoolyard. Well, again, first I thought 'get to a doctor.'

What happened to me, I didn't know what was going to happen to me anyhow. And actually I hadn't seen any atrocities except that one thing that I mentioned before about the Filipino being kicked.

So I took a chance of going inside the schoolyard to find a doctor. Immediately upon entering the schoolyard I was grabbed and thrown in the ranks by a couple of Japanese guards. And I don't know what caused it--maybe the good Lord was with me--but all of a sudden a man next to me fainted, passed out. As he did the man on his other side caught him and I . . . the two of us caught him by the arms and pulled him out of the ranks and told the Japanese, the interpreter, the Filipino who was an interpreter, what had happened. And I said, "I have an ambulance out in front here I can put him in." And he said, "Go, go, put him in." And I took him out and put him in the ambulance. Well, it was beside the ambulance. He came to; he was all right.

And then I still wanted a doctor. I was determined as a young idiot captain, you might say, not knowing any better. What I should have done was gotten in the ambulance and gone up the road. But I went back in the schoolyard looking for that doctor and talked to an interpreter, a Japanese man who could speak English in this case, and told him that we had to find a doctor. He had none there, he said. And I said, "Well, why don't you give me a pass so that I won't get shot going up the road." All the troops were going forward, of

course, and there was Japs all up and down the road. I couldn't force him into it; I had to just bother him, worry him, until he got me a pass. He finally got the Japanese officer to write me out a pass. It could have said, "Shoot this guy." But, anyhow, I took it. They might have thought I was a doctor, I don't know. I didn't have any insignia except my captain's bars. And I went back to the ambulance, got in it, and we went forward again. We got to Balanga as well as I remember that was the name of the town or this village. And it was dark then. We saw lights beside the road, and we could hear Americans' voices, and we figured that was a group of people that were our people there and maybe they had food--that was another thing. And we had to get these men out of the ambulance and get them at least settled down for the night. So I pulled over into this courtyard. It was a house, a large house, with a courtyard. I told the Japanese interpreter that I had six men that were sick and wounded in the ambulance, and I told him that I would like to bring them into the yard and fix them there on blankets there. So they let me do that. They all the time thought I was a doctor because I had taken charge of the ambulance, you might say.

This was the point that I knew that things were going to be rough. They had our people--now there is no reason for this, except brutality is the only thing I can think of--they had our people lined up in rows in a sitting position trying

to sleep. They wouldn't let them lie down. This went on all night long by the way. They wouldn't let them lie down. They had guards to see that they didn't lie down. They wanted them to stay there for the night. We were fortunate, we were allowed to stay . . . I was allowed to stay out with the sick people and lie on the ground. Well, we fed them some rice and whatever I had in my bag. I had some stuff in my bag, some food in it.

And the next morning they had taken my ambulance when I woke up. I say my ambulance because I had taken it over. And I immediately began to worry the Japanese interpreter to get an ambulance to take these people. Well, about ten o'clock, they finally brought a man with another ambulance back. I checked the gas tank, and there was very little gas in it, and they wouldn't give me any gas. I mean there was very little. But they did write another pass. I insisted on a pass. And they still didn't send a guard with us. There was no reason in the world they shouldn't have sent a guard with us but they didn't. And they allowed us to go ahead and told us just to go up this highway forward. I ran into a doctor there, by the way. We did have an American doctor there. I think he was a psychologist, as I recall, but he had the title of doctor. Now I didn't know the man; I had never seen him before. And he came out and did what he could for these people.

And by about ten o'clock we went forward, started forward



again. And within a couple of hours we were stopped by a Japanese soldier on the side of the road, a single soldier. And at his feet was an American. He was not a soldier. He was probably a civilian who had been called into the Army after the war started. He had on a khaki uniform, no identification whatsoever, no laundry marks, nothing in his pockets. And he was unconscious--huge man, obese, you might say--and he was dying. The Navy medical man felt his pulse, and there was zero pulse. He said, "This man is going to be dead in an hour." The Japanese soldier made us put him in the ambulance, just forced us to at the point of a bayonet. I was not going to put him in there because the medical man said he was going to die any time and that it was just as well to leave this man. There was nothing we could do for him. He tried smelling salts and tried to get him to come to. So we put him in the back of the ambulance on top of some of the other guys. They agreed to this, incidentally. They didn't say "no" to it. Well, we would have put him in the front seat except he couldn't sit up. He was completely unconscious, out of his mind.

So we went forward again and all of a sudden--this was around one or two o'clock in the afternoon--the ambulance stopped, the motor stopped. And I said, "Well, we're out of gas." We were right out in the middle of the hot sun, no town near us, no Japanese, nobody. I just knew we were out of gas. There wasn't no doubt about it. I put a stick in the gas tank,

and it showed dampness on the end of this stick. I said to the driver, "Why don't you try once more to start this thing?" He started it up, and we drove thirty miles. When we arrived at this town--I'm trying to think of the name of this town, railroad junction--where we . . . this was our destination as far as . . . that was the end of the Death March, you might say. It seems like it was San . . . I can't remember the name. It was something that was well known. (Note: The town to which the memoirist is referring is San Fernando.)

Marcello: I'm sure it's a part of the record.

Adair: Oh, yes, it is. Anyhow there was a schoolyard there where we eventually parked the ambulance. Before we got to the schoolyard--I just thought of something--again I was trying to find a doctor. I still didn't have no medical doctor to examine these people or tend to them. I drove around the town--I can't think of the name of it--looking for a . . . there were Japanese all over the place, and they would just stare at us like we were idiots. And here we were supposed to be prisoners and no Japanese with us. It was kind of crazy.

Marcello: But do you imagine that in many cases there was just as much mass confusion among the Japanese . . .

Adair: Oh, much, more so . . .

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

Adair: . . . more so because those people had . . . in the first place, they didn't realize how many troops there were back

there, service troops. And they hadn't planned this thing, how they were going to take care of us. And they were most confused.

Marcello: I was just going to say that they were apparently overwhelmed also by the tremendous number of Americans and Filipinos that they had captured.

Adair: That's right. They weren't prepared at all. They just were not prepared to take care of it. This is one of the big problems, that they weren't prepared. I think it would have been better for us had they been prepared because I don't think it would have been . . . the front line troops would not have been guarding us. They would have had military police troops, and it would have been better. There would have been fewer people killed or beat up.

Marcello: As you were driving along in this ambulance, were you able to witness the results perhaps of any of these atrocities that the Japanese committed?

Adair: No, and I'm glad fortunately that I did not see it. I was told by close friends immediately afterwards when we were back together. I did see some slapping around and punching, but I did not see anybody shot, you might say, because we were driving around fifteen miles an hour. By the morning of the second day we were out of where the combat troops were coming in. They had already gone through, so we had enough room on the road. The prisoners were on the road, on each side,

walking. And we saw them. To answer your question, I did not see at that time any part. I didn't realize what was going on until that afternoon when they started coming into this camp in the schoolyard.

But to get back to the . . . to entering the town, I drove around through the town looking for a hospital. That's what I was looking for--something or somebody that would tell me where there was a hospital. And I asked Filipinos where there might be a hospital and no one knew. So I finally stopped a Japanese--I think it was an officer--and told him my problem, and he couldn't help me. I think he didn't know what to do, and he just walked off and left me. I got out of the ambulance, and the driver and I sat down on the curb and just set there for about twenty minutes, hoping somebody would come up that could tell us what to do. We didn't know what the hell to do, except try to escape.

Now, I've left this out. This enlisted man, who was a Navy medical man, and I were discussing the possibility of escaping. I mean, of course, we were on our own but still on the main highway. And I asked him how long how long he'd been in the Philippines. He said, "Two years." And I said, "You speak Tagalog language?" He said, "Fairly well." And I said, "Well, we're going to escape. We're going to first come close to a town, arrive somewhere near a town where we can leave the ambulance and where these people can get help or

find some help, and then we're going to escape." And I said, "By the way, why are you in this ambulance?" He said, "I have malaria." And I said, "Oh, hell. You and I are not going to escape because I can't speak the language, and I don't have a compass." I'd been in the Philippines six weeks when the war started, I didn't know which direction to go, and this is where we left it. I said, "You're going to die on me out in the hills and we're both (chuckle) going to be dead." So I didn't know what to do. Today, as I look back, I would have taken a chance, knowing now what I didn't know then. I would have gone out on my own, escaped on my own. We had no idea it was going to be, of course, like it was. I should have just escaped.

Marcello: How loyal were the natives? When I say the natives, I mean the Filipinos.

Adair: On the whole, very loyal I would say. When you got a bayonet in your back, sometimes you might lose a little of your loyalty in a case like this where there was so many of these people bitter about their homeland having been practically destroyed and their wives and sisters raped and that sort of thing. I guess it wasn't a matter of loyalty. It was a matter of trying to cooperate with the Japanese when they had to--forced to do it. Who knows what you or I might do in the same . . .

Marcello: The reason I asked you this question was, had you escaped, of course . . .

Adair: Oh, I see . . .

Marcello: . . . I was wondering about . . .

Adair: . . . Oh, I see--the escape . . .

Marcello: . . . the loyalty of the Filipinos so far as turning you in  
and then, of course, the hostility of the jungle itself . . .

Adair: . . . right. As history books have shown or will show, many,  
many of these men that did escape were helped by the  
Filipinos, and on a rare occasion they were turned in--we found  
that out--but that was very rare. So, on the whole, I think  
they were very loyal in that respect, yes. In fact, I think I  
would have had a very good chance of surviving alone, until I'd  
met up with some of our people. But I didn't know that at the  
time. I didn't know that any of our people had escaped. I didn't  
know anything, and had I been in the Philippines six months,  
even, I know I would have escaped on my own. I would have just  
left and gone, but I didn't know what was going to happen.

Marcello: You were talking about the, the thoughts of escaping.

Adair: This enlisted man still wanted to escape. But I told him that  
he . . . incidentally, I'd given away all of our medicine by that  
time, so we had no medicine. I didn't keep any for myself  
because I hadn't had malaria, and I didn't realize what  
malaria was. I guess I hadn't been there long enough, but it  
was a deadly thing, and it killed many, many of our people--  
many Japanese as well. But we decided against it anyhow. I  
decided trying to escape. At that particular time, I thought

I'd wait and find some people that I could escape with if possible. I was afraid to take him out into the woods or have him take me out. He had malaria, and I just knew he'd die on my hands and he would have. There was no doubt he would have died and possibly did. I don't know what became of the man; I never saw him again.

After we came into the town, of course, finally a Japanese came by and told us that the schoolyard across the railroad tracks was where we were ultimately supposed to go. So we went over there. We were the first group in that schoolyard where many thousands of Americans,--prisoners--came through, you might say. This was the loading point on the train. They loaded all of us onto trains, boxcars, and sent us on to Camp O'Donnell.

Marcello: Describe the trip from the schoolyard here to Camp O'Donnell. You said you were loaded on these boxcars.

Adair: They loaded . . .

Marcello: Crowded?

Adair: . . . oh, this was the most brutal thing that the Japanese could have possibly done outside of the Death March itself. This was the next worse thing, I guess you might say. They loaded, as I recall, 120 men to a boxcar. These were not the real large boxcars like we have in the States, as I recall. And they closed the doors. This was in hot summer, in the worst part of the summer, you might say. The heat must have

been 130 degrees, 120 degrees at least, in this boxcar. No water, we had no water at all. If you had water, you'd already drunk it by that time. I had none. And water is important but air is more important. Well, you couldn't breathe; there wasn't enough air to breathe in this car.

After a short while I went forward and worked my way to the door where the guard was and convinced him that we had to open that door. And I guess he was hot himself, so he decided to crack the door just a little bit. And we took turns about . . . naturally everyone surged forward trying to get that air. And I think, as I recall, I was the senior officer or the captain in this car. Anyhow, I took over because it was getting out of hand. People were fighting to get to the door, and I got two good stout enlisted men up there at the door. We would have them shuffle people forward two or three at a time and rotate them, in other words, to get air. And that was the point where morale was probably at its lowest because you're going to fight to get air; you'll kill to get air before you die. And it nearly got that bad. There were 120 people in that car, and it was not just the heat. Of course, men were passing out all over from heat, heat prostration. But the idea of getting some fresh air was what they wanted. Well, this went on until finally they opened the door wider. I think that the guard could see. Maybe the train stopped a couple of times, and maybe the non-coms gave



orders to open the cars a little wider. And finally we did get a little more air, but it was a brutal thing, a brutal experience that I hate to even think about. Again, you can't live without air, these people passing out back there, and I was afraid someone would die before we could get them up to the front.

Marcello: Now . . .

Adair: And, of course, we walked; we had to walk from Capas, I believe was the name of the town. It's close to Tarlac. The train stopped at Capas, as I recall, and we walked from there to Camp O'Donnell. It was a long walk. Of course, after that train ride, which was such a brutal thing, they should have let us take more time, but they just rushed us to Camp O'Donnell.

Marcello: Now apparently up to this time the officers had not been segregated from the enlisted men. Is that correct? You mentioned that you were on this boxcar with essentially enlisted men, I would gather, for the most part.

Adair: Yes, on this particular car I don't recall even knowing any officers. If there were any, it was so dark in there you couldn't tell who was an officer and who was an enlisted man.

Marcello: What was the walk like from the end of the railroad line to O'Donnell itself? Well, let me ask you this first of all. Can you estimate how long the trip took? How long were you on the train? Was it a matter of hours?

Adair: Yes. It was several hours, pretty long. The distance couldn't

have been so great, but we had made two or three stops. I would say five hours, six hours. I know we stopped a couple times, and the Filipinos tried to get rice and some food thrown into us, and the guards would hit at them with their bayonets. They didn't shoot at them, but they didn't want them to do it, and yet they didn't want to kill them in front of us, you know, but had we not been there, been able to see it, they would have probably shot these Filipinos with these . . . . You asked before about the loyalty of the Filipinos. Many times they tried to feed us rice and stuff, but they couldn't do it. They couldn't get through because the Japs wouldn't let them.

Marcello: Did the Japanese at any time during your experience ever attempt to show off the prisoners before the local population?

Adair: Oh, yes, they marched us . . . when we left Cabanatuan to catch a boat to Japan, they marched us through Manila, paraded us through Manila. Without a doubt they wanted to show off their power.

Marcello: There is another question also that comes to mind here at this time. Why do you think the Japanese were so brutal on this march? Do you think it was because they were using front line soldiers and because the Americans had put up a somewhat stiff resistance, perhaps?

Adair: That, no doubt, was a big cause of it, I would say, because when we got to Japan those people in Japan, even though some of

them might have been front line troops at one time, were not as brutal, near as brutal. If you were a front line soldier and had just seen your buddies killed by the enemy, you would feel differently. You wouldn't like that same enemy back off in the field of battle. There's a big difference. But that does not excuse their action. They were brutal to the point of not being human beings. It was unbelievable--some of the things they could do. All of them didn't have their best friends get killed, I'm sure of that. They didn't kill that many Japanese, even though they slaughtered lots of them with artillery; the infantry, too, killed quite a few of them. I'm not making an excuse for them because they were still brutal to the point of being barbarians.

Marcello: Did it appear to you that the officers had lost control of their men, or were the officers engaging in this as well as the regular enlisted army?

Adair: The officers ignored it. No, they didn't lose control. The Japanese officer, at no time that I . . . well, of course, I didn't see too many officers with their enlisted men in battle. To me it would be impossible for an officer to lose control of a Japanese enlisted man. They had that good a discipline. To give you an example of their discipline--at a later date I saw this happen on board ship--this officer was disciplining an enlisted man. He possibly was a non-com, but anyhow he was an enlisted man. I was standing not ten feet away. This enlisted

man came up to the officer who was sitting with his knees crossed on the floor, and he came up to the officer, saluted him, and knelt down in front of him, and knelt there while the officer slapped him in his face constantly. His face would come back to the front. He'd slap him on one side and then on the other. This went on for five minutes. Then he got up, bowed, saluted, and left. This was his punishment. One of our men couldn't take that. The American enlisted man or officer would punch the officer right in the nose--you know that. That's the difference in discipline; that's the way they were disciplined.

Marcello: So what was the trip like from the end of the railroad lines to O'Donnell itself? Do you remember any of the events along that trip?

Adair: Definitely. They hit people with rifle butts. I did not see anyone shot, but we were so near the end of our trip--we knew then where we were going--that I think we gathered up our last bit of strength to help guys walk and get to the camp because . . . well, in my case I had not marched, and I was in pretty good shape, so I was able to help some people, and I don't think there was anyone shot because if they didn't fall down, they weren't left. If you fell in that march, you were dead. They shot you. They would not leave anybody with you. So on that particular leg of the trip I don't recall anyone in our group being shot.

Marcello: Okay, I guess this brings us up then to the point where you actually got to O'Donnell. Could you describe the physical features of O'Donnell?

Adair: Very well. I was there before, you know, this war started of course. It had "nipa-type" shacks, they called them. Nipa houses . . . . It's made of, as I recall, a "nipa" grass. I think that's what it is. It's a grass shack with no floors. The floor's surface was a hard surface. And the sleeping area was bamboo with grass, weeds of some sort, and it was interwoven to make sort of a bunk-type thing. We called them bays. And that's what we slept on. If you happened to have a blanket, you were lucky.

Marcello: If you had a blanket, I assume it was one that you had carried with you from the time you were captured.

Adair: That's right. They were not issuing anything whatsoever in the Philippines. Later during . . . in Japan we got some but not in the Philippines.

Marcello: Now up until this time they had not been issuing you any food either, is that correct? I mean now until you got to O'Donnell at least.

Adair: No, at that first place, Balanga, they were feeding us rice balls, just gobs of rice, very little, just a little handful of rice. And then the next one was at the railroad junction at San Fernando, I believe it was.

Marcello: San Fernando.

Adair: They had a little more rice there, and then we went down into Camp O'Donnell there was still not very much rice, but more than we got before.

Marcello: I assume they had some sort of barbed wire or enclosure around the camp by this time, or very shortly after you arrived there, they constructed such an enclosure.

Adair: I believe it was already constructed before we got there. I'm quite sure there was barbed wire when we arrived.

Marcello: When you got to O'Donnell, did they then segregate the officers from the enlisted men?

Adair: Not at O'Donnell. No, they did that later on--Cabanatuan--at least in our area. Now they might've in some other area, but they didn't in our area.

Marcello: What did you do when you got to O'Donnell? In other words, what was your daily routine like?

Adair: Oh, sitting. Nothing, they didn't . . . well, there was . . . each day there would be a burial detail and a latrine digging detail. Yes, they had two things--latrine digging and cooks, of course. They had picked out a certain number of men to do the cooking, but mostly men just sat and waited between meals, you might say.

Marcello: As an officer did you ever have to go on any of the burial details?

Adair: Fortunately, I did not go on any burial details. There were so many that I don't know why I wasn't called upon because

there was so many that died there in Camp O'Donnell. There were constant burial details.

Marcello: Now again, most of these men who died at O'Donnell, I assume, died as a result of the injuries, illness, so on and so forth they got on the march itself. Now . . .

Adair: That's right.

Marcello: . . . did the brutality continue at O'Donnell?

Adair: Yes, it did. Of course, you can't compare it with what went on in the Death March because it was different. I would imagine that the troops that were there, the guards, were not front line troops. And they let up somewhat because you didn't see men shot like you did on the Death March. But they were still brutal, and they were knocking people around and that sort of thing, but the worst part of it is not taking care of the wounded and not giving us medicine for the sick people. They were just throwing them in a building to die. They didn't care whether they died or not.

Marcello: In other words, there were no medical . . .

Adair: None whatsoever.

Marcello: . . . facilities whatsoever.

Adair: And we had our own doctors that did what they could, but at that time they had no medicine, and they couldn't get any.

Marcello: I was going to say that medical supplies were practically non-existent.

Adair: Non-existent. No, we didn't have any.

Marcello: Did most of the brutalities committed by the Japanese take the form of beatings, slappings, pushing, this sort of thing? Or did they usually go beyond that in many cases?

Adair: You mean torturing?

Marcello: Right, this sort of thing.

Adair: I never was told by anyone that they had been tortured, but we heard stories of men being tortured to get information out of them. Frankly, I never knew anyone that did. And I can believe anything I heard about it because it happened. We knew it happened in Japan. They tortured our flyers, a lot of our flyers there, to get information. They segregated those people as a rule, the ones they wanted to question. They'd put them in another camp anyhow.

Marcello: Did you ever witness or did you know of any escape attempts at O'Donnell?

Adair: Not at O'Donnell. I doubt that there was an escape out of O'Donnell. It could have possibly have been, but they were so closely watched there. But in Cabanatuan there was some attempts made.

Marcello: What sort of rules did the Japanese lay down at O'Donnell? Were there certain things that you had to do, procedures that you had to follow such as bowing or saluting officers . . .

Adair: Oh, yes, we were . . .

Marcello: . . . and things like this?

Adair: . . . told immediately that we had to salute non-coms and officers, and at times we were told to salute enlisted men. I



don't think they really meant that. Somebody was just out of their mind because you don't salute enlisted men at all. Nobody does that. But at times, they said we should do that. But officers and the non-coms you were told to salute.

Marcello: And how long were you at O'Donnell altogether?

Adair: It seems like we moved in June. It must have been six weeks, six to eight weeks, I'll say. I just can't remember.

Marcello: In other words, O'Donnell was more or less a type of transitory stop I guess you would say. They sent you to O'Donnell before they sent you on to other various prisoner-of-war camps. Most of the people at O'Donnell, I guess, went to Cabanatuan did . . .

Adair: Right . . .

Marcello: . . . they not?

Adair: . . . see, the Bataan group went directly to O'Donnell. The Corregidor group went directly to . . . it couldn't have been thirty days, to answer your question, because we were in Cabanatuan when the Corregidor troops came in, and that was only thirty days later. So we weren't at O'Donnell thirty days. I was thinking we were there longer. (Chuckle) It seemed like a lifetime.

Marcello: I see. So eventually, then, life at O'Donnell consisted of nothing really more than trying to stay alive and sitting around doing nothing for the most . . .

Adair: Right.

Marcello: . . . part. They didn't have you on too many details of any sort.

Adair: They were so disorganized they didn't have the details to put us on. Now they did take some enlisted men as I recall, back into Bataan to drive trucks and work on roads and things like that.

Marcello: But up until this time they made no distinction whatsoever between officers and . . .

Adair: No . . .

Marcello: . . . enlisted men. Everybody was more or less lumped in together.

Adair: I believe before we left O'Donnell they had segregated us, come to think about it, and put us into just officers and men not according to rank but just officers. I think they actually did that before we left O'Donnell.

Marcello: I assume that the treatment given to the officers was practically the same as that given to the enlisted man at O'Donnell. There really wasn't a whole lot of difference.

Adair: I might sound prejudiced, having been an officer, but I believe they treated us worse because it was usually Japanese enlisted men that you came in contact with, and they just took advantage of their position, you might say, and pushed the officers around a little more. And later on I know very definitely we got worse treatment because we wouldn't work. Enlisted men were forced to work. We were supposed to volunteer to work,

and we wouldn't, and they hated us for this, of course. And they gave us worse treatment, constantly harassing us because of that.

Marcello: Is there anything else that stands out at O'Donnell that you think ought to be a part of the record?

Adair: Just a mental picture of the hospital ward, the "Zero Ward" they called it.

Marcello: What was it like? I heard some of the other prisoners talk about this "Zero Ward" at O'Donnell.

Adair: It was unreal. This was the ward that they died in. When they were put in there--that's why they called it the "Zero Ward"--you'd have no chance of living. It was a bad thing to even go by and look at because it was pitiful. That's the only word I can use.

Marcello: About how many men were usually in this "Zero Ward?"

Adair: Oh, when I got there . . .at one time . . .

Marcello: Was it usually pretty well filled up?

Adair: Yes, well, they were dieing, as I recall, like twenty or thirty a day. There were 200 Filipinos they were burying per day, and it seems to me it was 10 per cent of that number, twenty or thirty probably . . .

Marcello: They were burying . . .

Adair: . . . maybe more, but it averaged about between twenty or thirty a day, I guess.

Marcello: They were burying around 200 Filipinos per day . . .

Adair: It averaged that . . .

Marcello: . . . and averaged around thirty Americans per day . . .

Adair: . . . twenty or thirty, I would guess.

Marcello: Did they segregate the Filipinos from the Americans at . . .

Adair: Very definitely.

Marcello: . . . at O'Donnell?

Adair: We were never together. They put them in a different area across the road.

Marcello: Even on the march, were the Filipinos segregated from the Americans, or was everybody lumped together on the march?

Adair: Yes . . .

Marcello: They were segregated there, also?

Adair: . . . as far as I could see. In the group that I saw they were very definitely segregated.

Marcello: Do you have any idea why they did this?

Adair: Yes, I heard many times that they gave the Filipinos better treatment. They were trying to get them to cooperate, naturally. That's not the word. What word do I want to use?

Marcello: Switch loyalties, I suppose.

Adair: Oh, yes, very, very definitely. And for that reason they wanted to keep them segregated.

Marcello: Did you ever see any collaboration taking place at O'Donnell, that is, prisoners perhaps giving information to the Japanese in order to get better favors?

Adair: Very definitely not. Not only there, but any place that I was located. You never heard of anything like that.

Marcello: I see. From O'Donnell you were sent to Cabanatuan, is that correct?

Adair: Right.

Marcello: What was the trip like from O'Donnell to Cabanatuan?

Adair: About the same. They put us in boxcars. It was a little better than the trip from out of Bataan into Camp O'Donnell by train. And as I recall, they left the doors open a little wider, and we got a little more air. To begin with they didn't. I think they goofed and closed the doors and had to open them. But it was a little better than the other trip, but there were still too many people in the cars. They were jammed up so close, like cattle.

Marcello: About what was your own physical condition like at this time?

Adair: I was very fortunate. I was in good health, and I stayed that way most all during . . . that's why I'm alive.

Marcello: Up to this time, at least, you didn't contract malaria yet?

Adair: Nor dysentery. Dysentery was the deadliest and . . .

Marcello: Right.

Adair: . . . hadn't contracted and never did contract dysentery over there.

Marcello: Had you lost any weight?

Adair: Oh, yes. Everyone immediately lost weight, but I was the exception and lost lots of weight. Of course, I only weighed 135 pounds when I was captured, so I got down to 106 by the end of the war. That was my low weight, and, of course,

percentage-wise that was pretty bad, but it's not like a man losing 100 pounds. Some of them lost 100 pounds.

Marcello: Did you find that the ones who were bigger physically suffered a lot more in many cases than the men who were . . .

Adair: Yes . . .

Marcello: . . . more slightly built?

Adair: . . . yes, for this reason. They required more food, and they got the same amount of food that . . . you know, everyone got the same amount of food. So naturally they were hungrier, you might say, than the smaller men.

Marcello: About how long did this trip take from O'Donnell to Cabanatuan? Was it a matter of hours?

Adair: Oh, yes. It was probably less than a day. We didn't spend a night on the road. We probably left early in the morning and arrived in late afternoon.

Marcello: Can you remember that . . . what Cabanatuan was like? Was this Cabanatuan I or Cabanatuan II? There were a couple of camps there, were there not?

Adair: Yes, and I think Number I was the large camp and II was the smaller, and I never did know too much about the other camp, but it was there. I've forgotten, but the large camp, I'm quite sure, was Number I.

Marcello: And that's where you went?

Adair: Incidentally, I was also stationed there before the war started. I forget that. The officers took over their cadres

enlisted men--Filipino Scouts--at Cabanatuan. We joined them there, and that's where we were trained for a short while. Well, actually that is where we inducted the regiment. That's right. We inducted the enlisted men for the regiment there. In other words, we signed them up there, and then they reported to O'Donnell. So we were there probably two weeks.

Marcello: What was Cabanatuan like, physically?

Adair: Well, it was a much better, a cleaner place than O'Donnell. Not that we had any more . . . well, yes, we got a little more food, a little more rice, there. And by that time we were able to organize. The Japanese segregated the enlisted men from officers; the officers were segregated by rank. As I recall, the captains were in one group of houses. We set up mess halls for each group, and we had our leaders appointed then according to command. They left that up to us. So we had a lot better discipline. Things were better there than at O'Donnell, and that's not saying much. It was so bad at O'Donnell. It didn't improve too much, but it was still . . .

Marcello: I see. Anything would have been an improvement . . .

Adair: Right.

Marcello: . . . over O'Donnell, I suppose.

Adair: . . . right. I wanted to get out of that place any way I could because it was so dangerous there of catching a disease. It was so dirty and filthy in that place. We didn't have any water. Well, we had enough drinking but it was bad.

Marcello: At Cabanatuan you mentioned the Japanese more or less let the officers alone. By that I assume you mean that they would relay orders from their officers to the officer in charge . . .

Adair: Right . . .

Marcello: . . . of your group, and he in turn would see that they were carried out.

Adair: . . . we had leaders.

Marcello: What did your food consist of at . . .

Adair: Well . . .

Marcello: . . . at Cabanatuan?

Adair: . . . rice. At this point our men hadn't learned to cook rice like the Japanese. If you know how the Orientals cook rice, it's very dry. It's like our bread. In fact, it is their bread. It's possible our men could have done it, but they didn't get enough rice to do this to begin with so they'd cook it in a mush. We were fed a mush rice, in other words--a mush made of rice--and a little watery soup with a few green vegetables thrown in to flavor it. There was no fruit at all. Rice was what you got. And several times they would put some beef bones in the soup to flavor it but no meat; we never had any meat ration.

Marcello: Was your food any different from that of the enlisted men?

Adair: Not at that point.

Marcello: Not at Cabanatuan. You were still eating the same.

Adair: Yeah.



Marcello: But you were eating in mess halls, is this correct?

Adair: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Now were you . . .

Adair: No, wait. I'm sorry, no we weren't eating in mess halls, no, but you'd go to the mess halls and line up to get your food and bring it back to your place to eat.

Marcello: I see. Now who was cooking the officers' food? Were enlisted men cooking it?

Adair: Enlisted men were cooking all food, Japanese, officers, and all. They cooked all the food.

Marcello: I see.

Adair: Of course, in the Japanese kitchens they were being supervised by the Japanese, but they were using our enlisted men.

Marcello: At Cabanatuan what did a typical day consist of? What did you do on a typical day, as an officer?

Adair: Same thing we did at O'Donnell (chuckle), and that was just sit.

Marcello: You just sat around?

Adair: There was nothing to do. They had no books to read; they had nothing to do.

Marcello: There were no work details?

Adair: As I recall, there was no one allowed to leave that camp at all unless they took them out on what they called permanent details down into Bataan to work on a project--not to go out and come back in. One time while I was there I was taken out and was in charge of a group of enlisted men to gather a type

of very long grass to make a wrestling ring for the Japanese. They wanted some grass to put in the corners, I guess, to pad the ring.

There was a funny incident happened that you might want to hear about. It was unreal, of course. To begin with we were divided into groups of ten, and if one man out of that ten escaped, the others were to be shot. When we went out to this area to gather this grass, the enlisted men were gathering up grass and putting it in bags, burlap bags, and they weren't moving fast enough. So the sergeant, or whoever was in charge--I think it was a corporal or a sergeant--had a rifle with him. And he stormed at them two or three times and told them to hurry. And they weren't hurrying fast enough, so he decided he'd help them, show them how. And he handed me his rifle to hold and I, not even thinking, took the rifle and was holding it. Of course, I would have taken it whether I thought or not. But I didn't even stop to think. I was standing there holding that rifle and said, "What in the hell am I doing? Here am I got this rifle, and he's over there bending over." I wanted to shoot him. Had I done that, they would have shot nine of my friends, and I might have gotten away. I thought about it very seriously, but I didn't (chuckle) do it. But he immediately realized what he had done and within a minute or two he came back and took the rifle. And I don't think he realized what he was doing (chuckle) either.

Marcello: Just one of those little quirks of war.

Adair: It might have not been loaded, too, and if I'd tried to shoot him, it (chuckle) could have backfired, but I sure did want to try it.

Marcello: You mentioned a little bit earlier that there were several escapes made . . .

Adair: Attempts . . .

Marcello: . . . and attempts . . .

Adair: . . . attempts and, as I recall, a couple of guys escaped. But the one that was publicized so much was, as I recall, two colonels and an ensign that tried to escape one night. Actually they did get outside, and they beheaded them right outside the gates right after they had caught them.

Marcello: I assume it was in the wake of these escapes that they laid down this rule that if one man escapes, the other nine men in your squad would be . . .

Adair: They made that rule the next day, as I recall, after these three fellows that at the beginning had tried to escape.

Marcello: Did you witness any atrocities at Cabanatuan?

Adair: Oh, absolutely.

Marcello: Such as?

Adair: Beatings and that sort of thing. I don't recall anyone being shot but they did . . . yes, they did. They shot one of our men, might have been two, right in front of us, so we could see it, right outside of the fence. They caught him escaping--

I guess it was one man--and shot him.

Marcello: What could you get a beating for or what could you get rapped around for? Just about anything?

Adair: Oh, just being at a particular spot at a particular time you might get a beating. There's no rhyme or reason; it depended on the mood the guy was in, probably.

Marcello: Essentially, this was carried out mainly by the guards. You didn't see too many officers . . .

Adair: No . . .

Marcello: . . . engaging in that sort of brutality.

Adair: . . . you didn't see too many officers at that time. In fact, I believe there was only one or two officers in that camp, inside this compound. At that time, I imagine there must have been more outside of the camp. I think I only saw one officer while I was there. I think he was a lieutenant.

Marcello: At this point, I think we also ought to get into the record that officers--you were a captain--are not supposed to work . . .

Adair: . . . right . . .

Marcello: . . . isn't this correct?

Adair: . . . according to the . . .

Marcello: This had been laid down by the Geneva Convention and Conference and what have you. What is the story on enlisted men? Can they do work?

Adair: They can be forced to work so long as it is not work that will help the enemy's cause. That's the way I understood it.

But they used our men to load their ships and everything else, so they never obeyed the Convention at all.

Marcello: At Cabanatuan did they ever attempt to make the officers work?

Adair: No, we had nothing to do at that time except picking out details like that little thing I mentioned . . .

Marcello: Right.

Adair: . . . to pick the grass. And I recall there were a few details that went out of camp, and I can't imagine now what it was for because we had no garden like we had in Japan or any reason. But I recall a few details going out of camp but not very many.

Marcello: About how long were you at Cabanatuan altogether?

Adair: Well, let's see. May, June, July, August, September, and October and we left for Japan the first of November.

Marcello: Which was . . .

Adair: It was about six months.

Marcello: You were at Cabanatuan about six months, and then you left for Japan in . . .

Adair: November . . .

Marcello: . . . about November of 1942, is that correct?

Adair: Yes.

Marcello: Is there anything else in your stay at Cabanatuan that you think ought to be a part of the record?

Adair: Oh, the horrible hospital facilities there . . .

Marcello: They were . . .

Adair: . . . even though they were just a little better than O'Donnell. They were pretty terrible because again they didn't have the medicine to take care of them.

Marcello: Would you care to describe the hospital facilities at Cabanatuan?

Adair: Oh, just practically nil again. They just had a special building set aside for them. They were no better for the sick and wounded than the ones we were living in. They did keep them clean. Our men, of course, did that, kept the buildings clean. But if you got sick, badly sick, you just about died there. There was no way of saving you, no medicine, unless it was medicine that the men had themselves, like quinine tablets and stuff like this.

Marcello: At Cabanatuan were there ever any Japanese who as individuals stand out in your mind?

Adair: None whatsoever. We didn't even have nicknames for them there, you might say, because we didn't come in that close contact. I think they stayed away from us pretty much. They patrolled the fence more than inside. There were very, very few of them inside the grounds. They stayed outside the camp.

Marcello: Where did you go from Cabanatuan?

Adair: To Japan. We sailed on a ship from Manila, oh, about the first of November, around the first of November. It was called Nagato Maru. It was terrible, a terrible boat. I call it a boat, because it wasn't a real large ship.

Marcello: Well, how far was Cabanatuan from Manila? In other words, what I'm trying to get at here is how did you get from Cabanatuan . . .

Adair: Oh, yeah . . .

Marcello: . . . to Manila?

Adair: . . . I believe they trucked us down there or was it in box-cars? I can't recall now. But they marched us from . . . it must have been by train because I think they marched us from the train station. That's right, yeah, that's right, because we spent the night in the railroad station on concrete. I remember sleeping on concrete, so it must have been in boxcars. And then we walked all through Manila, paraded all through Manila.

Marcello: What was this parade like through Manila? Now you mentioned that you got on the boxcars again in Cabanatuan, and they dumped you off in Manila at the railroad station, and then from the railroad station I assume that you marched up to the docks, is that correct?

Adair: No. We marched through town first . . .

Marcello: Yeah, right. Marched through town on your way to the docks?

Adair: . . . and went back to the docks and spent the night. I guess it was on the docks we spent the night. That's right, it was concrete in the shipyard there at the docks.

Marcello: What was this march like?

Adair: It was bad . . .

Marcello: Can you describe it?

Adair: . . . it was a loss of face, you might say, as the Oriental would say. They did it for that reason. They wanted the Filipinos to see that we were losing face. And the Filipinos would cheer us as we walked along by waving. They couldn't cheer out loud, you know, yell, but you could tell they were waving and holding up the "V" sign and all this sort of thing.

Marcello: The "V" sign meant something different then than what it does today.

Adair: Absolutely.

Marcello: I assume there were large crowds of Filipinos . . .

Adair: There were . . .

Marcello: . . . to witness this march.

Adair: . . . oh, they were just lined up as if it were a parade. They were honoring us really. That's what they came out for because some of them might have been forced to by the Japanese to see it, but the Japanese knew they wanted to cheer because they still were loyal to us. No doubt the majority of them were.

Marcello: Did they try and throw you any food if possible . . .

Adair: Yes . . .

Marcello: . . . and this sort of thing . . .

Adair: . . . they certainly did. They'd try to get cigarettes to us, and occasionally they'd get through if they would pass it when the guards' backs were turned or something like that. This



was a bite of food or cigarettes or something.

Marcello: What was the trip like from Manila to Japan? Describe the boat trip . . .

Adair: I could write a book on that.

Marcello: Go ahead.

Adair: This was something. It was afternoon when we boarded the ship. We must have sat for two hours after we boarded the ship. Oh, to begin with they put everyone in the hold of the ship and it was crowded as the devil. And people were passing out, and it was hot because the ship was sitting, of course, in the harbor. And if you had to go to the latrine, you were in bad shape because they wouldn't let you. Finally, they allowed them one at a time to go up topside, and we had to get permission to do that. And then they had a guard at the top of the ladder so that only one at a time could go. And when you would have to go to the latrine, you would have to go at times, so lots of the guys did and . . . there were supplies of sugar in our hold, bags of sugar. And they would urinate on this sugar, back in a corner or any place where they happened to be. And the guards would just come down and bat them on their head for doing this. It was pretty bad. Finally, they did allow more than one before the trip was over. They had it organized. But it was very disorganized to begin with. And in the way of food . . . it must have been say six o'clock, and we still hadn't sailed. And everybody was getting hungry or hungrier (chuckle),

I should say, wondering when we were going to get fed. So I went to the colonel that was in charge, the lieutenant-colonel that was our senior officer, and asked him when we were going to be fed? And he was sick at that time. Something was wrong, and he was real sick. And he said, "Adair, would you go up and check on it for me?" So I went up to where the galley was and approached this Japanese civilian who was in charge. He was the ship's steward for the prisoners. I asked him about food and he spoke English. And he said that food had been sitting there for two hours. And I said, "Well, why hadn't somebody told us?" And he didn't know. So I went back and told the colonel, and we got a detail together for this food and passed it out. There was 1,500 prisoners on board the ship. So I went back in the galley--taking a bucket back or something--and this steward somehow appointed me mess officer. I don't know how. This was good luck for me because little did I realize we were going to be kept in that hold. I thought once we put . . . that once we were put to sea we could get up on topside and walk around, but this didn't happen. And he sort of appointed me mess officer, or maybe I appointed myself, but at least I became mess officer all of a sudden. I had been mess officer for several . . . any place I went just about I was involved in mess details. I was a chow hound, I guess. So this was a break because they allowed me to pick--they already had some enlisted men up there--but to

pick twenty enlisted men to do the cooking. And they allowed me to pick an assistant, too. I suggested this and they let me get a captain, a buddy of mine, up topside. And we were allowed to sleep in a little shack on the deck, and the enlisted men were allowed to sleep up there, and this was the biggest break we got during the entire thing because these poor people down in this hold of the ship suffered for the nineteen days that we were on the trip. And, of course, there was a lack of facilities, you know, latrine facilities, water, everything. It was just horrible. Air, you couldn't get decent air. They had to sleep sitting up because there wasn't room otherwise. So this was a big break. We were allowed to sleep topside.

Marcello: Now you mentioned this trip took twenty days. That's an awful long time for a trip . . .

Adair: Yeah, it is . . .

Marcello: . . . from the Philippines to Japan. Something must have happened . . .

Adair: . . . well, we . . .

Marcello: . . . several times along the way.

Adair: . . . we stopped at Formosa, I guess, one day. I guess they were refueling and taking on supplies and what not. We were there about one day. But other than that . . . well, we didn't have any . . . if you're thinking of bombing and torpedoes. One time we were . . . not attacked but had an

alert, and the destroyer that was close by zigzagged, and so we figured there was a submarine close by, and we just knew that we were going to be torpedoed but we weren't. Of course, some of the ships, as you probably know, were.

Marcello: Now were you part of a convoy?

Adair: No, I'm sure it wasn't. We didn't call it a convoy. We had a destroyer--I guess that could be considered a convoy--and I believe one other ship, troopship. And I don't know whether or not it had prisoners. I'm not sure. It might have been just Japanese soldiers. We had Japanese soldiers on board our ship by the way, 300 Japanese soldiers.

One incident occurred that was funny because the Japanese getting seasick and, our own men got seasick. It was very rough at one time--very, very rough. And the Japanese soldiers were getting seasick and coming up topside, and throwing up all around the ship. And they turned about the color of your trousers, you know. They had brownish-yellow skin anyhow, and they turned green. Of course, it tickled the hell out of us, but our men also were getting seasick, lots of them. I didn't, fortunately, but many of them were getting very seasick. But to see all these Japanese throwing up all over the place just tickled the hell out of us. They weren't very good sailors.

Marcello: (Chuckle) Not these soldiers, anyhow, I suppose. What made this trip so long?

Adair: Well, it was such a lousy boat, probably. The ship that we

were on an old . . . I call it a cattle boat. I don't know what they called it, but it was, oh, it was in bad shape. It creaked and rattled like you wouldn't believe, like something out of a story.

Marcello: And they crammed 1,500 prisoners on your ship.

Adair: Plus 300 Japanese soldiers.

Marcello: Did this ship ever break down or anything on the way to . . .

Adair: No . . .

Marcello: . . . Japan?

Adair: . . . I don't think so. I don't think we had any trouble that way.

Marcello: I just wondered, you know, it still seems like an awfully long time. But it did take that long?

Adair: That lives in my mind--nineteen days it took from Manila to Japan.

Marcello: Where did you land when you got to Japan?

Adair: It's right across from the main island. I wasn't on the main island. We had to take a ferry across, so it was on, I think, the second largest island, smaller island there. Moji, I guess it was. I remember we went to . . . we went by ferry boat across and got on a train on the main island, Honshu. We were taken to Osaka.

Marcello: What did you do at Osaka?

Adair: About the same thing we'd been doing, (chuckle) sitting. At Osaka they made us exercise. They tried to, but we were so

weak we couldn't do it. There was a funny incident that happened there, could have been tragic, too, but it was so hilariously funny that I could have died of laughter. They ordered us to do close-order drill. We'd been doing a little exercise. They forced us to do that--as much as we could. We couldn't do much, though, because we were too weak. But one day a sergeant called us out to do close-order drill. I think we'd been doing this in some camp he'd been in, and he assumed we knew how to do it, knew the orders and everything. And he would start immediately giving us orders in Japanese, and nobody knew what in the world he was talking about--like doing right-face and forward march. If you'd seen a comedy like . . . I recall a comedy, a movie, they made, Buck Private with . . . this was before you were born. I don't remember the two comedians now. They're both dead.

Marcello: You don't mean Abbott and Costello . . .

Adair: Abbott and Costello. Exactly like that movie where the recruits hadn't had any training, of course, and they were running into each other. Just a delightful movie, of course. This is exactly the way this thing happened. We were running into each other and falling all over each other. And I got so tickled my side was hurting me badly. It was paining. And this was fortunate because if they'd seen me laughing, they would have probably have chopped my head off. My buddy grabbed me out of the ranks and just put his hand over my mouth and made

me quit laughing. I was doubled up on my side. And they thought I was hurting, I was sick. So they allowed him to take me off, and I was laughing until I was hysterical. I never laughed so much in my life. To see all these officers in this group doing close-order drills to Japanese . . .

Marcello: Commands . . .

Adair: . . . commands and not knowing a word that they were saying. This was something.

Marcello: Now how long did you stay at Osaka altogether?

Adair: We were only there until January. It must have been the latter part of November to about the sixteenth of January, I believe, and we moved over to a smaller land . . . island. Zentsuji was the town and the island was . . . oh, boy.

Marcello: You were sent to Zentsuji?

Adair: Zentsuji at the time on the other island.

Marcello: All right so you were at Zentsuji, then, two and a half years. And I think you can really pick up the story at this point. Up until this time I don't believe there had really been very much bombing of the Japanese islands, is that correct?

Adair: That's right. It was January . . .

Marcello: This would have been January of '43.

Adair: That's right.

Marcello: Now, you . . .

Adair: In fact, we hadn't seen a plane at this time, not a plane . . .

Marcello: . . . right . . .

Adair: . . . they had been bombing maybe some, but we hadn't seen them.

Marcello: By January of '43, I think, you know, we were just about ready to start . . .

Adair: Right . . .

Marcello: . . . taking the offense. Actually, we had been fighting a defensive action throughout most of 1942 or a holding action . . .

Adair: Well, we probably hadn't taken the islands that we had bombed them from--Saipan and Tinian.

Marcello: Right. I don't think we had taken those islands yet. That's correct. Did you get any news from the outside world at this time yet?

Adair: A small amount of news. When we moved into Zentsuji, it was already occupied by officers and enlisted men from Wake and Guam, and they had very good organization there--good cooks, excellent cooks as far as the Navy goes. They have good cooks in the Navy, and they prepared the food excellently. And everything was well organized.

Marcello: We were talking about news from the outside.

Adair: Oh, yes. And one American naval officer could speak Japanese fluently--read it and write it. He had been at the embassy in Tokyo before the war. He'd been on duty there. And he didn't want the Japs to know this--that he could speak their language --and I don't think they ever found out he could speak Japanese.



He was very careful about this; he didn't want them to know. But the enlisted men would steal newspapers, Japanese newspapers, and bring them in, he would interpret the news from that. At about this point, they let us have Japanese newspapers, The Nippon Times and some other one. We got lots of news about the European operations but very little about the Pacific. However, the Japanese newspapers in Japanese told quite a bit about that, and that's why we would get a newspaper and interpret it. And we'd have a commentator come around, and he'd have a certain section to come around as if he were lecturing on some idiotic subject, you know. And they put a guard at the door to make sure no Japanese were close by, and then they'd give us a daily news report. In addition to that, oh, a little later, a group of Dutch officers came in from another camp, and they brought a radio with them, a short-wave radio.

Marcello: They apparently had smuggled this in pieces.

Adair: Right, in pieces, hidden on their person somewhere. And they put it in the wall, but we didn't ask questions. We just listened. But they were operating that radio, and they'd get KGEI in San Francisco, the daily news reports. And they would also bring that around, so we were pretty much up to date. And, like I said, we had very good news on the European theatre until D-Day in Europe, and then they stopped this English newspaper. Once we had landed in Europe they stopped,

and we didn't know what was going on except for the Japanese newspapers, and they wouldn't admit anything. To their own people, you know, they told lies, gave propaganda stories.

Marcello: What was . . .

Adair: They never were losing at all if you read their newspapers.

Marcello: What did you do at Zentsuji?

Adair: Much better there as far as recreation and that sort of thing. We got better food--not that it was anywhere near adequate--but more food, I should say. We had that rice soup again, but more of it. It was much cleaner. It was barracks that the enlisted men had used, Army barracks that they had used before. So it was a lot better than what we had had. We were tickled to death about it.

A very funny incident occurred when we arrived there. Back in the Philippines we had somehow gotten infected with body lice, and there was no way in the Philippines to rid of this lice. They were so bad that you never could get rid of them. They were body lice, not head lice. Body lice are gray, worm-type bugs about this long (gesture) that get in your clothing right around your belt, mostly. That's where they'd stay because it was warm there. Your body warmth was better to them, and they'd bite you there, and that's the way you'd get bitten by these things. Heat would take them out and daily you would see guys out in the sun picking lice off of them, and the next day they would be hatched out again, I guess.

They had them constantly. This went on in, also in Osaka while we were there because they never had bathing facilities for us and clothing or anything. The moment we arrived in Zentsuji, they had us walk in the gate and pull off all of our clothes. It was in dead winter, January 13th, cold as hell. We had to pull off all our clothes, leave them, and we never saw them again. They burned them. And then we had to go into a vat. It was huge tub, swimming pool-like-thing, like they use for bathtubs. And we had a hot bath which was terrific. We hadn't had a bath since we'd taken one in the Philippines with a canteen cup. So we could spend so many minutes in that bath getting all the bugs and things off of us. And we went outside and got new uniforms. It was in the wintertime, and they gave us Japanese-type uniforms. Later we were issued British woolen uniforms which was quite a help. But on board this train coming over from . . . we went by train from Osaka to the boat. And it was very warm on that train. It was in the wintertime, but it was very warm, the sun shining in the window and everything. And these lice started to get to us around the waist, and you could see guys picking them off. They looked around to see if the guards were looking, and they put them down in the . . . they killed them and put them in the seats. So many Japanese picked up the body lice. And that was always a big joke with us.

Marcello: Well, what was the main purpose in sending these people to

Zentsuji? What was the work that had to be done there?

Adair: Well, enlisted men were already there working. See, no enlisted men were with us. We were all officers in that group that went into Osaka. We were all officers, 300 officers. The enlisted men that were there from Guam and Wake were doing stevadoring work daily. They did it about eight hours a day or about ten hours daily, stevadoring work. Now they kept in pretty good shape because they fed them better. They had to because they did stevadoring work.

Marcello: And apparently they stole quite a bit, also. I think living on the docks, they had all sorts of . . .

Adair: That's a story in itself.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the thievery that went on here at Zentsuji as a result of these enlisted men working on the docks.

Adair: The men would go out each day, as I mentioned. They would go out each day to their stevadoring work. And the stories that they would tell! Of course, they had all different kinds of chances to steal on board the ship as they went on--sugar and rice and things like this that they were loading or unloading. But as an example, one of the men was telling me how he stole rice. I asked him, "How did you get rice without the man watching you? Where did you put it?" They would have pockets sewn along the inside of their trousers all the way down to their foot--just a pocket sewn there. The way this man

described it, he had a short bamboo, hollowed-out pole, say, a foot and a half long, an eighth of an inch in diameter. And it was cut off at an angle so that there was a sharp end to it, if you can visualize this. And he would be talking to a guard and standing there eating lunch or something, talking to a guard, leaning up against a sack of rice. He'd stick this sharp point into the rice, up vertically into it, and the rice would pour through that bamboo pole into his pocket. And this pocket had a hole in it and it went down into the long pocket sewn to his leg, and he would steal a few pounds of rice, as much rice as would go down in there. And if they shook them down, they would never make them take off their clothes. At times they would search their pockets and that sort of thing but never thought to go down where these pockets were sewn. They brought in food and tobacco and things that you wouldn't believe that they could steal. But they did.

Marcello: Now the officers did have access to this stolen food?

Adair: We'd buy it from them. We'd buy it with Japanese yen. See, the Japanese Army paid us according to rank in Japanese yen. Now they wouldn't let us keep all of this. For instance, I was a captain and I rated 120 yen a month. That was the captain's pay in the Japanese Army. Of course, their yen was worth nothing to us because we couldn't spend it except trading with each other, bartering. And they kept all except fifty yen of this in a bank account according to what they told us. And we

would use this yen--what we had--to . . . well we played poker with it, frankly, quite a bit. But if we had extra yen, we would buy cigarettes or rice, anything we could, from the enlisted men. I'm sure they never spoke of this, but they would buy merchandise from guards, too, and Japanese civilians outside because they could use the yen. But many things I can't remember now that happened with this stealing that were just real funny incidents. They were masters at stealing. They learned to be because they did it because they were hungry, naturally.

And then the officers weren't beyond doing the same thing when they had an opportunity. For instance, they had a bakery, a Japanese bakery, next door to us across the fence. And one night, I'm sure that at least thirty officers went through a hole in the fence and stole sugar and bread and cookies out of that bakery. You can't imagine a West Point graduate, a good friend of mine who was a very solid man, plenty smart. He went through that fence, took his life in his hands to go through that fence, to steal a little sugar or whatever it was. But it got to be so common for him to do it. I didn't know this was going on until that particular night. I went out to the latrine, and here they were just lined up going through this fence. And why the guards didn't see them, nobody knows. The guards, I think, got careless after a year that we were there. They got careless about the fence and

didn't see the hole for two or three days. No one was caught. No one got caught in this particular end, but they stopped it. They decided not to do it any more because it had gotten out of hand. There was too many going across and they knew it would be found out.

Marcello: What did the officers do at Zentsuji?

Adair: Read books. We had a library, books that had been donated by our ambassador. When he left Japan, he had donated his library to the camp. And we had, as I recall, his entire library, which was very good. And the Red Cross sent some books in. I read over 400 books myself.

Marcello: Is that right? How many Red Cross packages did you get while you were in Zentsuji? I'm sure you didn't get any in the Philippines.

Adair: No, they didn't have any such things in the Philippines. About eleven, I think, as I recall, eleven packages.

Marcello: What was usually in these Red Cross packages?

Adair: A can of powdered coffee. We called it powdered coffee.

Marcello: Instant coffee?

Adair: Instant coffee, Nescafe--that was the only brand then. A can of powdered milk, pound of powdered milk, a whole bar of Kraft cheese. I ought to remember this very well.

Marcello: Cigarettes, I'm sure.

Adair: Four packages of cigarettes, usually. A can of butter, a quarter pound of butter, and a can of jam or jelly, something

like that, and that was about it, I think, usually.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever ransack these packages before they handed them out to prisoners.

Adair: Not the individual packages but we were sure that they ate some of the food. They were seen eating cheese and that sort of thing--some of the officers were--but we couldn't tell. They were housed in a separate building from us. But the bad part of the Red Cross thing, they left the packages in there. We knew they were in there to begin with before we got our first issue. And knowing they were there, we were about ready to go over and take over the thing. But the bad part about it was they let the cheese spoil. It had been over there so long that the cheese was half rotten by the time we got it. And the medical supplies were over there, they wouldn't issue them at all. This, incidentally, is probably why this Japanese doctor was executed after the war. He was hanged after the war because there were atrocities he committed plus the fact he wouldn't issue the medicine.

Marcello: Did the attrition rate kind of level off by the time you got to Zentsuji?

Adair: Yes, it did.

Marcello: You didn't leave too many men there?

Adair: The only men we lost there died of . . . well, one Englishman, as I recall, our doctor said he died of malnutrition. And some others died of various causes, but nobody was beheaded or



anything like that in that camp. But I can only speak for that camp because, incidentally, this is what they called a propaganda camp, not that they used us for propaganda purposes as such. But they allowed the Red Cross to come in there about every six months, but they wouldn't allow them to stay there long, and they could talk very little. But they were allowed to come in and inspect, and the place would be spotless. We would have twice the rice rations and that sort of thing on that particular visit.

Marcello: Did they ever try to force the officers to work at Zentsuji?

Adair: Yes, they sure did. They would try to get us to volunteer to go out and grow a garden. This was the only thing that we would even consider, of course--growing a garden for our own use. And it was a lost cause because they wouldn't give us any . . . we would not use human feces for fertilizer like they used. And we couldn't grow anything because we had no fertilizer--just some seeds is about all they would give us. It was a farce, really. But finally we decided we just wouldn't do it, and we sat down, just went in and quit. And they cut our rice ration in half. So we decided we better go back in the garden, at least pretending to work. Nobody ever worked very much anyhow in the garden. Do you remember hearing about the old WPA days, like people leaning on their shovels, you know, and this is the way it went. We just sort of pretended to work. But our senior officers decided we'd better

go back to the garden. They had enough volunteers, usually, to go out on this garden project just to get out of camp. I played poker all the time. I didn't volunteer to go out there. If it would have been a worthwhile cause for us, I would have. I gathered grass for the rabbits we were trying to grow. We were trying to raise some rabbits. Occasionally, I'd go out on the grass detail. I played poker most of the time.

Marcello: You mentioned that you . . .

Adair: Read books.

Marcello: . . . read books. I was going to ask you what else you had possibly done to fight the boredom. Obviously, there must have been quite a bit of boredom.

Adair: It was terrible, but you had a library there. If you wanted to read, you could read. They had classes of various types. One man learned the Russian language from a Russian, a White Russian. He was in our Army, a captain in our Army. And he taught another captain Russian. He was the only one who had guts enough (chuckle) to go through with it, this one man. He learned it well enough to go on to a language school and teach Russian, as I recall, at the Academy.

Marcello: I see.

Adair: We tried a Chinese course. It was too hard. You couldn't think. We had what we called the "rice brain." This meant you just couldn't think well enough. It was an ordeal to try to think well enough to accumulate any knowledge. So some of

us just read. You could read, of course.

Marcello: Did you say that poker was also a big activity in the officers' quarters?

Adair: Just as far as one game and one blackjack game. There was a constant game of blackjack and poker.

Marcello: Going all the time?

Adair: Ran all the time, day after day. The Japanese didn't realize we were gambling. There was a very strict rule, no gambling.

Marcello: Why?

Adair: In the first place, we weren't supposed to have any money to gamble with. If we didn't use that fifty yen per month--that they gave us--that's what I got as a captain. If we didn't use it we were supposed to turn it back in because they didn't want to take chances of having us accumulate money to escape with. Not that you could ever escape from Japan anyhow, but they were very careful about that--no gambling, you know. We'd call them markers. We'd use chips, of course, and keep score and pay off the game. I was the banker in the game, and many times they could have caught me with 300 or 400 yen in my pocket and hit me over the head, but they never did.

Marcello: Well, you said if you didn't spend these yen, you were supposed to turn them back . . .

Adair: You weren't supposed to have over fifty yen at any one time. And there was no way to spend it.

Marcello: Where did they expect you to spend it?

Adair: They knew that. That's why they didn't search us to see how much yen we had. They knew we were gambling. I'm sure the officer did. But they never did anything about it. But there was a strict rule right on the bulletin board, "No Gambling."

One time--this was a funny incident--one time in the blackjack game--I hardly ever played blackjack--I was up watching the game, taking time off from my poker game. There must have been twelve guys around this table playing blackjack. They played for big stakes; they played on credit as well as for yen. They would give checks and that sort of thing. I was standing at the end of the table watching the dealer deal, and they were yelling out dollars--betting, you know--five dollars, ten dollars, whatever it was. And there was a guard standing right there by them.

Marcello: Was he watching the game?

Adair: Yes. He was watching very intently and . . .

Marcello: He just knew you had a card game, but he didn't know you were . . .

Adair: Right . . .

Marcello: . . . gambling.

Adair: . . . and most of them couldn't speak English, of course, we thought. After that we decided they were picked as guards usually because they probably could understand some English. And they kept talking about dollars, and I said, "You'd better put the nix on this money business. You got company," or

something like that. And they paid no attention to me at all. This guy who was dealing dealt this hand around and came to himself, and he had a king of some face card and a nine--nineteen--and he stayed on that, of course. He turned his cards over and everything, but this old Jap reached over and picked up the next card on top and looked at it, and it was a duce. In perfect English he said, "Had you drawn the next card you would have had a perfect twenty-one, wouldn't you?" And you could hear a pin drop. We just knew (chuckle) everybody was going to the brig, what they called the brig. And he laughed and turned around and walked off. From then on out they didn't mention the word money.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that prisoners were trying to breed some rabbits. Where did you get the original rabbits to begin with?

Adair: They brought in some . . . I've forgotten . . . the large rabbits, Australian rabbits, I think they called them, huge rabbits. There were several pairs of rabbits to see if we could breed them. And they had a Navy chief there who was in charge of the rabbits. I think he bred rabbits when he was a kid. He knew how to take care of rabbits. And we were supposed to keep them fed and supplied with . . . we'd gather grass. And they'd give them a little meal, that soybean meal they called it. It was residue from soybeans and that sort of thing. And we tried and the rabbits would get diseases and die. Occasionally, we'd put a few rabbits in the soup

pot, you know, for flavor. At least if you never got any rabbit, you got flavor. They finally gave it up as a lost cause.

Marcello: Did you ever have very much contact with the Japanese civilians at Zentsuji?

Adair: None whatsoever. None.

Marcello: Well, at Zentsuji, are there any individual Japanese who stand out in your mind?

Adair: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Who were some of them? I'm sure you had nicknames for all of them.

Adair: We had this one interpreter who had attended Cambridge and was an architect by profession. He spoke perfect English, you know, with an English accent, beautiful English. And he had long hair like they had before the war. The Japanese wore long straight hair. And he was a handsome man, actually, a real, real handsome man, dressed immaculately. He always had a tie and a jacket on. All of a sudden one day he appeared with his hair in a crew cut. It was very crew cut. And he wore a Japanese uniform which was horrible. His morale went down (chuckle) 100 per cent. He told one of the guys--he was fairly friendly to us and never gave us any trouble--that he lost face having to do this. And he had been sort of the big dog, chief interpreter I guess you would say, because he was highly intelligent. Maybe the reason for this . . . another interpreter

who was mean as hell was always slapping people around, and we called him "Duck Butt." He was a little short one, of course. Have you heard this name?

Marcello: No, I sure haven't.

Adair: He wore boots. (Chuckle) He was so short that the boots came (chuckle) right up to his knees, and they were rubber boots. He always wore rubber boots. Maybe he couldn't afford any other. And we thought he was a nut, but this man could speak seven languages--highly intelligent. But he gave us trouble all the time. He got about twenty years in prison, I think, after the war.

Marcello: What were some of the things he would do?

Adair: Slap people around, nasty to people, and just hated Americans, of course. And he had probably been . . . I'm sure he'd been in the states because he spoke English with an American accent. I think he was educated in the states. And then another interpreter had gone to high school in California. He had lived in the states a good number of years and had gone back to Japan. He was pretty nice to us. And then there was a guard, or a sergeant, one sergeant who was very mean. "Kendo Kid" we called him. He was good at this . . .

Marcello: "Kendo Kid."

Adair: . . . Kendo game, Kendo being the big sword that they practiced with and played with. It was a game with them. And we called him the "Kendo Kid." And then the junior lieutenant in the

camp was a drunk. They called him "Saki Pete" because he drank so much saki. He fell out of the window one day. He was so drunk that he fell out. (Chuckle) We hoped it killed him, but it didn't. They gave him twenty years, also, I think, after the war. But the doctor was the one that was hanged. He was the worst in the bunch. He was brutal.

A little incident about the doctor. One night I came down with a cold and couldn't get rid of it. For thirty days at least I had this cold. I took aspirin and that didn't knock it out, so they could no longer do anything for me in sick bay, as far as our doctors, so they sent me to the Japanese doctor to try to get medicine. If you go to him and convince him, you might get something. He had his feet up on his desk when I went in and had an enlisted man in there. Right away he told the enlisted man--I'm sure he told him in Japanese--he told him to get a blood sample. So he rolled up my sleeve, and he took out a damn syringe that was like our vets use. I'm not kidding. I guess there was a 500cc one. It was this long (gesture). (Chuckle) And the needle was this big and round. (gesture) He was trying to find a vein, and I was so skinny that he couldn't find a vein in my arm. He stuck me four or five times. Finally, after about twenty minutes, he finally got the blood out. And he was raising hell with this enlisted man constantly because he couldn't get the needle in. He was yelling and screaming. This man was nervous. I don't think it



hurt because it was so funny, really. I couldn't laugh, but it was like a comedy. It wasn't real. I damn near laughed out loud, but if I had he'd probably killed me. But he was just yelling in a high pitched voice at this enlisted man. And the enlisted man, "Ah, so," answering him back and forth and trying to get this needle in. And it was just terrible. He finally got all my blood out, just about. And I never heard a damn word about the blood. I could have died of tuberculosis or something, not knowing what was wrong. I got all right. I don't know what saved me; he didn't give me anything. He was going to take a sample. What he probably did was send this blood to the front line for the recruits. This is probably what they did because it was like taking a half pint of blood out of you with a big syringe.

Marcello: Are there any other individual Japanese who perhaps stand out in your mind?

Adair: Well, the camp . . . you might call him the executive officer, but I'll say the colonel in charge that didn't live there. He didn't stay there. He came on, of course, every day. The captain who was in charge, Hosotani never did slap anyone around, but he didn't do anything to help us either, and for that he got twenty years, also.

Marcello: Well, this is very interesting to me that these people were getting these stiff punishments after the war because I've been getting the impression that this camp really wasn't that bad, here at Zentsuji.

Adair: Now that was one of the better camps, you might say, so you can imagine what they did with most of the others. They really performed atrocities. They must have hanged lots of them that we never read about. This was a small article in the newspaper.

Marcello: I see. Is there anything else that happened during the daily procedures at Zentsuji that you think ought to be a part of the record? Did they ever conduct any sneak raids in the barracks?

Adair: Oh, yes. Shakedowns, we called them. Oh, yes, a good many times. They would somehow get word that the . . . well, for instance, they had missed sugar. Somebody had stolen sugar out of the bakery, and they knew that it must be the prisoners. They couldn't figure out why or how they did it, you know. They could figure out why, but not how they got over there? But they had a shakedown and . . . no, it was cookies that they missed, not sugar, cookies. They had us line up and turn our pockets inside out. Well, a couple of guys had some raw tobacco fragments in their pockets. The enlisted men had brought in some tobacco leaves, actually raw tobacco. I bought a hundred dollars worth at one time. They called it a "hand" of tobacco. I gave 400 yen which was equivalent in our exchange rate that we had in our camp to a hundred dollars. And a couple of guys got caught with that. And they questioned them, wondered where they got it. Well, they wasn't going to say

that the enlisted men stole it, so they never found out about that. One man had cookie crumbs in his pocket, and they sent him to the brig for an overnight stay or something like that-- something to save face. But they never found anything that was incriminating, you might say. But they were constantly doing this. They'd shake down the barracks--come through and check to see if you had anything stolen in the barracks and so forth. Everybody had it hidden. Sugar or anything like that, you would keep it well-hidden or you'd usually eat it the same day you got it or pass it out to the other guys.

Marcello: What were some of the items that you were forbidden to have?

Adair: Anything that they didn't issue us through the mess or sell in their little canteen. They had a little canteen that they sold, as I recall, ink, pens, a cheap pen, metal-point pen, tooth powder, writing paper, junk like that. Nobody ever bought it anyhow.

Marcello: Were you ever allowed to write home?

Adair: Yes, we were allowed to write. Oh, I think my folks got eighteen letters from me during those years, and I received probably a dozen letters altogether.

Marcello: You were allowed to write letters?

Adair: Yes. Twenty-five word letters, yes.

Marcello: I remember some prisoners still have some of the postcards that they were allowed to send home. You know, these were the ones that said, "My health is great" or whatever they were supposed to put in there.

Adair: You couldn't put in anything that was \_\_\_\_\_. If you did, they'd censure it out and make you write it over-- anything that had to do with what was going on in the camp. But these were double-fold stuff. Our people have the same thing. I guess they issue the same thing to write our soldiers overseas--a two-fold thing that just folded out for twenty-five words.

Marcello: And like you say, I would assume that anything that you did write home was very heavily censored, was it not?

Adair: Oh, very definitely. Everything was censored. And the letters coming in had been censored by our people and by the Japs, too. The Japs cut out one letter that my brother wrote. He just wanted to see what he could get through to me, and you could see where they'd cut out about five words, but I knew what they were. I could tell what it was.

Marcello: Did you ever experience any air raids at Zentsuji?

Adair: Yes, towards the end before they moved us to another camp we heard all this noise outside and ran out, and it was B-29s flying over at 30,000 feet. And the guards chased us back in. They made us pull the blackout curtains. They didn't want us to see these planes at all.

Marcello: Did any of the raids ever hit . . .

Adair: Oh, no . . .

Marcello: . . . the camp you were in?

Adair: . . . no, no, this town was not . . . it wasn't even on the coast. This town where they were working as stevadores was

like twenty or twenty-five miles away. So this town was not important. Otherwise, they would have.

Marcello: I see. As the war gradually turned in favor of the Allies, did you notice any differences in the conduct of the Japanese?

Adair: Yes, they got worse.

Marcello: They got worse?

Adair: Yes, they seemed more bitter as time went on. It never did let up. In fact, it got worse for us right up until the end.

Marcello: Do you think this was probably because they, perhaps, had lost families or something in air raids as much as . . .

Adair: Could be . . .

Marcello: . . . anything else?

Adair: . . . could possibly be. Of course, also, they weren't getting the true story about what was going on except in their own home. Maybe it was being bombed. They didn't realize how they were losing the war in the south. Had they known that, it might have been a different attitude, but I don't think they were allowed to know--at least nobody under a full colonel. That was the consensus, that they didn't know what was going on.

Marcello: Were you at Zentsuji for the duration of the war or . . .

Adair: No, we were . . .

Marcello: . . . were you moved to another camp?

Adair: . . . no, in June of '45 we were transferred to Rokuroshi, a village up in the mountains. It was a small village, oh, I

would say, about 75-100 miles up in the mountains from  
Yokohama.

Marcello: What did you do in this village?

Adair: We tried to grow a garden there, also, and otherwise, nothing  
but sit. We had a library there, so they did have some books  
that you could read there, but it was much worse than Zantsuji.  
It didn't have the facilities, and the food was much worse.  
The food got so bad. That's when I lost more weight. I got  
down to 106 pounds.

Marcello: And, of course, there was nobody there to steal food or to buy  
food from either, is this correct?

Adair: None whatsoever.

Marcello: I wonder how come they moved you? You hadn't been doing  
anything at Zentsuji . . .

Adair: They expected . . .

Marcello: . . . it was quite obvious.

Adair: . . . I think the consensus was that eventually they expected  
an invasion, and they wanted us away from the coastline, and  
they wanted us back in the hills as far as possible. I think  
that's the main reason.

Marcello: Did you ever think about what might possibly happen if Japan  
did lose the war? Did they ever threaten to kill all the  
prisoners, let's say, if there was an invasion of the home  
islands?

Adair: No, they never told us that, but we figured that would come.

In fact, we were convinced that if our people had invaded they would have murdered us. There's no doubt in my mind.

Marcello: Did they ever threaten to do this?

Adair: No, not that I know of.

Marcello: What was the thought that was most constantly on your mind

. . .

Adair: Getting home.

Marcello: . . . in this camp? Getting home, food?

Adair: Or food, actually more naturally. When you're hungry . . .

Marcello: Take first things first. Food was necessary to stay alive so that you possibly could get home.

Adair: Thinking of food constantly.

Marcello: While you were in these prison camps did cliques ever form? Were there just a few of you who, perhaps, might be closer than

. . .

Adair: Yes . . .

Marcello: . . . you were to the other people and so on . . .

Adair: . . . well, in Zentsuji . . .

Marcello: . . . and you would confide in these people?

Adair: . . . right, in Zentsuji where we were for so long, two and a half years, I believe . . . well, in fact we organized clubs sort of, and maybe it was with the thoughts of getting together by states after we got back--the Oklahoma group, the Texas group. I lived in Oklahoma for a time, my folks did. And we'd get together for a meeting of the Oklahoma group, and the Texans

would get together, and the Californians. In fact, that's how we were photographed. I don't know who started this. It must have been the Marines or the Navy before we got into Zentsuji because they had already been photographed by the Japs in groups. And they did it according to the states, and I guess it followed that we would do the same. I still have photographs of this Oklahoma group, the Australian group, the English group, and everybody in camp that was photographed.

Marcello: I meant so far as maybe two or three or four guys who would be real close friends and who might look out for the other ones . . .

Adair: Oh, yes . . .

Marcello: . . . and this sort of thing . . .

Adair: . . . like that, very definitely, oh, yes. My best friend, Colonel Cliff Hines, who is retired now in Oklahoma City. And it's amazing how these come about. I had known Cliff before the war in the Philippines on Luzon up on the coast. I met him one day just by accident at a gun emplacement, and he was from Oklahoma and we got to talking, and this captain that was in charge of the gun emplacement was from Oklahoma. And then later, I ran into him in a Camp Cabanatuan, and we became very close friends. And actually, I think he saved my life one time when I was in Rokuroshi. I'd say I was very near death because I couldn't eat. I couldn't eat for a few days. I just about died because I was so weak. And I couldn't keep my



rice down, so he pulled out a can of butter one day. This was many months after we'd been issued any Red Cross parcels. He'd saved this small can of butter maybe for some reason like that. And he pulled this out and put it on my rice and I started eating again. I would have died, I think, but this started me eating again, and I got my strength back, what little strength I had.

Marcello: Was the cold weather a factor in Japan?

Adair: It very definitely was. When we arrived in Zentsuji on January 15th, up to that point they had issued one bucket of coal. They had coal stoves in each room, and they'd been issued one two-gallon buckets of coal per day which meant that after dinner in the evening they would build a fire and keep warm a couple hours before bedtime. Once . . . one week after we arrived they took the stoves out. There were too many of us. There had only been, say, 300 in there, enlisted men and officers. And we were over 300 ourselves, and it made close to 700 people and they were running short of coal. So we had coal fires about one week and then no more fires. So we froze in the wintertime. (Chuckle)

Marcello: What sort of . . .

Adair: . . . sitting around and huddled up in groups trying to keep warm.

Marcello: What sort of clothing did they issue you to combat this cold weather?

Adair: Well, shortly after we arrived there, they issued us . . . in fact the other men had already received woolen uniforms. But some of those boys brought in their uniforms, those from Wake. They were allowed to bring them. See, the Navy captured them, and they were much better off for this. They did go through some combat, of course, before they were taken but not like it was in Bataan. It was very short because there were not very many of them there. So they issued us these British woolen uniforms that they had captured in Hong Kong. So they saved our lives, the British overcoats, you know, the topcoats. Other than that, we would have frozen. I don't think we could have survived without them.

Marcello: Did you ever have very much contact with any of the foreign contingents? I'm speaking now of British prisoners . . .

Adair: Oh . . .

Marcello: . . . or perhaps, New Zealanders . . .

Adair: . . . sure. We had about 100 Australians, Australian officers in Zentsuji and probably 100 British officers and French from French Indochina, very few, some French officers, one Canadian officer, oh, two or three Javanese officers.

Marcello: Did you ever have very much contact with these foreigners?

Adair: We lived right with them. The Australian officers were intermingled with our officers, they and the British.

Marcello: Oh, I see. You were all in the same . . .

Adair: All according to rank, according to rank.

Marcello: I see, I see. In other words, in your barracks, then, there were these foreign officers and what have you.

Adair: Yes, right.

Marcello: Did the Americans get along with them fairly well?

Adair: Oh, yes, the Australians especially . . .

Marcello: How about . . .

Adair: . . . they're just like we are . . .

Marcello: How about the British officers?

Adair: Oh, we got along very well but not as well as with . . . in fact the Australians didn't get along with the British as well as they did with us. We were more alike than they are.

Marcello: I was just wondering because I know that most of the enlisted . . . in fact, 100 per cent of the enlisted men simply disliked the British soldiers . . .

Adair: Well, I'd hate to put that on record (chuckle) . . .

Marcello: . . . with whom they'd come in contact . . .

Adair: . . . because I'd had some friends who were British who were nice guys. They weren't like the Australians, let's put it that way.

Marcello: Well, the major gripe of these American enlisted men was the lack of sanitary standards and so on among the British troops, especially the British troops.

Adair: Well, this could have happened in other camps but not on ours. Our sanitary conditions were as near perfect as they could be because we ran a clean camp. We kept it clean. Now, in these

working camps that were much worse than ours, anything could happen, and I wouldn't doubt that at all. No, these were all officers, and very high-type men, very fine men. It was just a matter of personality. If you don't like the British, you wouldn't like these guys. I haven't anything against the British.

Marcello: I see. Let's talk about the events leading up to your eventual liberation, now. I'm sure you can remember those fairly well.

Adair: Very well. On August 16th, which was after the two atomic bombs were dropped--we didn't know this had happened--on the 16th--that's the day, incidentally, that the officers were being forced to go out and fertilize the land using human feces. This was a "no-no" with us. We just refused to do it. They had asked for volunteers to do it, and after we refused they had ordered us to do this. Just one day it happened. The next day I think I was on the roster to go out myself which I was dreading very much. This was the 15th. On the 16th, the Japanese commander ordered that no officers were to do this dispensing of this fertilizer because they knew we would lose face. On the 17th they ordered that officers would work. No one would work; everybody back in the barracks. Well, we knew that something had happened then. We knew that things were coming in close; we just felt it; it was in the air. The Japanese were nervous. But on the 17th they told us and I think on that same day we got hold of a Japanese newspaper and the

headlines were red and according to our man who interpreted, it said that the Americans had used unfair weapons, unknown weapons, too. We knew that there was something big going on because the Japs were very nervous. That was on the 17th. We sat there in the barracks and sweated for five days. It was the 22nd, I guess.

Marcello: You thought they were going to kill you?

Adair: No, no, no, no. They left us alone. They didn't come near us. On the 22nd they told us the war was over. This was eight days after the war was over. They didn't know what was going on themselves, and they were afraid, if they did know, to tell us because we'd kill them. Before they told us the war was over, in the meantime they had all the troops removed and only left civilians there. There were no guns in sight at all. They might have had them hidden, but a few Japanese civilians were all that they had left. We knew by then that the war was over, but we didn't know for sure until the 22nd.

Marcello: Well, what did you do after they had given you the word that the war was over? What were your own feelings, if you recall?

Adair: I can't remember exactly that day what . . . they gave us more food. As of that day they gave us more food. Whatever they had they gave us double rations of rice and vegetables. And a couple days later they were told to send a truck down to pick up more food, down below in the valley. So that's when they heard about the atomic bombs. They were told down there by

some Red Cross people. Hell, nobody knew what an atomic bomb was. We had some smart engineers there. One was a Naval Academy graduate. He had been on that trip, and he told us it was an atomic bomb, and then as an engineer tried to explain to us as best he could. But he even didn't know much. And he said it had to do with the atom. That was about all he could say. And then we were told that they were to fly in supplies, and our B-29s would drop them. And we sat there waiting for food. But we got more food, of course. They brought in more rice and more vegetables, and we had plenty of food as far as what they had available. And then it must have been a week later . . . we were ordered not to leave this place until they had a recovery team come in and take us off. They were afraid the Japanese might kill us or we'd kill the Japs. So about a week later, they started flying these B-29s in early morning, trying to come in over . . . we were on a mountaintop, and clouds sat right down over the mountain. We could hear them come over, but they couldn't come in, couldn't come down under the clouds for fear of hitting the mountains. And we were just sweating this out for several days, hoping they'd get down and drop us some food. Finally, they came in, and I later heard the pilots talking about these flights. They took their lives in their hands coming in under these clouds on these mountaintops because they only have that 200 feet clearance, and B-29s are big planes. But they finally came in one day. And the

colonel told us or decided that we would all get outside of the compound and let them drop it in the compound. But then he decided that might not be best. He then thought we had better tear up some sheets that they had somewhere--they got them from the Japanese, I guess--and make a circle, a target outside of the camp, and we'd stay inside so we wouldn't get hit. Everybody would be concentrated inside the compound. Well, this was fine except the B-29s were coming in so fast and hurriedly under the clouds that they didn't hit the targets. Maybe they couldn't. They dropped the supplies by means of parachute rigs. God, it was a madhouse. It was like a bombing. You could see a fifty-gallon drum coming down on a parachute, and it would break loose from the mooring, and it was like a bomb. You could hear it. Woooooo. Man, in one camp they killed an American. Fortunately, nobody was hurt. But I saw a fifty-five gallon drum hit close to a Japanese woman that was . . . there were some Jap maids down there in the Japs' office. And she turned white with fear. She didn't know what was going on anyhow. And when we got down there to it, I thought it had hit her because it looked like blood scattered all over the place. It was ketchup. It had one-gallon cans of ketchup in the thing and Double Mint chewing gum. I'll never forget the cases and boxes of chewing gum and ketchup all over it. (Chuckle) It was a mess. But they dropped tons of food in there, and this was one of the

funniest scenes that you will ever see in your life--these guys eating.

It was pathetic, but it was funny. We were ordered to bring all the food in. I think I was put in charge of the storage house for all the food, and everyone was ordered not to eat anything until we got it all in there, and then we'd divide it up and pass it out. There was plenty of food, no problem. But finally, the colonel couldn't stand it any longer, and he said, "Just eat all you want to." And this was a mess. This one man had a two-by-four on the ground. I had to pass by him. He had canned goods open, like canned string beans, green peas, fruits, peaches, all lined up there. And he had a spoon (chuckle) and took a helping out of each. Chocolate bars, I ate probably twenty chocolate bars. That's all I would eat the first day.

Marcello: I understand a lot of the prisoners craved sweets for some reason.

Adair: My lord, yes. That's why I ate all that chocolate, and all the candy I could get, I was eating. I just craved it. A lot of the guys got very sick. I didn't, though, fortunately. But that night at the latrine, it was a steady stream going to the latrine because of all this rich food they were eating. Nobody died from it, fortunately. But, pot bellies, you should have seen them. And for two or three days they just (chuckle) . . .

Marcello: When did you have your first contact with the liberating



troops, then?

Adair: Just a few days before we were taken out . . . well, that's when these troops . . . it wasn't troops actually. It was a recovery team, they called it. It was two doctors, two nurses, three or four cavalymen of the 1st Cavalry Division with Tommy guns. And that was the troop that came in to get us, but actually it was just a team to check us out physically. They arrived suddenly, and we saw them coming in the truck, and everyone went out to the gates and watched them. We were most impressed with the nurses. Two women came. They were yellow as pumpkins. And the first thing somebody said, "Look at the cosmetics they're using." We knew nothing of Atabrine, never heard of it. We'd heard of it, maybe, but we knew nothing of it. They didn't have it before the war. During the war they couldn't get quinine to combat malaria, so they invented, I'd guess you'd say, Atabrine which is a synthetic. And it turns you yellow. And these two girls just turned yellow. And we couldn't believe the cosmetics they were using because we thought that was what it was. And then they told us it was Atabrine. But when they arrived and got out of the truck, they just stood there. Nobody moved. We knew who they were, but it was just one of those things, and finally one of the guys broke the ice by going up and grabbing the girls. And these doctors had come in there, of course, to check us. They checked us out, of course, as fast as they could, just to check

the ones who were real bad. All of us were in bad shape, but I mean as far as a disease or something like that. But they brought in alcohol, of course, grain alcohol. I thought I'd throw this in because it is a wild story. They brought in this two pints of alcohol, pint cans. And when they finished checking us out, one of them turned to me and said, "Could you find some juice of some sort, some grapefruit juice? We're going to mix a drink out of this alcohol." I said, "I don't think I can manage that." I went down to the galley and got some juice, and I got a Japanese civilian to get me some ice. He brought some ice from the village. We got roaring drunk, of course, right off the bat. The doctors went off to bed; they were tired. I got some buddies of mine and we got drunk. We hadn't had anything to drink in four years, of course. It was very weak, but it didn't take much . . .

Marcello: It didn't take much . . .

Adair: . . . it didn't take much, a couple of mixed drinks, and you were drunk. So we ran out of alcohol, and I decided we ought to have a party that night. So, we went down to the village . . .

Marcello: You could come and go when you wanted?

Adair: Well . . .

Marcello: Or you just did anyhow . . .

Adair: . . . we were ordered by our colonel not to go into that village until the next day. This was the first day we were allowed to

go down there--just wander around and look, but not to bother anybody. They were afraid to do that because they were afraid the civilians might uprising, you know, and kill us or something, and they didn't know what they'd try to do. But we took chances that they wouldn't, and sure enough they were as nice as they could be down there. They'd lost the war and naturally they were smiling and bowing and scraping. But we went down and asked--we had an interpreter with us--and I asked if he could get us some saki. He said, "How much do you want?" And I said, "Well, how much can you get?" He said, "I'll see." This clown brought back enough saki to fill a washtub. And he had a cup sitting there and anybody that wanted saki could come by. (Chuckle) We got the whole camp drunk. You've never seen such a wild bunch of people in your life. That night we built a bonfire. I went down to get permission to build a bonfire, went to the colonel who was an Air Force man. He was young, not as young as I was, but he was a pretty young man for a colonel. He'd taken over the Jap headquarters, and I went in . . . he was pretty stiff himself. And I went in and saluted and stood there at attention as well as I could being drunk, "Sir, I'd like to build a bonfire." And he very seriously said, "Adair, just as long as you don't burn down the camp, build all the fires you want." So we had those long poles all around the camp that were the fence, and we made a teepee-type bonfire. It went up about fifty feet or

sixty feet in the air. We later heard from the interpreter that the villagers thought we were going to burn the country. They thought that we were going to come down and burn the village, scared the hell out of them. We had no idea they'd think like this. So we were all drunk, and we decided to do an Indian war dance. And this really did scare the hell out of them. You could hear it all up and down that valley. Some Englishman had an accordion, and another one had a trumpet. And I got a five gallon drum and made a drum out of it, and we had a band, and everybody was dancing. You never saw such wild . . . like a bunch of kids, just like a bunch of kids.

I'll never forget this one guy from St. Louis. He's now a stockbroker, I understand, in St. Louis. He was dancing around doing the jitterbug. Before the war it was the jitterbug, and he was doing a dance, clowning, drunk out of his mind. And we were all applauding, and somebody yelled, "Take it off, take it off!" like you would, you know, for a stripper. This person just, he was just kidding. But he started doing a strip, and you have never seen a funnier sight in your life. He was funny-looking anyhow. All of us were skinny and had pot bellies and everything, you know. And took off everything but his shorts, you know, just peeling them off to the tune of one of the old strip things. And it was a riot.

All night long this went on, just snake dancing through the barracks, just drunk out of our minds. It's a wonder we

didn't all get killed. There was a well being dug down near the Jap headquarters, and one of the younger officers passed by this well, and there was noise coming out of the well. It wasn't very deep, maybe eight or ten feet. And he heard this voice, and he looked down there, and there was a colonel that had fallen in there. He was drunk and had fallen in (chuckle) this thing. And this man wouldn't help him out. He told me, "He's down there in the well, and I don't want to help the bastard out." I said, "You got to help him. He'll die down there." I said, "I don't like him. I'm not (chuckle) going to help him out." There wasn't a man he didn't like. He was drunk or else he wouldn't have said that. We had to go down there and get a rope and haul this poor, drunk (chuckle) colonel out of there.

Marcello: Did you ever think to take any revenge on any of the . . .

Adair: Not in . . .

Marcello: . . . Japanese guards and so on?

Adair: . . . not in our camp. They did in some camps. I understand . . .

Marcello: I guess a lot of them took off, didn't they . . .

Adair: Yes . . .

Marcello: . . . as soon as the word came in.

Adair: . . . all except one sergeant. The military left our camp. And this happened to be a pretty mean sergeant. He'd slapped some people around. So I'm surprised somebody didn't slug him,

to tell you the truth. But everybody was so happy to get out of there that they felt that they could turn in the report and get him later, which they probably did.

Marcello: As you look back on your time as a prisoner-of-war, what do you think was the key to your survival?

Adair: I've often thought of that, and I'm afraid there was no key except possibly . . . everyone had a desire to live. There's no doubt about that. You probably had to believe in fate. Well, I don't know. And I haven't decided, to tell the truth.

Marcello: Well, apparently you couldn't give up because the other prisoners said those who gave up are still over there yet. Could you tell us about the day that you officially took over the camp?

Adair: A Japanese officer came back into the camp. He had left the camp for several days. He came back in and no doubt was ordered by his superiors to turn the camp over officially to our senior officer. And we had a flag waving and it was a very, very touching ceremony.