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Interview with  
Mr. J. B. Garrison  
September 18, 1970

Place of Interview: Amarillo, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald Marcello

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Oral History Collection

John Breckenridge (Brack) Garrison

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald Marcello

Place of Interview: Amarillo, Texas

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Brack Garrison for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place in Amarillo, Texas, on Friday, September 18, 1970. I'm interviewing Mr. Garrison to get his reminiscences while he was a prisoner of war in Japan during World War II. Now, Brack, I think the first thing we ought to talk about before we actually get into your experiences in the Japanese prisoner of war camps is . . . well, would you give us a brief biography of yourself, when you were born, where you were born, your education, and so on.

Mr. Garrison: Well, I was born in Hollis, Oklahoma, October 14, 1920. And my family moved here in 1930 to Amarillo, and, of course, I've been in Amarillo ever since. I went to elementary school here, Amarillo High School, a graduate, and, of course, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1940 before I had an opportunity to go to college.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you decide to enlist in the Marine Corps?

Mr. Garrison: That was sure a pretty uniform (chuckle).

Dr. Marcello: (Chuckle)

Garrison: No, a friend of mine, Kenneth Wright--Nita (Boynton), you know him. Maybe you know Kenneth.

Mrs. Bounton: Uh-huh. I know him.

Garrison: He was working at the drug store . . . what, Post Office Drug?

Mrs. Boynton: I think that's right.

Garrison: Post Office Drug. And I went down to visit him one day, and this Marine Corps recruiting sergeant came in. And the next thing I knew we were both at the post office and decided that we needed some travel, adventure and romance. So that's how I enlisted in the Marine Corps.

Mrs. Boynton: What did you get most of?

Marcello: Travel, adventure, or romance?

Garrison: More travel than anything else (chuckle).

Marcello: How old were you at the time you enlisted?

Garrison: Oh, I was nineteen.

Marcello: Did you ever have any thoughts at that particular time that eventually the United States would be getting into a war?

Garrison: I think all of us knew that we were headed in that direction. Everybody seemed to think so. They didn't know when, but everybody was fairly sure in their own mind eventually we would become involved.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Garrison: San Diego.

Marcello: San Diego. How long were you there?

Garrison: About two and a half months, yeah, about two and a half months.

Marcello: Was there anything that stands out from your experiences in boot camp that you'd perhaps like to talk about?

Garrison: It was rough (chuckle). The first thing I saw when I got inside the Marine base there at San Diego was Jack Pittman.

Mrs. Boynton: I remember him.

Garrison: And he was cleaning a barracks, and he looked up and saw me, he said, "Brack, what in the hell are you doing here?"  
(Chuckle) That's . . . I guess that's probably . . . the rest of it was just, oh, like every Marine goes through in boot training. It's hard work, but it isn't as bad as it's pictured.

Marcello: It always looks easier when you look back on it, too, I think, than it did at the time. What were you trained for at that particular time?

Garrison: As a .30 caliber water cooled Browning machine gunner. I was the number two man on the gun.

Marcello: What's the number two man do?

Garrison: He carries the weapon itself. The number one man carries the tripod.

Marcello: I see. Who does the firing?

Garrison: Number two man.

Marcello: Number two man does the firing then. Where did you go from San Diego?

Garrison: Directly to Guam.

Marcello: You went directly to Guam.

Garrison: Well, we stopped in Hawaii, Honolulu, for three days and then stayed one day in Wake and then went on to Guam.

Marcello: Do you have any idea when you landed in Guam? I'm sure you probably wouldn't know the exact day, but perhaps the month and the year?

Garrison: I believe it was in March of '40 . . . 1940 when we landed in Guam.

Marcello: What was Guam like at that time?

Garrison: It was a paradise.

Marcello: In what way?

Garrison: Well, it was more in its original form at that time than, of course, it is now. I came back through there after the war, and I could hardly recognize the place. The natives were very naive and friendly and . . . there was only 128 of us there in the Marine Corps.

Marcello: There were only 128 Marines on Guam when you were there.

Garrison: Yes, when I was there. And there was about 20,000 natives. Now, there was some Navy personnel there. There was about 150 Navy personnel, most of 'em comprising of corpsmen and doctors. They had a hospital on Guam primarily for the Navy. This is primarily what the hospital was there for.

Marcello: I see. Could you identify your unit? That's something I forgot to ask earlier.

Garrison: Well, I was separated from the Second Marines on detached duty

on Guam.

Marcello: I assume, then, you were under the Navy's command on Guam.  
Is that correct?

Garrison: Oh, no, no, no. No, we had our own base. We were at the  
Sumay end of Guam where the . . .

Marcello: How do you spell that for the benefit of my transcribers?

Garrison: S-U-M-A-Y. And the Navy complex was at Agana, which is  
A-G-A-N-A, and the hospital . . . of course Agana was the  
largest city. In fact, half the population of the island  
lived in Agana.

Marcello: Why were you sent to Guam? Did you know, or did they tell you?

Garrison: I volunteered.

Marcello: You volunteered to go to Guam?

Garrison: Yes. I volunteered twice in my life, and I've never  
volunteered since (chuckle). It took twice to learn.

Marcello: Why did they want to send this particular detachment of Marines  
to Guam?

Garrison: Well, in the Marine Corps they had . . . you had a turnover,  
you know. And I don't know what it is now, but in a six year  
tour of duty you had to do, I believe, two years of the six  
overseas, either on a ship or China or Guam, Hawaii, wherever  
they happened to be.

Marcello: Obviously, if they had only sent a hundred and some odd  
Marines to Guam, they really weren't expecting any sort of  
trouble or anything at that particular time.

- Garrison: Well, now I was part of a group of, I believe, fifty-four--and now I could be corrected on this, I may not have the numbers right--as replacements for men that were already there. They came back when we arrived.
- Marcello: What did you do at Guam? I mean, what were the Marines doing is what I meant to say?
- Garrison: Primarily the Marine Corps in a situation like that are for guard duty, police protection of the island. This is primarily what the Marine Corps did on Guam. Our Marine base was on a nine-hole golf course, and they had outposts in various parts of the island. And you did guard duty on merchant marines that were unloading our naval ships, any kind of guard duty that was necessary to do. Basically, that's all we did. It was a paradise.
- Marcello: Well, we won't get into your personal experiences on Guam. Were there any preparations taken when you first arrived there so far as guarding against any Japanese attacks?
- Garrison: None. None whatsoever. In fact, I'll carry it a little further. We heard December 7th that Pearl Harbor had been attacked, and that we were to expect an attack at any time. And our commanding officer . . . we were painting barracks at the time, and our commanding officer said to continue painting the barracks because there was nothing on Guam that the Japanese would want. And about an hour later they bombed us.
- Marcello: I see. What were your initial reactions when you heard about

the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor?

Garrison: Oh, it wasn't really much of a surprise to us as you would imagine because the island of Orote--I believe that was the name of it--was a Japanese base. We could see Orote from Guam. And with binoculars you could see . . . you could distinguish activities and things like that. And we could tell that there was more going on over there all the time.

Marcello: That is, as December the seventh approached, you saw more activity taking place on this island. Do you recall how that's spelled?

Garrison: I think it's O-R-O-T-E. I could be wrong on that.

Marcello: You say that this is in seeing distance of Guam?

Garrison: Oh yes, on a clear day you could see it with a naked eye.

Marcello: Was it principally a Japanese naval base?

Garrison: Oh yeah, that's what it was.

Marcello: And obviously an airfield also.

Garrison: Yes.

Marcello: So the attack, of course, took place on December 7, 1941. Now when did the Japanese first hit Guam?

Garrison: They bombed Guam on December the tenth.

Marcello: On December the tenth. When did the initial attack come?

Garrison: You said December the seventh.

Marcello: Simultaneous with the attack on Pearl Harbor they also began their attack on Guam.

Garrison: Right.



Marcello: What occurred first? The air attacks?

Garrison: Yes.

Marcello: Where were you at the time they attacked?

Garrison: In a foxhole. (Chuckle)

Marcello: What were your initial reactions when the planes started coming over?

Garrison: Well, our orders were not to resist, actually. To give you an idea of the armament we had, we had two .30 caliber machine guns.

Marcello: When you say "we," this is the entire Marine detachment?

Garrison: The entire detachment had two .30 caliber machine guns, water cooled. They were Brownings. And we had one Lewis air cooled. And that's all. The rest of it was rifles. So we didn't really have much to fight with.

Marcello: In other words, it is safe to say that you were inadequately prepared for any kind of a Japanese attack?

Garrison: Right. I could stand corrected on this, but the reason for there being military, U. S. military personnel on the island was that should the Japanese invade the island, if there were no U.S. troops there it wouldn't be an act of war. So that's why we were there.

Marcello: I was going to ask you how come you didn't evacuate the island, if you were so inadequately prepared.

Garrison: They wouldn't let us.

Marcello: How long did the air . . . like you say it started out as an

air bombardment. How long did that continue? Do you recall?

Garrison: Well, it continued for the full three days as well as war-ships.

Marcello: And in addition you were from being pounded offshore by war-ships.

Garrison: Yeah.

Marcello: What did you find worse? The naval gunfire or the bombs?

Garrison: Oh, the naval gunfire by far.

Marcello: Why?

Garrison: You can't see those things. That's bad.

Boynton: Did they kill a lot of natives at that time, too?

Garrison: Well, I can't adequately answer that because we were never allowed to communicate with the natives in any form. After they took the island . . . of course, they weren't in contact with them. Everybody was hiding, I'll promise you.

Marcello: Sure. Something else I was thinking about here. Were there any Japanese nationals on the island? Do you recall any Japanese?

Garrison: Yeah, there was, but I don't know how many. There was quite a variety of nationals . . . people. There was Chinese, Japanese, and that's really the only two I can think of at the moment besides us.

Marcello: You said when the plane first came you were in a foxhole. Where was this foxhole? Was it close to the beach or in the hills?

Garrison: No. I said I was in a foxhole. We were still painting

barracks when the first plane came over.

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: And of course when they dropped the bombs we scattered, and we went to the boondocks. That's actually what we did.

Marcello: By the boondocks, do you mean up in the hills?

Garrison: Up in the boonies, up in the hills.

Boynton: You didn't have any firepower to stop them?

Garrison: Oh, we didn't have any rifles. I just had a rifle.

Marcello: In other words . . . so far as distance is concerned on Guam you were fairly far away from the beach then.

Garrison: Oh yeah. Well, now Guam, you know, is a real rocky island, but to be on the beach you got to be down . . . you have to climb down . . . over there where we were at the main base, I guess it was around an 8 or 900 foot clift to take you down to the beach. So you weren't too far away as far as distance is concerned, but you were a long way from it as far as getting there.

Marcello: I see. Well, if the Americans weren't resisting very much, I wonder why the Japanese continued the bombardment for three days? It was three days before they actually landed troops.

Garrison: Well, they tried to land troops before that, but now we did put up some resistance. That's not what I intended to imply. But on Guam at that time there were only seven places on the entire island that you could even get a row boat in there. They had seven channels to come in.

Marcello: So you only had seven places to defend, in other words?

Garrison: Right. So we could set up in those seven places and do quite a bit of damage.

Marcello: Did the Japanese take quite a few casualties in attempting to land during that three day period?

Garrison: They did. You bet.

Marcello: How about the American casualties?

Garrison: They were minimal, but we had some.

Marcello: Was there an airfield on Guam?

Garrison: Not at that time.

Marcello: There was no airfield, no planes in other words. They had complete control of the air?

Garrison: Oh yeah. There was no American resistance whatsoever.

Marcello: Were there any naval vessels there? Any American naval vessels?

Garrison: There was a . . . what was the name of that? There was one naval vessel there that was a patrol boat. And I can't remember the name of it.

Marcello: Well, whatever, it certainly could not offer any resistance whatsoever to the Japanese.

Garrison: No, no, they went to sea. They offered what resistance they could, but they went to sea, but they got sunk . . . two or three hours later.

Marcello: So therefore it was on December the tenth when the Japanese finally landed. It was an amphibious assault.

Garrison: That's right.

Marcello: Where were you at the time they landed? Were you still up in the boondocks?

Garrison: Oh, yeah. We'd heard . . . well word came down from the governor who was a captain in the navy and governor of the island that the island had surrendered. And we had been led to believe that the Japanese took no prisoners. So nine of us decided that if we were going to get killed we might as well be shooting back. So we didn't surrender. Nine of us got all the ammunition and rifles and weapons that we could accumulate and what stores we could get and went out in the hills. And we stayed out there for about eleven days, I guess it was.

Marcello: And this was . . . now you took off for the hills on December the tenth?

Garrison: Yeah.

Marcello: On December the tenth you took off for the hills. What did you . . . what did you do while you were in the hills?

Garrison: Well, we foraged for food. Tried to live, because if we ran into a Japanese patrol, well we . . . that's when I did my fighting.

Marcello: I see. What sort of food did you find back in the hills?

Garrison: Oh, my goodness. In Guam, we killed pigs, deer, iguanas, and there's all the fruit and vegetables, if you know what to look for . . .

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: It was no problem there. Had there not been that large a group of men, I might not have turned in. I think I could have gotten by with just myself and another man. There was nine of us altogether.

Marcello: When you took off for the hills, did you then start looking for the Japanese, or did they try to come to you? I mean, were you setting up the ambushes and so on?

Garrison: No, no, we stayed real quiet. We didn't try to . . . .

Marcello: You tried to avoid the Japanese, in other words?

Garrison: Right. Because all we went out for was to . . . until we found out something. Well, the word finally came down to us through some natives, that we run into, that were friendly to us, that we knew, that they were moving, that they weren't going to kill everybody, and that everybody was going to Japan, and that anybody that was left on the island would be shot on the sight. Of course, we knew that anyway. And they asked all of us to turn in. So we decided that that would be the best thing to do.

Marcello: So describe the procedure how you actually went about surrendering.

Garrison: Well, we took all of our weapons, took the bolts out of them, and threw them in the ocean so that they would be rendered useless to anybody and marched in with a white flag. (Chuckle) We marched within 100 yards of the main Japanese headquarters before anybody saw us. Nobody said a thing to us. We just

marched along the road there.

Marcello: Did you see other soldiers? Other Japanese soldiers?

Garrison: Oh yeah. There were Japanese soldiers all over the place.  
(Chuckle)

Marcello: They didn't even . . . they didn't even bother you?

Garrison: They didn't even notice us. We were waving this white flag, you know. And they finally saw us, and, of course, they started jabbering.

Marcello: As you look back on it, do you think that was the smartest thing you did . . . that you did surrender, rather than to continue resisting?

Garrison: Oh yeah, 'cause we couldn't have . . . for one thing we wouldn't have had enough ammunition. There ain't no way. Oh, we could've managed the ammunition, but Guam is so small that at one time or another they're going to trap you. There just wasn't enough area for hiding.

Marcello: So what happened? You marched into this Japanese headquarters and you surrendered. What happened from there?

Garrison: They had a list of all the weapons that were on the island. Well, we had a machine gun-- .30 caliber. They wanted to know where it was. So we took them to it. Of course, we stripped it and scattered the parts all over the place. There was no way to put it together. And we showed them all our rifles with the bolts out. They lined all of us up and said they were going to shoot us all because of what we had done. And we

said, "Well, there is nothing we can do about it. We done it."

And this . . .

Marcello: What did you think about this when they said they were going to shoot you?

Garrison: Well, they set up the machine gun and loaded it. And finally we thought, "Well, this is it. This is as far as we go." And when this colonel--I believe he was a colonel, I'm not really sure what his rank was--finally decided that we weren't withholding anything else, he told us we were good soldiers. Took us all into the main group then, back to Agana.

Marcello: Were there many Americans beside your group that had resisted . . . I mean that took off for the hills also?

Garrison: One other group . . . they were Navy. There was four of them, maybe there was three. I believe there was three of them. One of them was a radioman, and I believe he wrote a book. He was court-martialled after everybody got back. He was supposed to set up a radio upon Mt. Tanya, I believe is the name of it.

Marcello: Do you want to spell it?

Garrison: No, I won't spell it. T-A-N-Y-A I imagine is the way you spell it.

Marcello: Okay.

Garrison: He was to set up a radio to keep communication with the marines from Agana, the Marine base and he didn't do it. He took off. And he's the one that made it through the war. I can't remember his name right now.



Boynton: You mean he was never captured?

Marcello: He was never captured?

Garrison: No, he wrote a book. Made a fortune. But he was court-martialled after a bunch of us got back, because he didn't do what his orders were. I can't remember his name.

Marcello: Incidentally, what type of Japanese troops landed on Guam? Were these Marines?

Garrison: Marines.

Marcello: These were Japanese Marines. I suppose they were crack units.

Garrison: You bet. They were good units. And they were real big men. They weren't small like you think of the Japanese. They were real big men, 6 foot, good-sized people.

Marcello: Let me ask you this. Another question which comes to my mind is also concerning the natives. Were they loyal to anybody?

Garrison: They were loyal to us. They hated the Japanese.

Marcello: For any special reason?

Garrison: Well, they raped and everything else. They set up houses for their soldiers and gathered up all the native girls. The natives were harder on the Japanese than we were.

Marcello: Is that right? (Chuckle) After you surrendered, where do they take you then? And then after they threaten you with death and so on, they apparently took you with the rest of the American prisoners?

Garrison: Yes. They took us to an old church in Agana. That's where they had everybody billeted.

Marcello: In a church?

Garrison: Yes. In the grounds that surrounded it. They had a fence up. We could go inside or out. We did nothing there in Guam. In fact, we didn't even eat much.

Marcello: How long were you in Guam, that is, after your capture?

Garrison: After I turned in, we were there about . . . twenty days.

Marcello: Twenty days. Describe some of the things that took place during those twenty days. Were there any atrocities committed by the Japanese?

Garrison: Not to us.

Marcello: Any cruelty?

Garrison: Not to us. Other than the fact that we didn't get much to eat . . .

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: But . . . we were helpless. There was nothing they could do to us. We were on an island and knew nothing. We had no information concerning the war, and they knew it. And there was nothing to do to us there.

Marcello: What did you do during these twenty days? Just sit around . . .

Garrison: Right.

Marcello: . . . and wait to be transferred some other place?

Garrison: That's right.

Marcello: Were there any . . . were there any . . . no I guess there were no foreign troops at all taken, that is, there were no . . .

Garrison: No. No.

Marcello: . . . British troops or anybody like that. They were all Americans.

Garrison: All Americans.

Marcello: You were there for twenty days, and then where did they send you from there?

Garrison: They sent us to Japan.

Marcello: You went directly from Guam to Japan?

Garrison: To Japan. Right.

Marcello: Describe the trip to Japan.

Garrison: Well, we went on a . . . I don't know the tonnage of the vessel. But it was called the Argentina Maru.

Marcello: The Argentina Maru?

Garrison: Right. And it was a luxury liner. Of course, we went down . . . we stayed down right above the engines. And . . . but they had a big bar and . . . we went by all of it and got to see all of it, but we went down in the basement, and we had to stay down there . . . they let us up on deck once a day to get some exercise, to get a little sunshine, and back down the hold.

Marcello: About how many of you were there at this time? How many were down in that hold?

Garrison: Well, there was approximately 300 service personnel and approximately 400 civilians. Now these were primarily contractors who . . . the government had started blasting out

Apra harbor. And that's what these fellows were there for, and they got captured. Now there were about 400 of them. We were all in one hold. All . . .

Boynton: Were they Americans?

Garrison: Yes, uh-huh. They were all Americans.

Marcello: What were conditions like in the hold during that trip to Japan?

Garrison: We slept on steel, didn't have any beds.

Marcello: Quarters pretty cramped?

Garrison: Yeah, you slept side by side.

Marcello: What were the provisions like--food . . .

Garrison: Food?

Marcello: . . . and so on, yeah.

Garrison: Well, I'll put it this way. I weighed 140 pounds when I turned in, and by the time I got to Japan I weighed 110. So, they were very meager. And we, of course, were unaccustomed to rice.

Marcello: This is essentially . . .

Garrison: Essentially, that's right.

Marcello: . . . the food they gave you?

Garrison: And with a few sidearms of . . .at the time, we didn't know what they were, weeds is what we thought they were. But they were what they call dicons. And they're pickled radishes, big ole' white radishes that they cut up and pickle, and they were pretty hard to eat, even as hungry as we were.

Marcello: Is there anything else from the . . . any incident on that trip to Japan which stands out in your mind that you'd like to talk about?

Garrison: Yeah, there's one thing. We had no escort. There was twelve Japanese soldiers aboard that ship that had weapons that we knew of. And we came up with a scheme to take this vessel over, and go to Australia. They were all . . .

Marcello: When you say . . . when you say we, this was a . . .

Garrison: a group . . .

Marcello: . . . a small group . . .

Garrison: . . . a group of service people. They were both Navy and Marines. And our officers were in on it, our Marine officers. When we got all of our plans completed, we had a detail to go to radio shack, to the quartermaster, to the bridge, to the engine room, to the guardhouse where the guards were. We had it all figured out. And we knew somebody was going to get killed. We figured they would. But we figured it was worth it. But when we presented this plan to the captain, who was the governor of the island, he turned it down. He wouldn't let us do it.

Marcello: Why . . . what were his reasons for . . .

Garrison: Too many civilians aboard.

Marcello: . . . turning down the plan?

Garrison: But, there was a lot of civilians in on it, too. They wanted to do it themselves, but the captain wouldn't let them do it.

Marcello: I see. How many people were in on this plot?

Garrison: I'd guess about sixty-five or seventy.

Marcello: What thoughts were running through your mind, now that you knew . . .

Garrison: We wanted to do it . . .

Marcello: . . . that you were on your way to . . . I mean . . . you knew you were on . . . you knew that you were on your way to Japan?

Garrison: Right.

Marcello: What thoughts were going through your mind at this time?

Garrison: Our thoughts were to if . . . of course, until the captain stopped us, well, we were going to try to do something.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: But, of course, he wouldn't allow us to. And at that time, we respected the authority of . . . higher authority, I'll put it that way. And we wouldn't override it. If I had it to do again, I'd go ahead and do it. (Chuckle) Wouldn't pay any attention to it.

Marcello: Did you strike any close friendships during this period? Let's say from the time of your capture onward? The thing I'm getting at, did the nine of you that surrendered all at one time, did you more or less stick together as a group? Were they your closest friends?

Garrison: No. They were at the time, but there was no way you could stay together. You went where the Japanese sent you. But . . .

you did, even if you went from one camp to another.

Marcello: I'm speaking now of on the trip over to Japan. I assume you were all together at this time, yet.

Garrison: Oh, yeah . . . yeah, the bunch of us stayed together.

Marcello: And . . .

Garrison: I think I could probably name them: Hinkle, Orr, Rucker, Stansberry, \_\_\_\_\_, myself, of course, \_\_\_\_\_, and I can't remember Ross's last name . . . one more . . . Bender, a fellow by the name of Bender. But I got separated from them after I got to Japan.

Marcello: I'm sure you did. What was the morale like on the ship going over?

Garrison: Terrible! Nobody knew what was going to happen. We didn't know what to expect, what to look forward to. We didn't know . . . well, we didn't know anything.

Marcello: You had no outside information . . .

Garrison: Oh . . . none . . .

Marcello: . . . whatsoever. You were getting none.

Garrison: Nothing.

Marcello: Did you know that you were going to Japan?

Garrison: Well, that's what they . . .

Marcello: . . . did you know that much?

Garrison: . . . told us. That's what they told us. That's all we knew. We just had to go by what they said.

Marcello: About how long did it take you to make the trip from Guam to Japan?

Garrison: About ten days.

Marcello: Were there any close calls, that is, so far as the ship being strafed by American planes . . .

Garrison: We didn't see anything . . .

Marcello: . . . or subs or anything like that?

Garrison: We didn't even have an escort. We . . .

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: Nothing happened along that line, not a thing. Because that was completely out of range of any Americans at that time.

Marcello: Right.

Garrison: There was nothing in Honolulu, either.

Marcello: The United States was still reeling, in other words.

Garrison: Right. Right.

Marcello: Did the prisoners contract any diseases during this period? What was medical condition, the physical condition, rather, of the troops at this time?

Garrison: Well, everybody had lost considerable weight, and there was . . . I don't believe we had any dysentery outbreaks while we were on this trip, because we're speaking of only a month.

Marcello: Uh-huh, sure.

Garrison: And it hadn't had time to progress into anything like that. So as far as being sick or anything like that, we didn't have any outbreak of any kind.

Marcello: I see. Now approximately when did the ship land in Japan? And where did it land?



Garrison: Well, it landed in about ten days. I'm not real sure about that time, now. But we landed on the island of Shikoku.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: . . .at Zentsuji, Japan. This was the first prison camp that was formed in Japan. There was about twenty-five or thirty mixed Australians and Americans who had been captured on Wake . . . or from Wake, and I don't know where the Australians were from. They were already there when we got there. But the balance of us formed this first camp.

Marcello: Would this have been somewhere around February, 1942? Is that a safe assumption, or was it after that?

Garrison: Oh, no. It was in January.

Marcello: This is January of '42?

Garrison: Yes, January '42.

Marcello: Must have been near the latter part of January '42.

Garrison: One month to the day after the island surrendered we left for Japan.

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: So we left on January 10 and got there about January 20.

Marcello: I see, I see. Approximately January 20, 1942?

Garrison: That's right.

Marcello: They took you directly to this prison camp. Had it already been built?

Garrison: Yes.

Marcello: What was it like? Would you describe it?

Garrison: Well, it was a three-story barracks that the wind blew through. You could see through from the eaves. There was no weather stripping at all. It gets cold in Japan. Heck, it snows there and everything. So we didn't have much heat. And they had a big ground that . . . about the first month we didn't work. We had exercise periods and they were decent to us, really. They didn't feed us much, but they weren't very hard on us because the Japanese were taking all the South Sea Islands. We got English printed newspapers about everything they were taking and about the glory of Japan . . . all this. Now, we were interrogated from time to time by some Japanese officials. Of course, at that time we didn't know who they were.

Marcello: Who was running these camps?

Garrison: The Japanese were.

Marcello: Well . . .

Garrison: The Army.

Marcello: The Japanese Army.

Garrison: Right, the Japanese army was, yeah. And our guards were all veterans. And they felt sorry for us. They didn't treat us bad at that time, but they were getting all this loot from every island that they . . .

Marcello: Things were going good for the Japanese.

Garrison: Things were going good, that's right, and they were proud of it. They were bragging and, of course, trying to make us feel bad.

Marcello: Do any of these Japanese stand out as individuals at this time?

Garrison: Not at that time. It was a little too early for that.

Marcello: Were you allowed to have any contact at all with the Japanese civilians?

Garrison: Oh, no. No, no. Not then. Not right then. Now a little later we did.

Marcello: What sort of security precautions did the Japanese take at this initial camp?

Garrison: Well, you had a big fence that you couldn't climb over. (Chuckle) And that's about all they needed. It was about twelve or thirteen feet high with barb wire slanting in and all this.

Marcello: Did they at any time ever conduct any searches of your barracks?

Garrison: Oh, yeah. But we didn't have anything for them to find.

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: There's no way we could have anything.

Marcello: And I assume they took roll every morning or at least once a day or something?

Garrison: Every morning.

Marcello: Did they make any threats about what they would do to prisoners who did attempt to escape or who did escape and were later captured?

Garrison: Oh, yeah, sure. They informed us that anyone who escaped would be shot immediately. No, they didn't go into that war bit yet. That came later. But anybody that tried to escape

would have been shot.

Marcello: What did you do while you were at this camp? You said the first month you did very little at all.

Garrison: Well, they formed labor battalions, and we reclaimed mountains for farmland. It's pretty hard to explain but their mountains . . . this is how they acquire more farmland. They have to go up the sides of mountains to do it. And we had a rake--a little hand rake--and a little wicker basket, opened on one end closed on the other--a little round wicker basket. You took this rake, and you raked through this grass and gathered up the rocks and let the dirt stay there. And then when you got a basket full of this you went down and dumped this at a wall. And you would go back . . . they would pull the dirt from the top end to the bottom end to make a level area. And when you got it so wide, then you formed another wall . . . you moved up a step and formed another wall. And then they put water to it. This is how they got extra land. This is all we did there the entire time I was there.

Marcello: What was the typical working day like?

Garrison: Oh, five until dark.

Marcello: Did you have a certain quota that you had to meet each day?

Garrison: Oh, no. There was no way you could do that on this. Later we did on other details, but there is no way you could . . . like I said, in the beginning these people weren't hard on us. They really weren't. They didn't feed us what we needed to eat to

keep our strength up. For example, when I was in Zentsuji we got to write a letter home, the fourth month we were there, I believe it was. We had a fellow that had been a carnival wrestler, and the last time his folks had seen him he weighed 240. So he wrote a letter back to his folks that went through-- we found out after the war that it went through. He wrote his parents and said that he was being treated fine and his weight was way up to 160. (Chuckle) And it went through. And so they knew that by that he had lost a lot of weight. Our bodies, or our systems, wouldn't assimilate rice and convert it to food . . .

Marcello: To energy . . .

Garrison: . . . to energy like the Japanese. Like any Oriental.

Marcello: In other words, let me ask you this. They were probably giving you the same amount of food perhaps that they ate, but . . .

Garrison: Correct.

Marcello: . . . your system simply couldn't take it.

Garrison: It just wouldn't take it. We lost weight on it.

Marcello: I think this is a point that needed to be brought out as far as . . . at least to keep the record accurate. They weren't deliberately withholding food from you. They were giving you exactly what they ate.

Garrison: Not in the beginning.

Marcello: I see. Did you get any other supplements besides rice?

Garrison: Oh, yeah. We had the dicots and \_\_\_\_\_. This is a bean-mash type thing. Once in a while a little piece of

smoked salmon. Some seaweed. Cured seaweed that they cured. It takes a long time to get accustomed to eating that stuff. I tell you it's pretty hard to eat.

Marcello: Well, was there any evidence of any sort of collaboration at this time? Did any of the Americans ever collaborate? That is, in order to seek favors from the Japanese?

Garrison: Not there. Not there. Not to my knowledge.

Marcello: Was the morale pretty good among the prisoners who were there?

Garrison: Oh, you couldn't have good morale in a situation like that.

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: We were all down.

Marcello: Were you receiving any . . . you said you were receiving news from the outside through this English language newspaper.

Garrison: Well, not from the outside, from Japan.

Marcello: The Japanese, yeah.

Garrison: The Japanese themselves. Which we in our own minds didn't believe was true. There was no . . . there was never at any time when I was in prison camp that I ever . . . that it ever entered my mind that the Japanese could whip us, ever, because we saw what they had, and we knew what we had. And it just wasn't there. The Japanese didn't have it.

Marcello: How long were you in this initial prison camp? This first prison camp?

Garrison: For six months.

Marcello: You were there six months. And while you were there, did you

mostly just work on recleaning these mountains?

Garrison: Yes, that's all we did there.

Marcello: What sort of diseases were the American troops experiencing at this time?

Garrison: Well, by this time we had, of course, lice. My goodness, you didn't have enough bathing facilities. You couldn't keep clean. There was about . . . about 800 people there, and you had one shower building that had a couple of showers . . . had, oh, maybe three or four showers in it. There was no way to keep clean.

Marcello: Were there any foreign contingents in this original camp?

Garrison: Yeah, there was some Australians, and there was a few Dutchmen. And I never did . . . you couldn't go from one barracks to another. When you were in your barracks you had to stay there. You couldn't go visit from one building to another. They wouldn't let you. So . . . and I wasn't in a building with any other foreigners. Personally, I didn't know much about them.

Marcello: Is there anything else that you would possibly like to mention about your initial stay in this first prison camp?

Garrison: Well, at Zentsuji, no, because they didn't mistreat us as far as punishment was concerned. There was no necessity of it. There was nothing we could do.

Marcello: Did the Americans ever attempt any sort of sabotage or any acts of sabotage?

Garrison: Not there . . . how do you sabotage a mountain?

Marcello: That's true. (Chuckle)

Garrison: There's no way.

Marcello: Everybody was working on these mountains in other words?

Garrison: Yes. Uh-huh. All the details were.

Marcello: Where did you go then from this original prison camp?

Garrison: Well, I went to Osaka.

Marcello: Osaka?

Garrison: Uh-huh.

Marcello: Now were you in the city itself?

Garrison: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what this prison camp was like.

Garrison: Well . . . our . . .

Marcello: Now when was this?

Garrison: This was six months after we got there . . .

Marcello: Well it would be about July or August, I suppose?

Garrison: July the tenth . . . everything that happened to me in Japan happened on the tenth. (Chuckle) I remember that. We left on the tenth of July for Osaka. And we got there in one day, to Osaka.

Marcello: How did they transport you from the first prison . . .

Garrison: By a . . .

Marcello: . . . camp to Osaka?

Garrison: By a boat, bus, or truck.

Marcello: Is Osaka on a different island?

Garrison: Yeah. And Osaka is on Honshu.



Marcello: Honshu?

Garrison: That's the big island. So we went across water to the landing area. And we were put on trucks and transported to our quarters.

Marcello: Is there anything about this particular trip that stands out in your mind?

Garrison: Not this. It was very uneventful. We just got on a boat, crossed the inland sea, and got on some trucks that were covered, of course. And we couldn't see anything. And then we were . . .

Marcello: Did they at any time ever exhibit you to the Japanese civilians . . .

Garrison: No.

Marcello: . . . in any way?

Garrison: No.

Marcello: Now by this time you had been split up from your friends?

Garrison: Yeah. They took eighty of us. And there was a Navy chief named Barnum. The entire time I was in Japan . . . we never had an officer other than at Zentsuji in our camp. There was always some enlisted man at the head of the American contingents, where . . .

Marcello: Was it usually the ranking enlisted man?

Garrison: Yes. Uh-huh, as a rule. This was a chief in the Navy named Barnum.

Marcello: B-A-R-N . . .

Garrison: B-A-R-N-U-M. And now we were quartered under a football stadium in the . . . what would be the locker room area of an American stadium. It was slanted and you slept at the end that was . . . (chuckle) closest to the ground.

Marcello: At the apex, right!

Garrison: And walked around out in the higher areas. Now there in Osaka we worked on general details.

Marcello: What sort of general details did you work on?

Garrison: Well, we worked on . . . we worked on everything. They had us split up in groups there of . . . ten to twenty men. I worked on what we called the "banana pile." There was sixteen of us. And we worked general cargo at the docks. And we'd unload raw rice one day, and Armour's corned beef the next, C & H Imperial Sugar the next, and Standard Oil aviation oil that was shipped over there in 1940, the next. It was just general stuff, maybe wine . . . but food stuffs, as a rule, was what we was on. But . . . the other details, we'd unload coal out of cars, or . . . they'd work slag piles at the steel mills or . . . just various and sundry things.

Marcello: Did they give you special identifying uniforms, or were you still . . .

Garrison: Oh, no . . .

Marcello: . . . wearing your army clothing?

Garrison: Well, at that time we still had most of our own clothes. But we eventually wore just regular Japanese army uniforms,

leggings and all.

Marcello: Did you ever attempt to steal any of this food you were unloading?

Garrison: That's all we lived for. (Chuckle)

Marcello: In other words, you consider that good . . . that was a good detail when you got . . .

Garrison: Oh, yeah.

Marcello: . . . on the "banana pile?"

Garrison: You bet. No, we stole food and took it back to camp for everybody. Being only eighty of us, we were a very close-knit group. And . . . a moment ago, you mentioned sabotage. And, boy, we did it there!

Marcello: What sort of things would you do?

Garrison: Man . . . everything. We were working on this dock one day and they were trying to get us to unload bauxite. And we weren't going to do it. And they messed with us for about . . . three days. And . . . because they had some army trucks on this. We weren't going to do it. We were going to have to unload these and we said, "No, we won't touch them." But anyhow, in this warehouse, when we finally started unloading this bauxite . . .

Marcello: Let me ask you this. How did they finally persuade you to unload the bauxite?

Garrison: They got the trucks out of the way. We wouldn't touch them until they got them . . . they wouldn't force us now. They

didn't force us at this time to do . . . they could have, but they didn't. They still were a little leery of us. You know, we were all big people to them in size and stature. We were a lot bigger than they were. And they still were a little leery of us, even though we were prisoners. But we finally started unloading this bauxite, and we had to go through this warehouse. And there was some great big crates that had . . . it looked like monstrous beakers that a chemistry lab would use. And right on the bottom of these things there was a mercury-filled bulb. None of us had any idea what it was. But we had a radioman in the bunch. I can't think of his name right now. But anyhow, he told us that they were used in radios, and the best thing we could do . . . and that to seal this mercury off, they used heat and pulled it out to seal it . . .

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: . . . so that the mercury wouldn't get away. And he said the best thing we could do . . . is when we go by with a load of bauxite is just reach out there and knock the tit off one of those things. And all the mercury runs out.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: And, of course, mercury at that time, I guess, was priceless. And we hadn't been working there two hours . . . and, of course, this mercury ran under the dirt. You couldn't even see it was there. And first thing you know, it was splashing.

(Chuckle) And you're just walking along there, and mercury was splashing everywhere! (Chuckle) And, of course, the Japanese begin to get inquisitive there: "What's . . . what's going on here?" 'Course none of us knew anything. And they couldn't pick out one American from another one. Just like we couldn't pick out one Japanese from another one in the beginning. Now later we got where we could tell whether they were Japanese, Koreans, or we could distinguish an individual. But in the beginning, we couldn't. They all looked alike. And we all looked alike to them. But we ruined a lot of beakers for them that day.

Marcello: Did they eventually find out what happened?

Garrison: No, no. We were dumb. We didn't know anything.

Marcello: There were never any punitive measures taken on anybody . . .

Garrison: Well, they tried. But we didn't do it. Nobody saw us. (Chuckle) They suspected it, but they didn't . . . they couldn't prove anything.

Marcello: Were there any other acts of sabotage that you committed?

Garrison: Oh, yeah. We were transferring some Standard Oil--aviation oil-- in barrels from a warehouse, and they started stacks of it on the ground, and then when they got it so far then they put runners up, and then you would roll up and put a second layer. Well, every once in a while we would see one of these bungs that had a ring of wet oil in it. Well, it would be a

little loose. You could unscrew it with your hand. Well, we would unscrew it to where just one thread was holding it, and we would roll it upon this second layer, and we would bump it against the next barrel pretty hard. And every time the bung would come out. But we would do it when the bung was on the inside so they couldn't see the oil running out. And it was a monstrous . . . it must have been, oh, a block or two long and half a block wide of barrels on the bottom row. Well, it took a long time for this oil to run out. Boy, the next day there was oil everywhere. And of course none of them could figure . . . they didn't even know who was on the detail. This is how lax they were in the beginning.

Marcello: I was just going to say, I'm surprised that even though they didn't know, or even though they couldn't pin-point exactly who had done it, I'm just surprised that they didn't just punish everybody period.

Garrison: They didn't do that to start with. That came later.

Marcello: Any other acts of sabotage?

Garrison: Well, that's the only ones that I was involved in. Well, yeah, if you could call this sabotage. This was a bunch of guys I was working with. We were called the . . . what's the Japanese word? Well, anyhow, there you had a certain amount of work per detail that you had to do. For example, this one group of guys . . . there were sixteen men unloading coal cars, and to start with these sixteen guys had to unload ten coal cars a

day. This was for their steel mill to make coke and things like that. It was powder coal. Then when they got these ten cars unloaded they were through for the day. Well, the guys started working a little harder and the first thing you know they were getting through at noon and going to camp. So one day instead of being ten cars there was twelve. They just continued and they increased it until there was fifteen. Well, then they called us (What did they call us? I should be able to remember that). Well, anyhow we were the detail called upon to straighten them out. So the next day instead of these fellows going to their coal pile, we went and they went to our "banana pile." Well, we unloaded three cars that day. That's all we could get done. I mean we used a . . . do you know how to use a "yoho pole" with baskets?

Marcello: Yeah.

Garrison: Well, this is how we unloaded this coal. You had one guy filling the baskets for you and several guys carrying it up planks . . . up and down the planks. Well, we would get our "yoho poles" crossways and knock the other guy off the plank, and, you know, everything. We did this and we would fall off the plank, we would spill the coal and everything. Well, for two days we did this. The second day we only got two unloaded. So they decided the best thing . . . they wanted their original group back. And they could unload ten, and they wouldn't increase it. Well, then we would go back to our "banana pile" then when

that's over. But every time something like that would happen, well, we would be called on to slow it down. For example, they got timbers in on barges and they had a group of guys that did this. And you carry one timber at a time on your shoulder. Well, you're supposed to carry that timber straight, you know, when you go up that plank. Well, they were unloading two barges a day. No, they were unloading from barges and loading two boxcars, two half cars a day. And then they were . . . Now they were getting through about two o'clock, so they increased it to three. So then they called on us. So we would go out there and we didn't get one unloaded because we would forget and carry that timber crossways and nobody could come down the plank. It was just one person at a time that could either go up or down. So we were called on to do that.

Marcello: The Japanese didn't take any punitive action whatsoever at this time when all these things . . . I mean these things were quite obvious, I assume.

Garrison: Not as a group. If you ever got caught they would punish you with a club.

Marcello: Suppose they caught you stealing food?

Garrison: They never did do it. They tried it, but they never did do it.

Marcello: What . . . were there any special food at that time that you had a craving for? Something that you really wanted?

Garrison: The Japanese canned the best tangerines you ever tasted in your life, and we stole them by the crates. I want to tell you



something funny that happened. There was a warehouse next door to this warehouse that we was working at, and the Japanese never would let us go in, and we wondered why. Well, we found a way in there one day, and this thing was full of 65 gallon drums of grain alcohol. So one day we got a carload of wine, port wine, to unload. Well, there would be a slat broken in one of those crates ever once in a while, and the bottle would fall out in our paths or something. And when we got through unloading this we had about 48 quarts of wine.

Marcello: For how many people?

Garrison: Sixteen of us. We had a place up in a big pile of rice, big stacks of rice, that was our little cache where we would put everything. So the next day when we came to work . . . they furnished us a big wooden keg of water with a big block of ice in it to drink. And it was our own. The Japanese wouldn't drink out of it, and we wouldn't drink out of theirs. So a guy sneaked in this warehouse, and he dumped the water out. A guy sneaked in this warehouse, and drew off a gallon of grain alcohol, put it in the keg. So then we started opening wine and dumping it in there and stirring it up real good. And gosh, man, in an hour we were "swaked." The Jap . . . the guard . . . we had three guards on this detail. And they came out, and said \_\_\_\_\_ . They wanted to know where we were getting this wine, so they looked over there in the water barrel. So they looked and said, "Ah So." So they got

a cup . . . well, to make a long story short, we carried these three guards back to camp. And three of us had their rifles on our shoulders. And we were doing close order drill right down the main street of that camp. And we never saw those three guards again. There was no place we could go except back to camp.

Marcello: Right. I would assume that there were never any escape attempts at all. There were no places to go, like you say.

Garrison: Later, there were some who tried, but never did pan out. I'll get in to that.

Marcello: Okay.

Garrison: All in all . . . Osaka was not a bad place. We generally became known as "Barnum and his seventy-nine thieves."  
(Chuckle) That's what they called us, before we left there. But we stole everything. Anything we could convert to food, we'd steal.

Marcello: Did your physical condition improve during this stay on Osaka?

Garrison: Gosh, yeah. I weighed 140 pounds, and I was hard as nails. But I was eating. Man, I was getting corned beef, all the sugar I wanted, and all the vegetables and canned fruit, anything you wanted that was available to us on this particular detail. And, of course, at that time they hadn't started a searching program when we would come into camp. They didn't . . . understand . . . I don't guess the Japanese people steal. But they didn't even think it would be done. And we got away

with it all that time . . . well, 'til right to the tail end of it. They began to watch us pretty close.

Marcello: What was the camp like at Osaka? I don't think we ever described the physical features of the camp.

Garrison: Well, it was under a football . . .

Marcello: That's right. You did tell me that. I'm sorry.

Garrison: . . . stadium. It was under a stadium. And it was slanted to the ground and we lived . . . and they'd just boxed in the outside of it. And that was our quarters.

Marcello: You remained there at that particular building the whole time . . .

Garrison: Right.

Marcello: . . . you were there.

Garrison: Right.

Marcello: How long were you at Osaka altogether?

Garrison: About six months.

Marcello: Did you strike any lasting friendships there among the prisoners themselves. Is there any . . . did you have any real close friends there?

Garrison: Yeah, this is where you really became . . . well, . . . you had friends . . . very, very close friends. And then you had one guy you lived with. And that's the way it was. You'd have eight or ten real close friends that you'd talk about old times and what you used to do at home. But with the eighty of us, we were such a small group that we were all pretty close-knit.

Everybody knew everybody pretty well with no more of us than there were there.

Marcello: What was the discipline like? What . . . I mean . . . as a group, eighty prisoners as you say were under Barnum, was . . . did discipline break down or . . .

Garrison: Oh, no, no. If a man . . . that's one thing about it, when eighty of us got together, we'd stayed clean. And nobody got out of line, because if somebody did, we'd straighten 'em up ourselves.

Marcello: I was just going . . .

Garrison: We had our own discipline.

Marcello: . . . just asking if you had your own discipline . . .

Garrison: Yeah.

Marcello: . . . that you imposed upon everybody else.

Garrison: We had certain rules. You didn't steal from anybody else. (Chuckle) And you didn't take advantage of anybody else. And it was just unwritten . . . just somebody . . .

Marcello: Now at this time, did you all more or less work as a team, or was it every man for himself?

Garrison: Oh, no. This was as a team. And . . . well, yeah . . . yeah it was still as a team then. We . . . because things weren't very bad. Then we were all living pretty good. 'Course we didn't like our circumstances.

Marcello: Were there any individual Japanese who stand out in your mind at this time?

Garrison: Not at Osaka. Not really . . . there was on the details that we worked at. But we hadn't been there long enough to learn enough Japanese to remember names. The people . . . I have one that stands out in my mind on the "banana pile." He weighed about 85 pounds, and I watched him carry a 500 pound bail of cotton from a dock up a 12 inch plank to a barge. It was amazing what those people can carry. They're not strong, but they know how to carry a weight, a load.

Marcello: I assume that at this time there was never any American bombing and so on. This . . .

Garrison: Oh, no.

Marcello: . . . was still too early in the war for that sort of thing.

Garrison: Let's see. Do you remember this incident where the submarine gun . . . in the sea . . .

Marcello: I know of it. I don't know that much about it.

Garrison: Well, that happened while we were in Osaka.

Marcello: What sort of a reaction did that get from the Japanese?

Garrison: Well, we didn't even know it happened . . .

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: . . .at the time, because we didn't understand enough Japanese to know. But there was a sudden flurry of activity in the inland sea area. Cruisers and destroyers started running up and down the place like this so we knew something had happened, but we didn't know what.

Marcello: Is there anything else about your stay at Osaka that you would

like to talk about?

Garrison: Well . . . no. Those were the better times, actually. But we were sent out of there because the Japanese considered the eighty of us "eight balls." (Chuckle) And out of this group of eighty, which I was part of, they sent sixty of us from Osaka and replaced us because they couldn't handle us . . . to Hirohata, which is a steel mill.

Marcello: Want to spell that one for us? (Chuckle)

Garrison: H-I-R-O-H-A-T-A . . . Now this was . . . about 4 miles from a city called Heneji, which is H-E-N-E-J-I. And we worked in a steel mill there. And that's when it started getting bad. About this time is about when they stopped their advance, and we started in the . . . Allied forces started pushing them back a little bit.

Marcello: In what way did things start to get bad at the steel mill?

Garrison: Well, for one thing, you can't eat iron ore and coal. (Chuckle) That's the bad part about it.

Marcello: In other words, you were back to the rice diet primarily?

Garrison: Right. And that's exactly what they wanted us to eat. And . . . oh, of course, we could occasionally find some food on one of the ships that we could steal. We occasionally would get some raw rice, but every time we got the opportunity, we did. But it was so seldom that it really didn't help us a lot. Because people get like animals when they're hungry all the time, and you'd stuff yourself just like a cannibal. And it

really wouldn't do you any good. If you'd use your head and spread it out a little bit, well, then it would do you a little bit of good.

Marcello: I assume that you started to lose weight once again.

Garrison: Oh, yeah. You bet. And it was very hard work. I worked on four details, and we got out before daylight, of course. And we were at work by 5:30 a.m. We were unloading ships with iron ore for the steel mill. And they used big overhead cranes with big clams on 'em that would go in each hold and dig the ore out until it got down to the deck. Have you been on a ship?

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: You know how . . . the . . . what do you call them . . . the levels go down into the hold?

Marcello: Yes.

Garrison: Well, when they'd get to the bottom level, there would never be any ore in the upper levels. It would all be piled in the bottom part of the hold. And, of course, it went back underneath these areas, and this clam could only get so much of it. Well, once they got down to the deck . . . cleared out . . . and got all the ore out that they could get, then they would take these ore buckets that would hold 3 tons per bucket, and they'd put four buckets in a hold. And you took a shovel--four men to a bucket--and you shoveled this bucket full of ore. Now while all this was going on, this crane was going around and picking up each bucket, taking it upstairs and dumping it in a

hopper and coming back down and replacing this bucket and moving over to another one. Well, you had to have your bucket full when that crane got there. And if you didn't you wished you had because they, at this time, began to break out the "reform bats."

Marcello: The what? I'm sorry.

Garrison: The "reform bats."

Marcello: The "reform bats!" (Chuckle)

Garrison: They were clubs about . . . I guess about half of as big around in diameter to a hard ball, baseball bat. And they had it printed right on it: "reform bat" and it was burned in there. And they used it. And, of course, shortly thereafter there began to be a few Allied bombings on the island. And by this time, we no longer had veteran Japanese guards. They reached down to the bottom of the barrel and got sixteen, seventeen year old Japanese boys and filled them full of Bushido and Japanese patriotism and whatever you want to call it. And they were mean. Boy, they'd jump you if you even blinked your eye, they'd jump you. But we still managed. We were still smarter than they were.

Marcello: Were you ever subjected personally to any of these beatings?

Garrison: Oh, yeah.

Marcello: Why did you get these beatings? What offenses did you commit?

Garrison: Well, I'll tell you what. 'Course, we stole everything we could get our hands on. Everything. If we could get the purser's



where the money was, we'd steal every dime, every yen there was in it. Now we had a real good black market going on. And by this time, we all . . . I say all of us . . . a certain group of us could speak enough Japanese to get by.

Marcello: Did you have any contact with any civilians . . .

Garrison: Oh, yes. We did.

Marcello: . . . at this time? You did now.

Garrison: At this time we did, yeah. Because they had Japanese coolies and Korean coolies that were all working these ships the same as we were. We were just additional labor. And, of course, by this time we didn't really have a say-so in what kind of work we did because we had to do what they told us to do . . .

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: . . . or you got a beating in one form or the other. And it got real rough. And it just . . . if you shovel iron ore and coal all day long every day and weigh 90 pounds, it's tough. There's hardly any way to put it in words. You learn how to pace yourself. And you learn certain tricks of how to use gravity to help you load one of these buckets. In other words, you'd dig back into the side of one of these wharf areas, and then you'd shove that bucket right up against it and get up on top and break a big chunk off, a big loose chunk off, to fill the bucket so you wouldn't have so much to do.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: You learned certain tricks to it. But it was hard work. But

we'd steal sugar, we'd steal cigarettes, we'd steal anything we could get our hands on.

Marcello: Where did the opportunities come to get these things?

Garrison: Through the bilges.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: Through the bilges. You'd be surprised how far up and down a ship you could go through the bilges. And we had to learn this the hard way. We'd crawl right through the bilges to get to another place. Of course, the rest of the guys that were in the hold with you . . . there were sixteen of us in the hold . . . they would cover for you. For example. I'll give you an example. We got in a storage room one day that had a lot of raw rice in it. So, we all started making individual trips. Now, they never did the entire time refuse to let us go to the bathroom. If we said we needed to go to the bathroom, they let us go. So we used this as an excuse for one man at a time when we would locate some rice or sugar or something that we could eat. Why, the word would get around the hold, and then it would get over to another hold. We had a system. We worked at it. And one guy at a time would go, and he would load up with stuff. Well, he didn't have to go to the bathroom. But anyhow one day we got in a storeroom that was full of rice. And so we all started . . .and by this time we were wearing Japanese uniforms, leggings. They were searching us every day when we came in, and we still got the stuff in. We made little

sacks to fit the calves of our legs and we would fill them up with sugar, rice, or something and then form it to fit the calf of your leg and wrap your leg. And they couldn't tell it. There was no way they could feel because it just felt like the calf of your leg. So we still got stuff in but not enough stuff to really help us.

But this is one incident, to go back to it. We found this rice, and one at a time we had gone up and got all of the raw rice we could carry safely back to camp. Well, this fellow named McCune, he was in the Navy. So he went up there, and he was gone for the longest time. And we said, well, "They caught him. We won't see him again." Well, in about another hour here he comes. And we said, "What in the hell happened to you?" He said, "Well, I got in the damn storeroom, and I heard 'em coming." There was rafters in the storeroom. Now this guy swung himself up on the rafters and hung there the entire time the Japs were searching that thing. They knew somebody was in that storeroom. They didn't know who it was, but they knew we had found it, and they knew we had gotten into it. And he hung right above their heads the entire time, and they never saw him. And he got out.

They caught me in the storeroom one day, and . . . of course, I had a nickname in prison camp called "Peanut." I was the only guy in camp who could go through a porthole. And I could go through a porthole. Well, they caught me in the

storeroom, and I went through a porthole . . . and they locked the door on me. This Japanese civilian that was part of the crew caught me, and he slammed the door and locked it, but I went out a porthole. I looked out the porthole first, and fortunately I could reach up . . . it was close enough to the deck that I could reach up and get a hand hold. Well, I went out that porthole, right on up on the deck, down in a hold, and they could never . . . he never could pick me out.

So we got away with a lot of stuff like that. We got . . . one day we found some sugar. And we drug a 100 kilo sack of sugar through the bilges to the hold. And you can get drunk on sugar. I don't know whether you know it or not, but you can eat sugar until it gets bitter, and it's no longer sweet. And if you add water to it, it will get sweet again, and then you get drunk. You get drunk as a billy goat.

Boynton: You guys sure could drink.

Garrison: Yeah, man. Well, you wouldn't eat that much sugar here. But we were starved to death for anything sweet. Man, we stole cigarettes. Just before the end of the war, this fellow Hinkle and I--R. M. Hinkle--we got aboard a transport, army transport, and they got in the purser's office and stole fifty thousand yen. And we were buying squid, octopus, caviar-- anything.

Marcello: Now you could buy these things . . .

Garrison: We had the biggest black market going you ever saw here at this

time. We could speak enough Japanese, and those people were in hard enough shape themselves that they would do anything themselves to supplement their income because inflation had set in in Japan. And if you had the money you could buy things. Whatever they asked we paid. We didn't care. It didn't make any difference to us. But I went quite a ways. You know, I went all the way to the end. As the war progressed it got real bad.

Marcello: How long did the working day last? You said you started about 5:30.

Garrison: 'Til dark.

Marcello: 'Til dark. Describe the prison compound that you were living in at this time.

Garrison: It was about like the previous one was in Zentsuji. There was no weather stripping to speak of. Of course, we had been out of shoes by this time. Some of us went barefooted and they made thongs, what we call thongs here. Make them out of wood, a big old block underneath 'em--something to keep our feet off the ground. You would have to make your own. We'd scrounge rope or anything, so that we just wouldn't have to walk barefooted.

But as the war progressed and they started bombing more, you would come back to camp at night and suddenly one of the Japanese guards would grab somebody and start beating him. We didn't know why. We didn't have any idea why. We come to find

out later the planes would come over and bomb and kill three or four of his family something like that. It got real bad. And then, of course, they started searching us and any little thing--didn't make any difference what it was--I've been in the ice . . . in the tank many times.

Marcello: Describe the tank.

Garrison: Well, it just looked like an old horse tank, and they would always do this in the wintertime. And it snowed there about like it does here in Amarillo. And they would put blocks of ice in this tank for punishment. And they'd get two other American prisoners and make 'em naked . . . throw you in this tank and hold you under until you quit kicking. Well, course, we outsmarted them a little bit on that. We learned real quick to offer no resistance, and all of a sudden start kicking and blowing bubbles and quit like we'd passed out. And they just throwed you out on the ground. If you came to alright, if you didn't, alright. Well, we learned that pretty fast.

Marcello: What did you usually have . . . of what were you usually guilty when they did this?

Garrison: We were guilty. (Chuckle)

Marcello: I mean . . . of doing what? What other forms of punishment did they deal out?

Garrison: Well, of course they had the bat.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: And they had the ladder.

Marcello: What was the ladder?

Garrison: Well, they'd take a regular ladder, just a single ladder, and put it on a pair of barrels. Then you would have to get up there and kneel on this ladder with just this part--I don't know how to explain it--just below your kneecap on one side of the ladder, on one edge of the ladder and your arch--the top of your foot extended--on the other side, and you'd have to sit up straight on this. Well, that's probably the worse pain that I ever went through. And you could stay there for ten minutes. And the pain was . . . you couldn't explain it, you can't put it in words. It's all . . . it'd consume you. Pretty soon you'd pass out. If you would fall off, they put you back up. And they bring you to and put you back up. And if you don't stay up there, they beat you 'til you bleed. I've been beaten to the point that I had no control of my bowels and didn't know what was happening. It got real bad.

Marcello: Usually then, most of these punishments came as a result of your stealing or else because . . .

Garrison: Because of the bombing . . . most of it . . .

Marcello: . . . as you say because of the bombings.

Garrison: Most of it was a result of the bombings because we didn't really get caught stealing very often. We were a little too smart for them. But we still had . . . now, of course, I've jumped around a lot. They moved . . . about four months after we went to Hirohata, they started bringing the boys over from the

Philippines. There was sixty of us, as I remember. They brought 400 and . . . a little over 400 men from the Philippines then. Man, they brought everything: dysentery, lice, crabs, scabies, everything there was, they brought it. But we were a small group, and if someone didn't stay clean, we cleaned them. And they didn't do it but once. Because even if you couldn't do anything but just accidentally fall in the bay, you could get yourself washed off a little bit. And we all did it. But if there was some guys that wouldn't, why we'd take care of it ourself. We had our own discipline until those fellows came. And then it was so big, we couldn't control it. And it really got . . . it just got . . . we had this dysentery just ran riot. People would just die by . . . they had every kind of disease you could have, being concentrated like that.

Marcello: Right.

Garrison: Boils. One of the best friends I had had a boil on the back of his neck and it broke inside, and he was dead just like that. Killed him just deader than a door nail. One fellow . . . now our morale, we kept our morale up pretty well because . . .

Marcello: How did you keep your morale up?

Garrison: Those airplanes. And they kept our morale up because they kept getting thicker and thicker and thicker.

Marcello: And you knew that the Americans . . .

Garrison: We knew they were . . .



Marcello: . . . were getting nearer and nearer and nearer.

Garrison: Course, by this time we no longer had newspapers . . .

Marcello: . . . uh-huh.

Garrison: . . . or any news. But all you had to do . . .

Marcello: . . . you didn't need the newspapers . . .

Garrison: . . . didn't need any. But it got kind of bad because we had Japanese uniforms on. And those navy planes came hedgehopping over those little islands in the inland sea and the radar wouldn't pick them up.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: And they'd strafe us just like they'd strafe anybody.

Marcello: I was just going to ask you . . .

Garrison: . . . we hunted . . .

Marcello: . . . if you were strafed by the bombers.

Garrison: Oh, yes. We hunted a lot of holes. (Chuckle) But it got so bad, for example, this one sergeant, and I can't remember his name right now, . . . our food . . . you can't imagine what it was like. You got three little rice balls a day and maybe with one piece of dicon to go with it, pickled radish to go with it. And that was a meal. And maybe we got that three times a day. Or I remember one time that some dead whales washed up on the beaches. We ate the blubber from the whales. We didn't get the meat, we got the blubber. You can't imagine what that stuff tastes like. Terrible! Even in those conditions it was hard to eat. But it just got real bad.

But this one sergeant one night got his little ole' ball of rice, and he looked at it for a minute. And he said, "It's just not worth it." And shoved his rice over to his buddy and laid down in his sack, and he was dead the next morning. He just gave up. He said, "It's not worth it." But he was a big man. Boy, the big people was the ones that really had it bad. I weighed 85 pounds when I got out. But I know a lot of guys that would normally weighed 225-230 would weigh 110 and 115 pounds. And they was absolute skeletons. Their skin looked transparent. It looked like you could see their bones underneath their skin, their skin was so transparent.

Marcello: Were there ever very many attempts at suicide? Or were most of the cases just like the sergeant's, just giving up?

Garrison: No . . . just like . . . a lot of guys would break their arms so they wouldn't have to go to work. They'd get their buddy . . . they'd lay it up against something, and he'd pick up a timber and "pow" break his arm something like that.

But we had one guy--and I think this is an incident that should be told--they had a guy named Hammel. Well, I've got to give you a little background on this. An insane person in Japan is pampered, I'll put it that way. They could walk in anybody's house and get food because they're insane and they're some kind of a god. They're something I don't understand, though. But anyhow, they left an insane person strictly alone. Well, one day this Hammel . . . we were lined

up ready to go to camp. Well, we had this one officer that we called the "White Bull." There's no way to describe that man. There's no way. He was inhuman. It was an absolute pleasure to him to whip somebody. Just . . . it was his greatest love. Well, he walked past Hammel . . . and we had a moat that went around . . . all the way around the camp, full of water to keep us from escaping. Course, we went anytime we wanted to go. We'd sneak out at night and go pick vegetables and everything. But he walked past Hammel, and Hammel knocked him in the moat. We thought, "Well, Hammel's dead. (Chuckle) He's gone. That's it for him." Well, the "Bull" came out, and they started beating on Hammel. And they beat him down, and he knocked the "Bull" back in the moat. And finally they quit. And course, he started jabbering and just . . . completely out of his head. This went on for two or three days. And finally, those Japanese people were convinced that he was insane. They moved him out of the barracks, put him in the brig--what was supposedly the brig--gave him a brazier of charcoal so he could stay warm, fed him real good food the entire time \_\_\_\_\_ . Now he'd go out naked in the snow with a big ole' hat on with strings tied in it with a piece of wood tied to here and a rock here and a piece of glass over here--just nutty as a fruitcake. The day peace was signed, he came around shaking hands with everybody. And said, "Fellows, I just didn't think

I was going to make it." (Chuckle) And there was nothing wrong. He's the greatest actor that's ever been. (Chuckle)

Marcello: What sort of medical facilities did the Japanese have for the prisoners?

Garrison: None. No, I take it back. They did have. If somebody got real bad, they'd go to the hospital. But they had no sterile techniques. A good percentage of the time the guy never recovered if he ever had to go to the hospital. We didn't have any medicine to speak of. You just toughed it out. If you got well, you got well. If you didn't, you didn't. That's all there was to it.

Marcello: You mentioned a while ago that there was a moat around this particular compound. There was no fence?

Garrison: Oh, yeah. There was a fence, too.

Marcello: There was still a fence.

Garrison: Oh, yeah.

Marcello: How did you get out? Just climb over the fence?

Garrison: Climb under the fence.

Marcello: Climb under the fence.

Garrison: Just climb under the fence and swim the moat.

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: It was about 10 or 12 feet wide, I guess.

Marcello: Also, a while ago you mentioned the "White Bull." How did he get that name?

Garrison: Well, that's just what we named him.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: And that's just . . .

Marcello: There was no special reason for that particular name?

Garrison: Well, he was the most vicious person I've ever seen. And he did things that he was not ordered to do. He did it for just his own pure pleasure. And we had a commander . . . now this guy was an enlisted man. He was . . .

Marcello: Now this is something I was going to ask you. Who usually was responsible for most of the cruelty, the officers or the enlisted men?

Garrison: Well, let me go back here now. After we had been . . . after the fellows came from the Philippines, this colonel came in and made a speech to us in English. And in this speech . . . now this was at the time when Allied forces were bombing and bombing and bombing and bombing. And they was getting real bad. And he made a speech to us. And he said, "From this point on, you will be treated as inhuman as is humanly possible." That's what the man . . . I remember those words. I never will forget them. And we were. There was no mercy from that point on. There was dog eat dog, and you trusted no one. You couldn't.

Marcello: Were you receiving anything from the outside at this time, any mail, any Red Cross packages, anything of that sort?

Garrison: I've forgotten how often we'd get a letter. It seems to me like twice a year we'd get a letter. We could receive one

letter. Now the Red Cross mailed packages to us. The best example I could give you is one time they mailed enough packages for five packages per man. We got one-eighth of one package, and that's all we got and they took the rest. They had them in a storeroom, and they'd brag, you know. They'd show it to us: "Look what we got." And take out. And you had shoes, good shoes. And they took it all. We didn't get anything. It got real tough then.

Marcello: How long were you at this particular prison compound?

Garrison: The balance of the war.

Marcello: The balance of the war you were there?

Garrison: Yeah.

Marcello: Are there any other individual Japanese officers who stand out at this time?

Garrison: Yeah, there was . . .

Marcello: Other than "White Bull."

Garrison: . . . the fellow whose saber I had.

Marcello: Alright, let's hear about the story of the samurai sword and how you . . .

Garrison: Well . . .

Marcello: . . . how you acquired it.

Garrison: This Japanese man, we called him Sikidushi San . . .

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

Garrison: He was a . . . he was a . . . well . . . Sikidushi San . . . I'll spell it (It's probably wrong). S-I-K-I-D-U-S-H-I- and

then another word San, that means person.

Marcello: S-A-N ?

Garrison: S-A-N means person. And he and the "White Bull" were the two that got a great deal of pleasure out of punishing us. They'd beat you with clubs until you were unconscious. Whatever they decided to do they did it. We know they weren't ordered to do this. Well, when peace was signed, we received word from the Swiss Consul that we were to be the occupation troops there until we were relieved by regular personnel. And the next day, the 29th . . . of course, by this time the Japanese people had . . . we hadn't worked in about four days, and we knew the war was over. We knew that . . . this was before the Swiss Consul called because we didn't go to work. So when they called, they told us that they would call when peace was signed, the minute peace was signed. And we were to take over and be the occupation troops in this area, this sector, until we were relieved by regular personnel. The next day, the 29th . . . and I'm telling you . . . oh, no, no. The navy planes found us first, the corsairs. Those guys would come over our camp, and they wouldn't be 10 feet higher than the fence. They'd be hanging out of the bombay throwing cigarettes . . . with their landing gear down, the flaps down. They'd go just as slow as they could and a 'waving and a 'hollering, and oh, man, it was . . . it was a sight! But then in a couple of days, the 29th, they came over and they started dropping food, clothing,

supplies, ammunition, weapons. They dropped this stuff in 55 gallon barrels. Two of them welded together with the metal bottom in one end and the top cut out with crossed two by fours to hold it. They dropped it on a parachute. Have you got any idea how many barrels a B-29 can drop?

Marcello: I bet bunches.

Garrison: I have no idea, but anyhow the first time they came over they started dropping those barrels. Some of the chutes don't open. Well, we started running to the barrels. The first plane that dropped . . . after the first plane we ran away from it, because if one of those barrels didn't open when it hit the ground, it was just like a bomb. They blew the whole back end out of the prison camp. The whole fence went out. One went through the galley roof, and we didn't have a galley. It was gone. It just exploded. But after this drop, the lead plane came over, and they opened the cockpit up in the front and somebody threw a can out with a handkerchief on it for a parachute. A Pet Milk can with a part of an apple stuck in it to weight it. And it just so happened that I was the first one there, and I picked it up and it was a note with the list of all the crew on that B-29. The first man on the list, if I remember the name exactly right, was Lieutenant James L. \_\_\_\_\_, 1413 West 14th, Amarillo, Texas. He's an insurance man now in Amarillo. And I'm not sure it's James L., but I see him ever once in a while.



Marcello: How do you spell that last name?

Garrison: I could look it up in the directory.

Marcello: We can do that later on.

Garrison: Yeah, I can look it up. But he's here, still. He still talks about it every time I see him.

Marcello: I assume that now as all these beatings and punishments and so on were taking place in this last prison camp, you all were keeping tally. You had some scores to settle after the war was over.

Garrison: Back to the sword.

Marcello: Right. Incidentally for the record, I guess we should mention here that before this interview started, you brought in a samurai sword which you apparently had liberated from a Japanese officer, and that's what we're talking about right now.

Garrison: No, he wasn't an officer. This was an enlisted man.

Marcello: A Japanese soldier.

Garrison: Yeah. Well, of course, we took over, and naturally we started looking for specific people. We were going by the railroad station one day, and I just happened to glance in there, three of us, and there he was. Sikidushi San. Well, he saw us about the time we saw him and he ran. He ran out one side of the building, and we were a little bit behind him, and he ran into a Japanese house. So we got up there, and the fellow that owned the house came out and wanted to know what we wanted, and

we said, "We want that man that came in the house." He said, "Well, he isn't here." We said, "Well, now we saw him come in." And he said, "No, no, no he's not here." He denied it to the bitter end. We said, "Well, I'll tell you what. If he isn't there, it wouldn't hurt him if we burned the house would it?" So we lit a match, and we were going to burn that house, and he turned around and went back into the house and called upstairs, and this guy came out. And so then we commandeered a truck in the process of all this. So we took him out in the hills, and I got the samurai sword. And we tied him up to a tree, and we reciprocated him and left him there. And I don't know whether he lived or not.

Marcello: When you say you reciprocated, what did you do?

Garrison: Well, we had the same "Reform Bat" that they used.

Marcello: I see.

Garrison: And we used it.

Marcello: How about the "White Bull?" Did you ever catch up with him?

Garrison: Never caught him, but he got caught and was punished as a war criminal.

Marcello: As a war criminal?

Garrison: Right. Yeah, the FBI like to have scared me to death about a year after the war. I walked home and there sat a FBI agent in the living room. And I thought, "What have I done?" But he came for information on him. But all this wasn't bad now. There's some more things about this . . . I have skipped over a

lot of stuff. You, of course, know that. There's no way you can recall all of it, but we had no officers in camp, so this is after we were occupation troops. And I promise you, we would walk four abreast down the street and hope a Jap wouldn't get off the sidewalk. We would hope they wouldn't. But these officers came to camp, so they put a curfew nine o'clock, which we paid no attention to whatsoever. Well, some guys came in a little late one night, and some Japanese people in this little town of Hirohawa had jumped them. We cleaned that town out. Everyone of us went to town, and when we got through there wasn't a Japanese person left in town. We cleaned it out. So they left us strictly alone. They knew we were pretty mean.

But we stayed there for a while and these fellows decided that they were going to Yokohama. Well, this train was \_\_\_\_\_ immediately. And the Japanese never heard of a bum, I don't guess, riding the rails. Well, Ligon and Rucker went over to \_\_\_\_\_ to the water tower where they had stopped for water and got aboard up on top one of the cars and waited until the train left. When it got out of town they walked across the top of the boxcars. Of course, they had weapons, and they jumped down in the engine and told the engineer to stop the train. (Chuckle) He stopped the train. And these two guys unhooked this engine (chuckle) from the train and road to Tokyo! (Chuckle) Wide open! (Chuckle) So it wasn't all bad. (Chuckle)

Marcello: Are there any other incidents or individuals that stand out that you would like to talk about at this time?

Garrison: Oh, not in particular. Like I said, it's hard . . . Yeah, there's one thing . . . the night of July 4, 1945, . . . the American . . . the Allied forces started bombing Henji. This was one of the largest army camps in Japan. They bombed for six hours. They started at eleven o'clock at night. Mind you, this was about a mile from where we were. Course, we had to have our curtains drawn and everything, black out curtains. And the Japanese all went to foxholes. And we just stayed in the barracks. Well, we opened . . . soon as they got to the foxholes, we just opened the blackout curtains. And we were cheering . . . and they bombed for six hours. And that city burned for two weeks. And when they got through, when it finished burning, the highest thing left in that whole city was a corner of the bank building, and it was about 4 feet high. That's all that was left in the whole city. It was gone. Course, those people build houses out of . . .

Marcello: Now were these firebomb raids?

Garrison: Yes. Firebomb, well both. Some of both. But these were . . . the firebombs were what did the job. And it burned an entire city. And there were about 150,000 people there.

Marcello: I've read some accounts where at times the heat from these firebomb raids got so intense that the water in the canals would actually boil.

Garrison: Yeah. Well, now we didn't run into that because we weren't into that . . .

Marcello: Sure. Right.

Garrison: . . . particular area. Man, those American planes got real bad for a while.

Marcello: What was your initial reaction when you learned of the surrender and that the war was over and you would soon be free?

Garrison: Didn't have much of a reaction at the time. The biggest reaction we got was when we got to Tokyo. And you got off of that train and saw other Americans in uniforms. Then you had a shock. You finally realized that it was over and that you made it and you didn't see how.

Marcello: What was your weight at this particular time?

Garrison: Eighty-five pounds.

Marcello: And you went in weighing how much?

Garrison: 140.

Marcello: One hundred and forty. And you were down to 85 pounds. How long were you in the Japanese prisoner of war camps altogether? How long were you a prisoner?

Garrison: Forty-five months.

Marcello: Forty-five months.

Garrison: Well, all but three days of the war.

Marcello: . . . of the war.

Garrison: All but three days of the war. I never figured it up exactly. I think it's forty-four months, nine days, twenty-two minutes,

and fifty-six seconds. (Chuckle)

Marcello: Is there anything else that you would like to talk about that you feel ought to be a part of the record?

Garrison: Well, of course, this is pretty short. Yeah, there's many, many, many other things that if you . . . would prompt me a little bit I could probably recall. Of what nature are you talking about? How bad it was or . . .

Marcello: How bad it was. Any of the other . . . what should we say . . . humorous things that may have occurred. Were there any particular individuals that stood out?

Garrison: Well, we had unwritten rules in the camp that you should never steal from anyone. We had one particular person--just to show you how bad this can be--who started stealing his buddies' food. Every day we broke one of his fingers. And we had to break four, and he never did get 'em set. We had to break four before he quit. But he quit. Now this is how drastic . . .

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: . . . you had to get.

Marcello: By the time you were in this last camp, apparently it was getting to the point, in many cases, where it was every man for himself. In other words, every man was looking out for himself. A good many of them were.

Garrison: Oh, yes. Yes. Every man looked out for himself. But you had a little group.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: And then among this group you had one guy that you lived with, you knew everything about him, he knew everything about you  
. . .

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: . . . but you worked as a little group. For example, if you'd get aboard a ship and you'd make a find of some kind, rice or anything, cigarettes, whatever it was, why, you'd get yours first, then you'd tell your buddy about it, the boy you lived with, and he'd go get his. And then you'd let the other guys in on it. And the man who got caught, was just caught. You never told on anybody else.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: Because if you did, we took care of it at night. It never happened twice.

Marcello: Was there much collaboration at this last camp? You said this is where conditions were . . .

Garrison: No . . .

Marcello: . . . at their worse perhaps.

Garrison: There was no collaboration because we wouldn't put up with it. There was no collaboration, other than the fact that Barnum and a sergeant-major named \_\_\_\_\_ were the ranking enlisted men there, and they didn't have to go to work. Their job was to try to keep us in line, you know, . . .

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: . . . which they couldn't do. But that was their job. But other than that there was no . . . if anybody ever collaborated, or talked, or squealed, and . . . like if they'd be trying to find out something and someone went in to get maybe to get an extra ration of rice something, well, we knew it immediately. And they never got there. We just . . . we had that close of control over it. They'd separate you, but you never told on another prisoner, ever. You just didn't do it. Because it was worse when you got back to the barracks than the Japs would have made it. Because then it was just . . . you either live or you don't. When you get down to that, there is no other way to go. It had to be black and white, cut and dried.

Marcello: Whenever you got together in bull sessions and so on, what did the prisoners usually talk about?

Garrison: (Chuckle) Candy. (Chuckle)

Marcello: Yeah, sure. Candy. Okay. (Chuckle)

Garrison: We dreamed up the most delicious ice cream dishes, and candy, that you ever thought of. This fellow Hinkle, that was my good buddy, he says, "You know what I'm going to do?" Ah, get out of here. Says, "I'm going to buy a 5 pound box of Martha Washington chocolates." He says, "I'm going to take them all out of the little paper sacks and put them all in there," and he says, "I'm going to take my shoes off," and he says, "I'm just going to squish around in them with my feet. (Chuckle) I'm not going to eat them." (Chuckle) So you're just dreaming.



I dreamed about fried okra, (chuckle) and I still like it.

(Chuckle) Now you think of some questions.

Marcello: Well, Mrs. Boynton, are there any questions you'd like to ask him?

Mrs. Boynton: No. I can't think of any right now. I think he's covered quite a bit of time, haven't you?

Marcello: He sure has.

Garrison: Well, there's a lot more. Except you can't cover all of it. There's no way you can get the major things, but the bad thing about that last prison camp was there was no way that you could supplement your food, like we could in Osaka.

Marcello: Right.

Garrison: . . . cause we were working in a steel mill and . . . occasionally you could. And they'd jerk some of us . . . somebody out and just beat him to unconsciousness, and you didn't know why. Until later, you'd find out that a plane had come over and bombed a certain city, and some of their relatives got killed, or mother and dad or maybe brothers and sisters.

Mrs. Boynton: How many prisoners do you think died in prison camps?

Garrison: In our camp?

Mrs. Boynton: Uh-huh. From dysentery and beri-beri and other things they might have had.

Garrison: I believe, if I've got it right, the exact figure, it was 488 in our camp, when it was at its peak. And there was 304 that

came back. And they died from various diseases.

Marcello: That was roughly 25 per cent of them that did not survive?

Garrison: Yeah. If I remember, I believe it was 304 . . . was exactly what it was.

Marcello: In most cases were the deaths due to dietary deficiencies or from beatings or from disease or kind of a combination of all of them?

Garrison: Combination of all of them. Dysentery would run wild in that place. Our latrine was about 5 feet from our barracks. And the stench was terrible, and it was there all the time . . .

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Garrison: It just permeated the whole camp. Now you know about the honey buckets and things like that.

Marcello: Right. (Chuckle).

Garrison: Well, it's just what they did. They come around every day with their little buckets, and it was this way all the time. If dysentery ever got started, you'd lose twenty. You never really knew how many. They'd never let you know. But if I remember correctly, there was 304 left. Yeah.

Marcello: Here's a question that I just thought of. How great is the will to survive in such a situation?

Garrison: I made it. (Chuckle) I don't see how it could be any rougher. Like I said, I'd been beaten 'til I bled, 'til I had no control over my bowels, 'til I was unconscious, and . . . but I'm here.

Marcello: What do you think kept you going?

Garrison: Well, when the planes started coming over, . . . well, damn if those people weren't going to . . . well, I wasn't going to die. They was going to have to kill me. (Chuckle) That's the way I felt about it. Now they just weren't going to do it. And I made up my mind I was coming back. I like this country. I do. This is the greatest country there's ever been--The United States. There's nothing else like it anywhere in the world you'd want to go. They got something better right here. I don't care.

Mrs. Boynton: In the Panhandle. (Chuckle)

Garrison: Yeah, in the Panhandle. (Chuckle)

Marcello: You said there was another way of punishment that . . .

Garrison: Yeah.

Marcello: . . . you wanted to mention.

Garrison: Yeah. They'd stand you up and get a flat board, and they'd start slapping you on the cheeks with this flat board. And I'll promise you, when they got through your head was three times as big. And you can't imagine what this pain was like. FIRE! And they'll do it to you until you're unconscious.

Marcello: Did they hit you hard or was it just a constant slapping?

Garrison: Oh, no. They'd hit you hard. And keep it up until you were unconscious. And if you revived, okay. If you didn't, okay. It didn't matter to them one way or the other. I'd forgotten about that.