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M r . T . G . C r e w s

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Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. R.E. Marcello

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: T. G. Crews
(Signature)

Date: January 22, 1972

Oral History Collection

T. G. Crews

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas Date: January 22, 1972

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. T.G. Crews for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on January 22, 1972, in Dallas, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Crews in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Mr. Crews was with the North China Marines at the outbreak of the war, and so far as he knows they were the first Americans who were captured and imprisoned by the Japanese. Mr. Crews, to begin this interview would you very briefly give us a brief biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, would you tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education, things of this nature.

Mr. Crews: Well, I was born February 26, 1917, in Erath County. Let's see, what else do you want to know now?

Dr. Marcello: How about your education?

Mr. Crews: My education consisted of four years in high school

at Stephenville High School.

Marcello: When did you enter the service?

Crews: It was in July, 1937.

Marcello: Do you remember why you entered?

Crews: Well, yes. I went into the Marines because I had read about the Marines and always admired the Marine Corps. And I just wanted to make a career out of being a Marine.

Marcello: How old were you at the time? Do you know offhand?

Crews: I was twenty-one years old. Just turned twenty-one.

Marcello: I assume you took your boot camp at San Diego?

Crews: San Diego, that's correct.

Marcello: When did you go to North China?

Crews: I went to North China in the first part of 1938.

Marcello: I assume this was considered to be pretty good duty, wasn't it?

Crews: It was excellent duty at that time. It was considered to be the best. The Marines that I had spoken to wanted to go to North China.

Marcello: Why did they consider it to be the best duty?

Crews: Well, it was the farthest outpost that we had. And it was just the idea, I guess, that it was a sort of a sports-minded place. They had a lot of sports activities. It was a machine-gun company, actually. But North China was a very desirable place because of

this.

Marcello: I understand the prices were very, very cheap there also, and I'm sure this was something that made your stay there very pleasant. Now, you weren't making very much money, but apparently prices were quite low.

Crews: Yes, as I remember it, it was about twenty-five Chinese yen for the one American dollar. And I think a good comparison there would be that maybe five dollars yen would be comparable to one dollar, so you were making about five times as much money. This was another thing that I've overlooked previously. Of course, it made it desirable to be there.

Marcello: I gather that such things as hamburgers, perhaps, might only cost about a nickel, or a coke three cents or something like that.

Crews: Three cents. I think the hamburgers were three cents. And I think a cheeseburger was five cents at the Marine Club.

Marcello: Would you identify your unit that you went to North China with?

Crews: Well, it was the American Embassy Guard. We were primarily in North China for the purpose of protecting the American Embassy. Also, another duty that we had concerned guarding trains, keeping the railroads open for American products that went from Tientsin, Chinwangtao, Peking, and so forth.

Marcello: Why did you need train guards? This sounds like an interesting story.

Crews: Well, at that time, of course, there was guerrilla activity in those areas between Peking and Chinwangtao, which is on the coast. And this was one reason, of course, and maybe pilfering would be another reason.

Marcello: You mentioned guerrilla activity. Were these Chinese fighting the Japanese at this time yet?

Crews: Well, it was more or less in this category. Actually, most of the guerrilla warfare and the reason for it was making raids on the native villages and so forth for stock and food and so forth.

Marcello: Well, were these really guerrillas or bandits?

Crews: It's possible that I misused the term there. Maybe bandits would be a more proper word for it.

Marcello: And this was one of the principal functions of the North China Marines--to guard these trains?

Crews: That's right. You'd take a detail and you would be responsible for the goods that were being transported from the coast to inland China and the American Embassy and so forth.

Marcello: Do you remember any incidents that ever happened on any of these details. Were you yourself ever involved in any skirmishes with the guerrillas or anything like that?

Crews: No. I can't recall that we ever had any problems on those train guarding details.

Marcello: Now, I assume that you went to Peking, is that correct? You mentioned the American Embassy which was at Peking.

Crews: Right, Peking.

Marcello: What exactly did the Embassy guards do?

Crews: Well, of course, like I said before we were a machine-gun company, but we were responsible . . . it was more of an honor guard than anything else. In other words the sentries on the post had to walk their post more in a military-type manner than they did in some of the more relaxed posts. And we did have machine-gun drills and a lot of close order drill. We'd fall out lots of times as honor guards even for the Japanese.

Marcello: I would assume that this was a spit-and-polish outfit. Is that a good way to put it?

Crews: Right.

Marcello: And I gather that you thought of yourselves as being a rather elite unit, too.

Crews: We did. As a matter of fact, the Marines were chosen by their height and their weight and their athletic capabilities and so forth for that area.

Marcello: I remember seeing some of those North China Marine uniforms. They were pretty sharp uniforms with the long topcoats and the fur hats.

Crews: Yes. I have some old pictures in my albums.

Marcello: Now did you ever have very much contact with the other foreign contingents at Peking?

Crews: Oh, yes, we had much contact with the Italian Marines, the French soldiers, and the English soldiers.

Marcello: Were these mainly social contacts, maybe at the local bar or something like that?

Crews: Well, it would be more of this. However, we did have occasions when we'd have to fall out as honor guards for some Italian general or something of that nature. But mainly I came in contact with them many times in the bars and things because I was on MP duty.

Marcello: At this time--now again I'm speaking of a couple years prior to 1941--did you have very much contact with the Japanese, enough contact to form any sort of impressions about them.

Crews: Yes. We did not socialize with them, but we would meet them on the streets. And I can remember . . . well, I can tell you about one incident where I almost got myself into a lot of trouble. I was an instructor on the rifle range which was outside the walls of Peking. Peking was surrounded by a wall. And my buddy who worked the target next to me--you know, we were instructing and each of us had a target--didn't show up for work one morning, so when the master gunnery sergeant came by and asked me where he was, I said, "Well, he didn't feel

too good. He's up in the barracks up there, and he'll probably be back tomorrow." I said, "I'll take care of his target." He said, "Well, okay." So he went on and the next day Mitchell hadn't shown up yet. He didn't say anything to me; he just assumed he was sick again. I was beginning to sweat by then because I lied for the guy and he wasn't here yet. And I thought maybe he was in town and went on a binge and couldn't make it. So the very next afternoon--this would be the same day--we got a call from the Japanese gendarmes, and they had locked Mitchell up, had him in jail. And he had went down on one of the Japanese cabarets and was demolishing the thing. He ripped stoles and tore up the bar, and they had him down there without any shoes or anything. (Chuckle) So, of course, this is one experience I can remember coming in contact with them. But the old gunner that was in charge of the rifle range . . . I thought I'd get busted. But the only thing that old man ever said to me was that what I did was inexcusable. I can remember one other, if you want to dwell on this, where another friend of mine was . . . as a matter of fact, I have a newspaper clipping in the album. I think his name was Buck Allen. He went out in town and . . .

Marcello: His name was Buck Allen?

Crews: Buck Allen from Waxahachie. And he got involved with them, as a matter of fact. The gendarmes got him. And then we had a sentry that was shot on post and his name was Bunn. And this was about ten days before the war that a Japanese pulled up in a rickshaw and pulled his pistol and shot him in the leg. That's two things that I can think of right off.

Marcello: Generally speaking, however, I gather then that there really wasn't much friction between the North China Marines and the Japanese until you got right up to the eve of World War II. Is that correct? Is that a safe assumption?

Crews: I'd say there was quite a bit of friction, you might say, on the eve because I can remember that maybe six months prior to the end of the war we were not allowed to go on liberty alone. We had to take a buddy with us. And another thing, they installed an alarm system at each post. In other words, the area that we were guarding would cover an area, I guess, of easily half a square mile, and they wired the sentry posts where you could get help if you had trouble on post. This occurred after this sentry got shot. As a matter of fact, on the very day the war started I had the duty at about 4:00 a.m. As I remember it, a Chinese rickshaw coolie came up to my gate and told me that there were

some armed Japs up on the Chien Men Wall. In other words, the Chien Men Wall splits Peking, and it ran right alongside of the American Embassy. And ordinarily we would have a sentry patroling the top of this wall. The wall was, oh, seventy-five or eighty feet high and maybe fifty feet wide at the top with ramps going up. And we had a post up there, and like I say, I was the NCO in charge of the guards in that area, and I would have had a sentry up there. But on this particular night we had secured the guard because the weather was so cold. Anyway, this rickshaw coolie came up and told me that there were some Japs on the wall. And, of course, no Japs were supposed to be on our wall, you know. So I woke up two or three of the Marines in the guardhouse there and told them to go up and run the Japs off. We had already had this other trouble with them. And after ten minutes, I guess, they didn't come back so I woke some more up and told them to get on up there and run them Japs off and find out what had happened to the others. Ten minutes later they didn't show up, so I got to use the button, the emergency thing that was set up. In other words, I pushed the button, and I got help in about five minutes. I got a truckload of Marines. And so I told them to drive up the ramp. I said, "Drive the truck up the ramp onto the wall." And they got about

halfway to the top and the officer of the day called--the phone rang. And he told me, "Get those Marines off that wall. We're at war. Pearl Harbor has been bombed."

Marcello: What were your reactions when you heard that news?

Crews: Well, of course, I was shocked. Then I yelled up there and told them to get off, that we were at war. I can remember eating scrambled eggs and bacon for breakfast that morning. And four years later we got some more scrambled eggs and bacon (chuckle).

Marcello: Were most of the legations pretty close together in Peking? Were they in a particular section of the town?

Crews: We had in Tientsin what was called a Foreign Legation. This was at Tientsin. And the Foreign Legation consisted of all of the foreign powers. Like I say, the Italians and the English had their own guards, either a Marine detachment or an Army detachment or whatever they were using. They did primarily the same things we were doing.

Marcello: Well, what happened next? You got the word that Pearl Harbor had been bombed, you're shocked. Proceed with the story then from that point.

Crews: Of course, we waited to hear what we were going to do. Of course, then I observed that there was no traffic. Ordinarily there were rickshaws by the hundreds coming back and forth. As far as on the wall as you could see,

down close to one of the hotels. As far as on the wall as you could see, it was blocked off, and you could see soldiers. You know, it was a long way but you could see soldiers. And now daylight began to come, and I could see along the wall there alongside my post that there were a few armed sentries. They could actually survey the whole embassy from this wall. They had a real good location. We really should have had people up there, but we couldn't do anything anyway. Meanwhile I got relieved, and I returned to the Marine barracks which was a half mile or so from there.

Marcello: I assume it was a beehive of activity.

Crews: Yes. And word came down that we were going to have to go to the parade ground, bring our rifles and all of our ammunition, stack arms, and turn it over to the Japs.

Marcello: What did you think about this--the idea of having to surrender?

Crews: Didn't like it. Didn't like it at all. But what could we do? We had already packed our machine-guns. We were supposed to leave on December 10th.

Marcello: Now I gather that you were supposed to leave on December 10th to come home.

Crews: Yes. The President Harrison was going to pick us up. But anyway, to get along with the story, about nine or ten o'clock the next morning our colonel and their commander,

or whatever he was, I don't know, met and agreed that we would turn over our arms, ammunition, and so forth.

Marcello: Have you ever heard any stories to the effect that the Japanese never took prisoners, that they would kill all prisoners?

Crews: Well, I have heard this, but I can't say we were too concerned about that. I don't think that we were concerned about it at that time.

Marcello: As diplomatic personnel--I suppose you thought you were diplomatic personnel of some sort--did you think that you would be repatriated? Had you ever thought about this?

Crews: We had been told that according to international law, I believe, that we were supposed to be repatriated by the first available neutral country. We assumed this would be the Swiss people if this took place.

Marcello: I assume that was quite a disappointment when you found out that you were not going to be repatriated. I would assume that morale was perhaps at an all-time low.

Crews: No. I think the morale was at an all-time low when they pulled our flag down and ran theirs up.

Marcello: What did that kind of do to you?

Crews: (Chuckle) It's hard to say. I mean I couldn't possibly relay the impression that it had on us. It wasn't just

me; it was the whole outfit.

Marcello: I assume they had you all out there on the parade grounds . . .

Crews: On the parade grounds, yes.

Marcello: . . . when the flag came down.

Crews: And I don't think there was a dry eye in the crowd.

Marcello: Now there were only about 200 Marines in Peking. Is that correct? There weren't many more than that.

Crews: I think there was less than that. At the time of the war we had had no replacements in Tientsin, Chinwangtao, or Peking.

Marcello: Maybe it was 200 altogether in North China. Does that perhaps seem more reasonable?

Crews: I may be wrong, but I'm thinking in terms of around eighty or ninety in North China. We started out with about 400 or 500 in Tientsin and 400 or 500 in Peking and then forty or fifty at Chinwangtao. But for a year at least we had no replacements. When somebody finished his time in China, he was sent back and there were no replacements. This indicated to us that something was taking place.

Marcello: Now I assume that the Japanese completely controlled the city and the countryside. By this time they had already moved into North China, had they not? Well, ever since 1937. And I gather that they controlled all the area outside of Peking. Is that correct?

Crews: All the area outside of Peking. As a matter of fact, about six months of my time in Peking, I think as I have told you previously, was spent outside the walls of Peking on the rifle range. And at the rifle range the Italians had their range, we had our range, the Japanese had their range, the French had their range. They were all lined up together. And I know they couldn't believe that we were shooting 1,000 yards with our 03 rifles.

Marcello: You were still using the Springfield 03?

Crews: 03, yes. That's what I turned in on the day we pulled our flag down.

Marcello: Okay, so here your morale is at an all-time low when you saw the American flag being lowered. What happened then?

Crews: Well, we remained in the barracks at Peking. Things changed immediately. The cooking or chow arrangement was immediately placed on what they called the Japanese type food. It was rice.

Marcello: You started on the rice right away?

Crews: Right away, yes.

Marcello: Now how about your equipment? Were you allowed to keep most of your clothing and baggage and things of this sort?

Crews: In this respect we were more fortunate than a few that we were to meet later.

Marcello: I think you're referring to the Wake Island Marines.

Crews: Yes. We could carry what we could put on our backs. Most of us took canned goods, corned beef, and stuff into our clothes (chuckle) But anyway, they did allow us to do that and we did stay in Peking for, I'd say, three weeks or maybe a month.

Marcello: I would assume that you held on to those topcoats and what have you because in December it gets pretty cold in Peking.

Crews: I had an old lettered sweater from my old high school that was real heavy, and I hung on to that, and I wore it all through captivity. And the heavy green topcoat I held onto and some old sweatshirts. I got rid of the blouse because it was uncomfortable. It was kind of like a strait jacket. But I did hold onto all the heavy stuff, the old fur hat, and anything to keep us warm. I think all of us maintained a pretty good grip on that stuff.

Marcello: Correct me if I'm wrong, but were you allowed to sent certain things home through a Swiss firm in Peking? Sparkman made some metnion of this somewhere along the line. Do you recall that?

Crews: No, I was never given that privilege to send anything home. We did receive a little mail but very little.

Marcello: What did the Japanese have you doing here in Peking for

this couple of weeks or month?

Crews: Well, in Peking you might say nothing. We were just there.

Marcello: In other words, you were just sitting around waiting to go some other place.

Crews: Just waiting and wondering what was going to happen, where they were going to send us. I know I worked on an old boy whose name was Raymond Boyden. He threw away his album. He had a Marine Corps album, and I got it, and I'll show it to you after awhile. But he threw it in the GI can, and I had accummulated a whole bunch of pictures and things, so I thought 'What the heck. I don't have anything to do so I'll just grab that album and put all these pictures in.' So I did. I found some tabs somewhere and put it all together, and I'm glad I did because I still have my album. And that's about all I did in Peking.

Marcello: I gather that the Japanese more or less let you alone during this period.

Crews: Yes.

Marcello: Did you ever detect that they may have been just a little bit afraid or scared of these Marines?

Crews: No, I don't think so.

Marcello: Did they guard you pretty closely?

Crews: Yes, they did in Peking although they guarded us closely everywhere we went as a matter of fact.

Marcello: Did they rough you up any at this time yet?

Crews: Not in Peking.

Marcello: Do you think that there was perhaps a good deal of camaraderie here perhaps between the Japanese and the Marines. In other words, I assume that the Japanese Embassy guards were the ones that were keeping you prisoners.

Crews: Well, I presume they moved them from a local garrison there. I'm not sure. But I do know that they had a guard that we nicknamed "Hollywood," who was always around with a bunch of photographers. They wanted some pictures. They wanted to throw everything in a good light for them, of course. And I think that they tried to make us a showcase prisoner-of-war camp there for about three weeks to be used later on for propaganda.

Marcello: I gather it was fairly comfortable there.

Crews: Oh, yes. We had our bunks, still had our bunks to sleep in.

Marcello: You were still in your same quarters.

Crews: Yes. Same bunks, same lockers, same everything. This was great in Peking.

Marcello: Then, generally speaking, I guess you would have to say that your first month as a prisoner or your first several weeks as a prisoner were relatively uneventful. Other then the fact that you got captured, not a whole lot

happened during that period.

Crews: Yes, outside of "Hollywood" and his publicity shots. But, of course, the thing I remember most is hearing those Japanese hobnailed boots coming into the compound on that day and pulling down the flag. That's the thing that stands out in Peking. The rest is of no significance.

Marcello: Where did you go from Peking?

Crews: From Peking back to Tientsin where I had previously done duty for the majority of my North China time.

Marcello: About how far is Tientsin from Peking? About 150 miles?

Crews: Yes. I couldn't say how many miles, but I know it was a four or five hour trip on the train. I made it many times on the train.

Marcello: Was this a rather uneventful trip from Peking to Tientsin? Did they crowd you in boxcars or anything of that nature?

Crews: No. From Peking to Tientsin still we didn't have the crowded conditions and the stacked boxcars and things like we would later have. I can't remember anything too unpleasant about the trip.

Marcello: Did they ever at this time display you before the local Chinese population or anything like that? What I'm getting at is, did they ever want to convey the impression to the Chinese that: "Look, these white men aren't so tough after all. Look what we as Asiatics have done to them. Look what we yellow men have done to them." Did

they ever try and humiliate you in any way?

Crews: Well, no. We did a lot of marching out in public, and we did that with Japanese guards flanking the line with bayonets and everything. It could have been taken that way. However, later it got to the point where they actually and outwardly did try to humiliate us and did.

Marcello: What happened when you got to Tientsin?

Crews: We joined the group from Chinwangtao and the small group that had been left in Tientsin. And they put us in the old Army barracks there that we had inhabited before we went to Peking, my group. And the conditions were good there. We still had bunks to sleep on, but, of course, our food was rice. Actually, I wasn't too concerned with the rice at this point because most of us had brought extra canned goods and stuff. Like I said, we had filled our heavy marching_____with canned goods, and we didn't think too much about food because we were doing pretty good on that corned beef and stuff.

Marcello: Did they give you as much rice as you wanted or was this limited?

Crews: Well, at this point as much as we wanted because we didn't want much. But this was just toward the start.

Marcello: In other words, from a physical standpoint everybody in the unit was in pretty good shape yet.

Crews: Pretty good shape at Tientsin.

Marcello: How long were you at Tientsin altogether?

Crews: I was out there maybe six weeks, two months.

Marcello: In other words, this was still another transit point, and they were going to send you to some other place from there to perform some sort of labor or something like that. Well, did anything eventful happen here at Tientsin? Did the treatment get any rougher?

Crews: No. A patrol guarded us and the only thing that happened of consequence was that George Stone and his partner decided to try to make a break for it, holed up in the attic on the day that we left.

Marcello: This was in the attic of the barracks?

Crews: Yes. These were real old ancient-type barracks that had acres of area upstairs that you couldn't even get to unless you climbed up there and knocked a hole in there or something. What happened is they let us know when we were leaving. You know, everybody was glad to leave and get up to Shanghai. And they found out when we was going to leave, and they just got up in the attic some way and got them some water and some corned beef and some food and stuff to survive a little while on it. And when they pulled us out, well, we was missing two men. I believe it was two but it may have been three. I do remember George Stone. He'd been a pilot

in civilian life. So we went on without them, to continue my story . . .

Marcello: The Japanese didn't undertake any extensive search to find them?

Crews: Oh, they searched, yes. Never found them.

Marcello: Never did find them? Whatever happened to those two guys?

Crews: Well, after we got to Shanghai--I guess it might have been two or three weeks--they brought them into camp one day, and they told the story that they stayed up there long as they could. Of course, they got cold, you know. It was wintertime and Peking is like New York, not like here in the wintertime. It is zero weather practically all winter. The rivers freeze over and stay frozen. So they finally had to come down because all their water supply froze up. I believe that's what the story was. And their food was frozen, and they had frostbite. And they came down to get some water and some food or something, and the Japs had left somebody in the area, and they caught them.

Marcello: Had they been worked over pretty good?

Crews: Well, evidently they had some bruises on them. They didn't seem like they were too good a shape.

Marcello: I assume it was rather asinine to try and escape. There was really no place to go, was there?

Crews: Well, that's true but some officers made it later. They really got away. It was tried on several occasions in Shanghai and enroute to Pusan in Korea and even in Japan.

Marcello: Now at this point did you think that the war would be over in a pretty short time and that the United States could clean up the Japanese pretty easily?

Crews: I hoped so after we got to Shanghai. But the impact really hit us when they marched us into the old Woosung area.

Marcello: How did you get from Tientsin to Shanghai?

Crews: By rail. The transportation came to a complete stop (chuckle).

Marcello: How did they transport you?

Crews: They crowded us in boxcars. And, I guess, the best way to explain the crowded conditions is just tell you that there was no place for anybody to stretch their legs or lay down all at one time. In other words, if you got any rest, you had to get rest in shifts. You could sit down and pull your feet up under you like this (gesture) all around the walls and all out in the middle, and that's the only way you could get to even squat. Other then that you were standing all the time.

Marcello: How long was this trip from Tientsin to Shanghai?

Crews: Oh, I would say weeks.

Marcello: It actually took weeks. Were you ever allowed out of the boxcars at all?

Crews: Oh, sometimes we would get out and stretch our legs whenever the thing stopped or something, and the guard would let us get out and stretch our legs. That's about it.

Marcello: Had your food given out by this time?

Crews: Our food had, yes. We were completely without food midway between Shanghai and Tientsin. We were strictly on rice. Well, I don't know. We might have had something left because it seems to me like it hadn't yet gotten desperate as far as food was concerned.

Marcello: Generally speaking, you were in pretty good physical shape.

Crews: We still were in good physical shape.

Marcello: And I assume that there was really no outbreaks of any sort of disease or anything like that.

Crews: No. There was no dysentery, no malaria, or anything as yet.

Marcello: So what happened when you eventually got to Shanghai then? Morale, I am sure, had sunken low again.

Crews: It had. We marched all one day, it seemed, in the swamps and the area around Shanghai, the Woosung area. As I remember, it was in the fork of the Yangtze and Huang-pu Rivers. And it was very low, and the mosquitoes

and everything were prevalent in that area, of course. But anyway, they marched us almost all day, and then we came to this extremely swampy area with a little barn-like type structure. And around it they had a double electric fence. They had an electric fence around it sitting on a brick wall, and then on the interior right around the old barracks they had another electric fence. They marched us through the gate, and it was raining and there was water and mud and mudholes and everything. The first thing I saw was some bedraggled and depressive looking people who appeared to be Americans. I guess there was a couple of hundred or more, and they turned out to be the Wake Island Marines. But anyway, they looked terrible.

Marcello: Now apparently when they were captured, they had been stripped of practically everything but their underwear.

Crews: Right. They had on skivvies, T-shirts. Like I say, they just looked terrible. The thing that I remember most about entering this place, outside of getting swiped with a bayonet because I wouldn't stand in a mudhole, was that somebody was bringing some rice in big old buckets, and somebody spilled one of those buckets of rice, and it slopped over into a mudhole. And it never even hit the ground before a dozen men were down there grabbing it out of the mud and eating it.

Marcello: That more or less was a clue as to what was to come.

Crews: That was another shock (chuckle) to say the least.

Marcello: Well, tell me a little bit about this incident involving the bayonet that you just mentioned here.

Crews: Well, they marched us in, and, of course, everybody had to be at attention at all times. And I moved over to get out of the mudhole. It was deep enough to go halfway up the calf of my leg. And this guard came over and clanged me with the side of the bayonet to get back in line.

Marcello: In other words, he hit you with the broad side.

Crews: Oh, yes, not with the point. So I got back in line and stood in the water (chuckle).

Marcello: Now what time of year was this about? This must have been getting on towards spring.

Crews: Yes, let's see. It would have had to be January, February, March, I guess.

Marcello: Of 1942?

Crews: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, what were your barracks like here at Shanghai?

Crews: Well, they were a row. And I think they were formerly had been used by the Japanese soldiers as barracks. They had no heat in them. They were just bare, but they had racks built up on each side, just board racks. So they assigned a certain number of us to a certain

area, and we had to occupy that area all the time we were in there. And they had some old outdoor-type latrines and a place on the outside where you could wash your hands with running water.

Marcello: You did have running water?

Crews: Yes, it had some faucets over a big trough.

Marcello: Did you have an unlimited supply of water for bathing and washing clothing and things like this?

Crews: No.

Marcello: That was rationed?

Crews: I think we got two buckets a week to take a bath in (chuckle).

Marcello: Two buckets of water per man a week.

Crews: That's right, per man. And we slept on racks, and in Shanghai they had a straw mat which helped some. Like I said, there was no heat, but there were so many of us they were almost common mats, but that was the only way you could keep from freezing. It was still cold at this time of year.

Marcello: Now I would assume that sanitation broke down quite a bit under these conditions. Is that correct?

Crews: Almost immediately. Malaria was something that you had. You lived with malaria. And dysentery was something that most had.

Marcello: Did you contract both these yourself?

Crews: Well, yes. I think I got away without getting dysentery, but I had malaria constantly. Dysentery came later for me.

Marcello: I assume that probably dysentery was a bigger killer than malaria in these camps. Isn't that correct?

Crews: I think so. Fortunately the type of malaria that we had in that area was not a real bad malaria, I understood later from the medical people.

Marcello: I assume that lice and bedbugs were a problem.

Crews: Oh, yes. Rats would be a problem.

Marcello: Rats.

Crews: Rats. When we speak of rats, I can remember one time that we changed camps at Woosung, and the bulk of the prisoners went to the other camp. And for some reason or other they kept a half dozen of us back with a couple guards in the old camp to come on the next day. And that night we had to stand guard against these rats that were as big as cats. They would actually attack you if you laid down and went to sleep. So we had to stand guard against rats. A funny thing about rats was that it seemed if there were a lot of you, they didn't bother you. But if you got down to a few of you and there were a lot of rats, that was a different story.

Marcello: I assume that you didn't reach the stage yet where you were looking for other sources of food. I'm referring to dogs or cats or even rats perhaps in some cases. Had you gotten to that point at Shanghai or Woosung.

Crews: At the first, no.

Marcello: How about here at Shanghai or Woosung? Were you looking for other things to supplement your diet at this time?

Crews: Oh, yes. I've seen them dig snails out of the ground, and dogs didn't have too much chance if they strayed into camp. But most of all, in our working parties we built what they called "Mount Fuji Island" by hand. We used "yahoo poles" and hand cars.

Marcello: What actually was this? You called it Mount Fuji, but what actually were you building?

Crews: I think the thing turned out to be the butts for a rifle range or something of that nature. We never really knew what it was.

Marcello: They never told you it was going to be a rifle range of some sort? I gather that according to the Geneva Convention prisoners were not supposed to be engaged in this type of work. Is that correct? Didn't make much difference, I mean, because the Japanese weren't abiding by that Geneva Convention anyhow.

Crews: They did make us polish shells sometimes when it would be raining too hard to work on the mountain. But anyhow, what I started to tell you about the food was that the noticeable thing was that we had to march through the rice fields and wheat fields of the Chinese. This was a farming area. And about eight or ten feet on each

side of the trail where we marched to work and back, we'd strip wheat off and take it in and boil it or something. We got that desperate for an extra grain of rice or something.

Marcello: Did the Japanese ever have any objections to this? Would they have belted you pretty well had they caught you swiping this wheat or rice?

Crews: They did if they could spot who it was, you know. Let's say you had a column of 200 men and you had six guards. It would be pretty hard sometimes to tell exactly who it was that ran out and grabbed a handful of wheat. But on several occasions some Marines--I didn't personally get caught for it--but on several occasions some of the Marines did get worked over pretty good for that.

Marcello: What was your weight? I assume that by this time you were beginning to lose weight.

Crews: Some, yes.

Marcello: What was your weight when you were first captured? Can you estimate it offhand?

Crews: I weighed 190 pounds.

Marcello: You were a pretty hefty individual then.

Crews: Not as big as I am now (chuckle).

Marcello: I see. How long were you at Shanghai altogether?

Crews: As I remember, I was at Shanghai either eighteen months or two years, close to that.

Marcello: And during this time you were mostly engaged in making this rifle range or whatever it turned out to be.

Crews: That, and like I say, on days when it was too wet to work on the mountain they had us polishing shells. And I can remember they had the old Woosung Racetrack, and they were hiding petrol drums there.

Marcello: This was the Woosung Racetrack.

Crews: Yes. They had us digging trenches and hiding petrol in there and covering it up with brush and stuff.

Marcello: What was a typical day like at prison camp here at Shanghai?

Crews: Well, a typical day started about daylight regardless of whether you had malaria or what problems you might have. We'd march out to this site and begin to move dirt either with a "yahoo pole" or these cars. I can remember that they had an interpreter by the name of Ishihara. He was such a cruel person to us, and we knew he was from Honolulu. We figured maybe that he'd been a taxi driver or something and had been pushed around by some Marines because it seemed like he was always doing his best to downgrade us and make us work, work, work. Anyway, it seemed like if they would lose a sea battle or something--at least that's how we interpreted it--well, he would say, "Today we've got

to do 100 loads."

Marcello: I assume you had a quota every day.

Crews: Every day.

Marcello: Suppose you met the quota. Would they increase it?

Crews: Well, if you did it in twelve hours, fine. If you didn't, you stayed out there until you met it. At any rate, sometimes he would say, "Today we will add twenty-five loads. Our soldiers are fighting on the battlefront. We got it easy here. We will add so many loads." And you'd have to do it. We figured it out, and I think when we were pushing the cars--putting our shoulder to them and digging in and pushing them up this hill and dumping them and then going back and reloading them--I think we figured out by stepping the track off that we were pushing cars about twenty-four miles a day on a regular day's work.

Marcello: How many days did you work consecutively?

Crews: Oh, we worked . . . as I remember it, we didn't have a day off in that area.

Marcello: You worked seven days a week, twelve hours a day?

Crews: You might have had a few days off?

Marcello: Did you ever see any signs of collaboration at this camp? In other words did you ever see any officers currying the favor of the Japanese--or the enlisted men currying the favor of the Japanese--in order to

get more food or better treatment or anything like that?

Crews: No, my answer is that this was the old Marine Corps. It was a different breed. I think that breed came on later. We were all volunteers. We was in the Marine Corps because we wanted to be in the Marine Corps. We knew what we had to face up to when we went into the Marine Corps. Nobody told us we had to be a Marine and we were proud of that. And I don't think that there was one Marine in the entire detachment that ever looked for a favor from the Japs.

Marcello: Did you have much contact with the Wake Island Marines?

Crews: Yes, we did.

Marcello: Did you work side by side with them?

Crews: Side by side.

Marcello: Were relations pretty smooth between the two groups?

Crews: Well, relations were pretty smooth. Of course, they had a little bit of envy.

Marcello: I was going to ask if they may have resented the fact that you came into camp with your topcoats and fur hats, and they were practically naked.

Crews: I think that they did at first, but some of the boys shared with them, and that was all ironed out. We got along just fine. That wasn't a lasting thing at all. I have a lot of friends and had a lot of friends from Wake Island, even amongst their civilians. You know

they had a lot of civilian people doing construction work at Wake Island. And here's something that will surprise you, I think, and anyone else. The civilian people, most of them were older people, and believe it or not the older people, I think, survived and remained in better condition then the young 200-pounders, the young Marines. And I think the reason for that is everyone got a certain ration, and it didn't take as much for these older men to survive as it did the young ones. I mean it was real surprising to me that they made out a lot better then the young, stronger type.

Marcello: Incidentally, this isn't surprising to me because other prisoners have told me the same thing, whether it was in the Philippines or wherever it might have been, but it seems the older ones were able to come through this in relatively better shape then a good many of the younger ones.

Crews: I figured it would be the other way, but it didn't turn out that way at all.

Marcello: Were the Japanese ever roughing you up much here at Shanghai? Did you yourself ever experience any beatings or what have you?

Crews: Oh, I was racked up quite a bit and put in solitary without blankets for two or three weeks one time when

Corporal Story and Pfc Battles dug under the electric fence and escaped. And I was bunking right next to them.

Marcello: And they assumed that you knew about this escape attempt?

Crews: They took the whole bunch of us--probably twenty-five--and said, "Now you didn't tell us those boys were going to escape. You're going to suffer for it." So they threw us in this old dark room. And they didn't feed us.

Marcello: How many of you were there?

Crews: Oh, I'd say there were probably twenty of us, maybe not that many.

Marcello: These were the men in your particular squad?

Crews: In my area, in the area where Story and Battles slept, you know. And they kept us over there for about three weeks, and they'd give us a bowl of rice every two or three days. They took all of our clothes away from us except our skivvy shorts.

Marcello: Now what time of year was it?

Crews: This was still in cold weather. I forget whether it was the first year or the second year, but it was extremely cold. We would run and jump and everything all night. And in the daytime we had one little area where we would get a little light, and we'd take turns trying to sleep in that area where the sun was coming in.

Marcello: In other words, you were really shut in solitary with no light or anything.

Crews: Just because we had not told them that these men were planning to escape.

Marcello: I assume you suffered quite a bit physically from that experience.

Crews: Yes. We were roughed up quite a bit there.

Marcello: Did they beat you around very much?

Crews: They racked us up a little bit but nothing that would permanently disable us.

Marcello: What did they usually do?

Crews: Well, the Japanese have a very funny type of discipline. They use this even amongst their own soldiers. If one of their corporals does something wrong, the sergeant, instead of running him up to the CO or putting him in the brig, would stand him up and knock him down two or three times, and that's their discipline. So if we did something that wasn't right, if we didn't count right--and they made us count off in Japanese--missed our count or something or didn't understand what they wanted us to do, why, they'd knock you down. And you'd get up, and they'd probably do it again with their rifle butt or a club or whatever they had. I mean, this seemed to be their way of doing things. Well, you had to bow to the Japanese. This was a custom, I guess. I don't know if they still do it or not, but everytime a Japanese sees another Jap he bows. And, of course,

this was very hard for us to learn. But we had to learn it.

Marcello: And if you didn't?

Crews: If you didn't, they'd knock you down, and you'd get up and they'd knock you down again.

Marcello: I would assume that you were the low men on the pecking order. Like you said, the sergeants would belt the corporals around. The corporals in turn would belt the privates, and there was nobody below the privates, I guess, but the prisoners.

Crews: We've seen Japanese in formation do the same thing to each other that they were doing to us, you might say. It was part of their discipline.

Marcello: How long were you in solitary altogether?

Crews: As I remember about three weeks.

Marcello: What was it like when you got out? What was your condition like?

Crews: It was pretty nice.

Marcello: Did the sunlight hurt your eyes and so on? Did it take quite a while to adjust?

Crews: I can't remember too much about that part of it, but I know I was extremely glad to get out and get to working on the mountain again.

Marcello: Did they give you back your winter clothing?

Crews: Yes, they left it stacked up on our bunks, and we got our winter clothing back.

Marcello: Incidently, did they ever catch those two guys that escaped?

Crews: They caught them but they never brought them back to our camp. I understand that they had them in the dungeons in Shanghai, but Corporal Story made it out someway because he is out in the West Oak someplace.

Marcello: Did they ever warn you that all escaping prisoners who were caught would be shot?

Crews: Oh, yes. That was one of the main ways of preventing it, I guess.

Marcello: Now in a lot of the prison camps they divided the prisoners into groups of ten, and if one man escaped they threatened to shoot the other nine. Did they ever do anything like this in Shanghai?

Crews: No. I did see them shoot a man down one night for something. They never did say why they shot the old boy at the electric fence. They shot one of the Marines for nothing, I guess.

Marcello: You mean this was a guard on the outside who shot into the compound itself. I would assume something like that kind of shakes you up a bit.

Crews: Yes, it does.

Marcello: Did you ever have any nicknames for any of the guards

here at this camp in Shanghai. You know, a lot of the prisoners had nicknames for some of those guards. You mentioned "Hollywood" back in Peking. Did you ever have nicknames for any of the guards here in Shanghai?

Crews: Yes. We had "Mortimer Snerd."

Marcello: How did he get that name?

Crews: He looked like and talked like "Mortimer Snerd." He was one of the better ones if you could say there was a better Jap. "Mortimer Snerd" didn't seem to bother us too much.

Marcello: I was going to ask you if there was any guards who showed any amount of compassion toward the prisoners?

Crews: Not really. The only Japanese that I would say anything for as far as being human and having human feelings towards us was a medical man by the name of Shento. And he seemed to be more concerned about the health of the prisoners.

Marcello: Did the Japanese provide very good medical facilities at this camp?

Crews: No, we had our own doctor, Doctor Foley, who took care of all our needs. I presume they gave him a certain amount of antibiotics. And they did give us a little bit of quinine, not enough to ward off malaria, but sometimes if you got down with malaria they'd give you

a little bit of quinine to you to control it. Doctor Foley was, of course, the most popular man in camp. He was trying to do his best with what they gave him.

Marcello: Was it very hard to get on the sick list?

Crews: Very difficult. As a matter of fact, it got so bad on the mountain that people had to go out there with malaria and dysentery. On several occasions there were Marines who would throw themselves under a car and break their leg or something in order to get a few days rest in sick bay. It got pretty bad.

Marcello: Did you ever try and sabotage any of the work?

Crews: No, I never really was involved in any work that I could sabotage. While we was there they were always coming around with details that needed mechanics and truck drivers. And then they'd get a few men that said they were, and they'd transfer them somewhere. I often wondered if they had it better then we did. I suspected that they might, but I never could bring myself to . . . I'm not much for volunteering for things. (chuckle) So I just stayed; I never did know anything.

Marcello: Did you ever receive word from the outside while you were at Shanghai? Did you receive any letters from home? Or were you ever able to send any letters or post cards or what have you?

Crews: I don't remember ever receiving any mail. I don't think I did.

Marcello: I assume you were allowed to send those little post cards that they gave all the prisoners. Is that correct?

Crews: They did allow us to send out, oh, I don't know, a letter every six months or every year or something.

Marcello: How about Red Cross packages?

Crews: We got on an average, I guess, these ten or twelve pound packages probably once a year for four years. Probably four or five during the entire internment.

Marcello: I gather that they were withholding a lot of these packages from you and using them themselves. Is this correct?

Crews: Yes, I suspect that they were. Of course, we didn't really know anything about it at the time. One thing I do know, or at least I think I know, is that the rice ration that we were supposed to be receiving at this camp was cut by one of the Jap camp commanders because every time we entered the gates there was a little rice on the truck, a truckload of rice. It was a poor grade of rice, musty and mildewy and everything, but it was wonderful stuff at the time. But they would unload part of it, and then they'd throw a top over what was left, and then they'd take it into Shanghai, and I presume they were selling it to the Chinese.

Marcello: In other words, this officer probably got so much money to buy rice. And he brought the rice, went all through

that procedure, but then only distributed a certain portion of that to the prisoners, and he made a profit off the rest of it in Shanghai.

Crews: That's what we all assumed. And I think it was a pretty good assumption. But it seemed to work out that way all the time.

Marcello: Did you receive any pay while you were working on this rifle range? Did they give you a pittance per day?

Crews: Yes, they made us sign a payroll. I think for a month's work we got fifteen yen or something like that. For fifteen yen you could buy a half a pack of moldy cigarettes.

Marcello: Who would you buy the goods from?

Crews: Well, they set up a little area there, and sometimes from time to time they even got some peanut butter, and the men might buy a half a jar of peanut butter for a month's wages. But mostly they brought cigarettes. And then they gambled those cigarettes because a half a dozen cigarettes didn't mean anything, so they'd put them all in a pot, and somebody would have a deck of cards, and they'd play blackjack. And somebody would win enough cigarettes to smoke. But there was no matches. (chuckle)

Marcello: This is very interesting. I assume that matches were one of the items that you were not allowed to have.

Crews: Right.

Marcello: What other items did they forbid you to possess?

Crews: Well . . .

Marcello: How about a razor?

Crews: Well, we had a razor blade. I had a razor blade. I had an old razor there that I saved back. And another thing that I had . . . I couldn't eat with chop sticks, never did learn to eat with them. I hated them.

Marcello: I assume you just dug in with your hands.

Crews: No, I traded and scrounged around and got an old spoon, an old GI spoon that we had in our canteen kit. And I used that spoon for four years. It worked pretty good because I hated . . . I tried to eat with chop sticks but I couldn't . . . they're something you have to learn to use, I guess.

Marcello: I would assume that as time went on your outfit got to be a pretty scroungy looking bunch.

Crews: Scroungy looking, you bet.

Marcello: Unshaven, I assume. Real long hair.

Crews: Some of them grew beards. I never could stand a beard, so I hacked mine, and, of course, we all had our hair clipped or shaved. It was just for sanitary purposes. And we were a scroungy looking outfit, I'll tell you because after a year or so our clothes began to wear out. Our shoes also wore out, and I remember tearing up one of my sweatshirts and using it for a liner. We couldn't get shoes at all.

Marcello: Did the Japanese issue anything at all like toothpaste or toothpowder or . . .

Crews: No.

Marcello: . . . toothbrushes or anything like that?

Crews: Finally after we went through all of our clothes you could get an old sacky-looking Japanese uniform and a pair of old loose-fitting shoes that we carried for some time.

Marcello: I assume that generally speaking things were pretty rough here in Shanghai.

Crews: Yes, and before we left, of course, the air raids started about midway.

Marcello: I was going to ask you if you were able to keep track of the course of the war. Obviously you were able to observe some air raids, and you kind of knew that perhaps the tide was turning. Is that a safe assumption?

Crews: Well, we got two different groups of pilots in there.

Marcello: I'm surprised they allowed the pilots in your camp.

Crews: They did. I can remember one of them was Bishop, who later plotted the escape that happened near Nanking with a couple of our officers, McBrayer and Huizenga, plus a few others. And Bishop was an ex-Flying Tiger. He was carrying the crudentials of a Navy ensign. If the Japs had known he was an ex-Flying Tiger, they would have eliminated him. But anyway we did get a little bit of

information from him and two other Air Corps officers, and I can't remember their names. And they told us that they had been shot down and that the Japs shot at them in their parachutes.

Marcello: They were able to keep you informed as to the course of the war?

Crews: At the time they were shot down, yes. And we felt pretty encouraged, especially when the P-51's started coming over. There was an airport on each side of our camp, as I remember. I say an airport, but it was really a Japanese airstrip. And they were coming over and bombing these airports and strafing them in the daytime. And the sentries were shooting at them with their rifles from the sentry towers. They were that close!! And at night the big stuff would come over and drop bombs all along the riverfront there. And in the daytime, also, some B-29's would come over high.

Marcello: Now these were probably Chennault's boys. Isn't that correct?

Crews: Probably. They were shooting antiaircraft at the B-29's, but obviously they were not going high enough. They didn't have anything that would reach them. And then we had one guy that we called "Photo Joe." He came over in a P-38, one of those widespread wing things, you know. And every day about the same time we'd start looking at

the sky and pretty soon "Photo Joe" would come over. (chuckle) He was taking pictures of everything.

Marcello: I would assume that these bombing raids did wonders for the morale.

Crews: Yes, they did. We weren't allowed . . . the Japanese wouldn't let us mark the camps. Of course, it was kind of nervous with all this bombing and strafing.

Marcello: Did any of the bombs accidentally drop into the compound?

Crews: No. But we found out later from the Air Corps men that they didn't know that we were there. And that they were going all around us.

Marcello: This is the story that I got. One of the other prisoners that I talked to, after he was released, he congratulated a pilot, you know, for the pinpoint accuracy and what have you of missing this camp. And the pilot said, "Well, hell, we were trying to hit the camp and we couldn't do it." (chuckle)

Crews: I find it was pretty close on several occasions when the sentries were shooting at them with their rifles. And then, of course, I did observe . . . the first thing I did observe that was so thrilling to me was, I believe, the first group of P-51's that came over. And they caught a couple of Jap trainers in the air, and this one of them broke formation right on the tail and, boy, it exploded in the air. He went back up into formation,

and they went about their business. (chuckle)

Marcello: I'm surprised that the Japanese allowed you to observe this air activity.

Crews: They ran us in, and on a couple of occasions we found out--I wasn't involved--but a couple of Marines made the mistake of cheering, and they got stretched out and bayoneted for it.

Marcello: They killed them?

Crews: No, they didn't. They didn't kill them, but they weren't in too good a shape.

Marcello: Did you observe this? Did they make all the prisoners watch this? What was this incident like?

Crews: Well, of course, that was the last time anybody openly cheered during an air raid. I'll put it that way.

Marcello: What was the incident itself like? Can you describe what they did to these guys that had cheered?

Crews: Oh, they just ran out and started screaming at them and rammed them with bayonets. I don't know what they screamed, but they screamed in Japanese. We learned right then and there that we'd better not show any emotion if we liked what was going on.

Marcello: Did you notice any changes in the attitudes of the guards after any of these raids?

Crews: Oh, yes. They would be . . . especially this Ishihara, this guy that everybody hated so much. He would get up

and scream and make a speech and make you work harder, and things of this nature. Of course, I can remember, also, an incident or two when somebody on a working party would put a piece of wire or something on the electric fence. And I can remember one occasion in particular that they made us all stand up at attention all one night because nobody would tell who did it. And finally an old boy that everyone knew didn't do it, Kirkpatrick, went up and took the blame for it. Then they turned all of us loose.

Marcello: Is there anything else at your stay in Shanghai that you think ought to be a part of the record, or do you think we got most of that material at Shanghai? What was your weight down to by the time you left? I'm sure you would only be able to estimate this.

Crews: Well, when I left Shanghai I guess I dropped down to 120 pounds. I was getting pretty thin. Of course, on numerous occasions . . . I might mention we had a sergeant-major by the name of Dietz, and he would stand up for us when the Japs would pull some of their unreasonable stuff. And they'd rack him, and he'd stand up for us again next time. Henry Stowers wrote quite a bit about Dietz in that newspaper article that I'll probably show you when we're through with the interview.

Marcello: I would assume that . . .

Crews: Major Devereux, the hero of Wake Island was there. He was well thought of by all the Marines there.

Marcello: Did the officers work with the enlisted men? I know they did not have to. But did any of them pitch in with the enlisted men on this rifle range?

Crews: No, as I remember it might have been one or two but I don't know. But they had their own quarters away from us. And I'm sure that they weren't treated good at all. They might have had a little better rations. But at this point they didn't have to work. Later when we got to the coal mines they didn't do coal mining, but they did do other work. But in Shanghai the officers . . . we had one officer but I can't remember his name. He was a chief warrant officer from Wake, and he was an old timer. And he liked to garden. He got the Japs to give him some seed, and we planted a whole bunch of stuff, and sometimes we'd have some good soup and stew or something. And we had a regular garden detail. He was the only officer I know of who actually went out, but he pitched right in and labored with the men. I think his name was McKinstry or something like that.

Marcello: I would assume that meat or fish were a rarety in your diet.

Crews: The diet was strictly moldy rice, very little, not nearly

enough, with occasional seaweed soup or fish heads. I don't remember for sure, but I don't believe in Shanghai we got the fried grasshoppers. The fried grasshoppers were later considered to be a delicacy.

Marcello: I would assume that life in the prison camp brought out the very best and the very worst in people. You talked about this sergeant-major awhile ago. And I'm sure that you may have seen examples on the other hand where people would steal, cheat, things like that.

Crews: We had our own system to deal with somebody that would steal. And to give you an example, they had a young sailor off Wake Island that got hungry and stole some food from one of his buddies. I can't remember this boy's name and wouldn't say it if I could because he was a good boy. But they stripped him and publicly whipped him.

Marcello: The prisoners did that.

Crews: And there was no more stealing. That's the way we handled it. Well, we just didn't have any of that stealing, and that's the only case I can remember.

Marcello: Generally speaking, then, everybody was kind of pitching in together. There wasn't a whole lot of individualism.

Crews: No. Like I say, this group of men were Marines, and in that day it meant something to be a Marine, believe it or not.

Marcello: Where did you go from Shanghai?

Crews: Back through the interior of China through Nanking by rail, crowded boxcars, back to Peking.

Marcello: Was this a rather harrowing experience?

Crews: It sure was and I think when they put us on the train in those boxcars . . . what they did was that they walled off an area inside where the doors slide, and they put the guards in that area with some barbed wire.

Marcello: In other words, the guards were between you and the door.

Crews: That's right. And you'd be divided. There'd be a bunch of you in one end and a bunch of you in the other and a guard between you.

Marcello: And these were closed cars, I gather.

Crews: Closed cars just like cattle cars, is what they was. Well, once again there was just room to sit down and pull your feet up under you. Other then that you had to rest and sleep or stretch out and lie in shifts. And they would come by once a day and put a bucket of rice and you'd get a cupful of it or a handful of it in some hot water. Incidently, we never had any cool water the entire time we was in the Shanghai area. We had to boil the water fifteen minutes before it was fit to drink to kill all the bacteria, and we would always drink it before it had a chance to cool off. But anyway, it was about the same conditions in the boxcars, congested, as when we came down before, maybe more crowded.

Marcello: How long did this trip take altogether?

Crews: Well, again, it was weeks. I presume three weeks.

Marcello: It took three weeks to go from Shanghai to Peking?

Crews: Yes. It seems to me like there were several times . . . at this point the American air activity had increased, and there was some railroad bridges out from time to time. It might have taken six weeks. I'm kind of hazy about that. But it was a long time. I can remember spending nights, and on some days they'd let you get out of the boxcars until they repaired the bridge, which might take days to do. And then we'd go on as soon as the bridges were repaired. And I know in Nanking, for instance, the railroad didn't go over the Yangtze or Huang-pu River. I'm not sure which one goes around or through Nanking. But anyway, they unloaded us there and they put us on flat raft-like things that were motorized in some manner but I don't remember how. And they made us cross the river on the rafts. And then we boarded trains from there. And in this area ten or fifteen miles past Nanking, after we had been loaded on the freight cars in Nanking enroute to Peking, is where Lt. Bishop, the ex-Flying Tiger pilot, Lt. McBrayer, and one other lieutenant but I can't remember his name . . . as a matter of fact, McBrayer was a lieutenant over at my platoon in Peking.

Marcello: Well, tell us a little bit about this escape.

Crews: Well, they had a can rigged up in the back to use as a restroom. And they got the Japanese to thinking that they wanted a little privacy back there, so they put a blanket up shielding the can off from the guards who were up in the middle of the boxcars I described previously. And the Japs didn't happen to think about it, but there was a window opening in that area. So behind the blanket they either sawed the bars loose or unscrewed them or whatever they had to do with them, but anyway they had plenty of time to work. The Japs couldn't see them. And somehow they got it open anyway, and one by one they dropped out of the train.

Marcello: How many of them?

Crews: Three of them.

Marcello: Three of them altogether.

Crews: I can remember two names. And, of course, the Japs didn't know they were missing until they took a count the next morning. Every morning they'd line you up and count you off. And when they found that they was missing, well, they stopped the train, and they got some of the clothes that they left behind. They didn't take anything with them. Evidently Bishop was familiar with the area since he'd been a pilot, a professional fighter over there for years, and he figured he could contact the guerrillas near the railroad. So they didn't take their clothing.

They brought some bloodhounds in and let them smell the clothing, and then they took off down the track presumedly to intercept the trail where they left the railroad. And that's the last we saw or heard of them until after the war when we found that they really and truly made their escape. They got in contact with the guerrillas and . . .

Marcello: Did you yourself ever entertain any ideas of escaping?

Crews: Yes. As a matter of fact, this friend of mine, an old buddy, boxer in the Marines, had bunked together and we planned this escape. As a matter of fact, we saved up chocolate bars out of a couple Red Cross boxes.

Marcello: Now where did this take place?

Crews: In Shanghai.

Marcello: You were in Shanghai.

Crews: And we had saved these up for the trip. We'd heard it was a long train trip and that we were going to Japan. We figured that the route would be through China, Peking, Korea and Manchuria . . . the Manchuria line, of course, is where you entered the upper part of the boot in Korea. If we could find out when we were in that area and if we could get out of that train, we'd have a good chance of getting into Russia. And so we saved these candy bars to help us survive and so forth. But, of course, our plans changed because after Bishop and McBrayer made

their escape the Japs were alerted, and they would stand there planting their lights on us all night long. Although we did stop off in Peking for several months anyway, there wouldn't have been any chance to make an escape on up the line on account of these other officers beating us to it.

Marcello: What was it like in Peking? Or let me put it to you this way, what did you do when you got to Peking?

Crews: Back in Peking the sanitary conditions were terrible. It was the worst that we had seen.

Marcello: In what way?

Crews: Well, they put us in an old aircraft hanger. It had a dirt floor, and once again there was no bedding or blankets or anything. You just slept in the dirt. And, of course, the latrines and everything were open and the water was bad.

Marcello: Now was this in the summer?

Crews: This was the summer, yes. And it gets pretty hot in Peking in the summer. Mosquitoes weren't as bad as in Shanghai, but in Peking dysentery had us. We didn't do anything in particular. I think we were there maybe two months.

Marcello: Again, this was more or less just a transit stop.

Crews: It was, yes. And they didn't depend on us to work too much. I doubt if they could have mustered enough men

to work because everyone was sick. So we stayed there . . .

Marcello: Now you came down with dysentery yourself here in Peking?

Crews: Yes, I did. I had had previously amoebic dysentery in Tientsin prior to this when I was in the regular Marine detachment, and I was particularly worried about contacting it again because of that. And I got down with it, and I guess I weighed less than a hundred pounds. I wasn't shaking it off at all, and I was just about to the point of giving up on it.

Marcello: This dysentery is just one constant trip to the head, is it not?

Crews: Yes, but you're losing more then just the food that you've eaten. It's tearing up the . . .

Marcello: A lot of blood and so on, I gather.

Crews: That's right. And it's kind of hard to describe unless . . . if you've had it you'll remember.

Marcello: I would assume that all these people with dysentery simply increased the chances of picking up some other sort of disease, also.

Crews: Right. Anyway, I've always credited it to the fact that we moved out of there . . . they put us on the train again and moved us out of there, and about two days after we left the dysentery cleared up.

Marcello: I gather this was the low point perhaps of your . . .

Crews: It was. Physically it was the low point, yes.

Marcello: So where did you go then from Peking?

Crews: From Peking to Pusan, Korea.

Marcello: In other words, you went from Peking up to Mukden.

Crews: Right.

Marcello: Is that correct? In Manchuria and then down to Pusan, which is in southern Korea.

Crews: That's right, right on the toe of the boot so to speak. The map of Korea looks like a boot.

Marcello: Now you must have been on the train for several weeks again.

Crews: Several weeks. I don't know how many, but it was a long time. But there again in Pusan the conditions were terrible. However, my dysentery had cleared up. But we had a lot of sick people. It was rainy. It seemed to rain . . . it wasn't cold. It must have been in the summertime. But it was raining constantly. And they put us in an old barn-like structure, all of us in one structure.

Marcello: Were you right along the docks?

Crews: We were close to the docks. And in this barn-like structure--I described the closeness of the boxcars--and this was just about how much room we had. We couldn't get outside because it was constantly flooded with rain up over your shoetops. So we were stranded there in this old barn thing with no room to sleep and no room to rest. In many instances I observed, and have done myself, observed someone take some rope, tie himself to a rafter or a post or something in order to get some . . . it got crowded. We were there for weeks and maybe for as long

as a month.

Marcello: You did this just to be able to stand up or what?

Crews: That's right, to be able to . . . just not go out completely and maybe get a little rest if you could get in the right position. I remember they used us there in the daytime for loading and unloading salt ships. We would go aboard these salt ships and carry out salt on our shoulders or load it, whichever the case might be, which wasn't too long, I don't know, maybe two months.

Marcello: I would assume that was a pretty difficult job considering how much weight you hauled. A sack of salt would weigh quite a bit, and then given your conditions it was pretty taxing work.

Crews: It was. It wasn't as bad as coal mining, but it was a little bit more strenuous, I guess, then mountain building (chuckle). But anyway we stayed there for a couple of months.

Marcello: Was this all you did there?

Crews: That's all. As I remember we loaded and unloaded salt ships and tried to get some rest, tried to get somewhere to stretch out.

Marcello: Were you having much contact with the Japanese soldiers or guards at this time? Or did you have Korean guards or something?

Crews: Well, I think at this point we still had the Jap guards.

But we did have some Formosan guards back in Shanghai.

Marcello: And they were pretty rough characters, weren't they?

Crews: The Formosan guards? Oh, I didn't find it to be that way, really. I understand that there was some other Marines that have had bad reports on the Formosan type. But they were kind of looked down on by the Japanese, and it looked like the Japanese were kicking them around a little bit. My relations and the relations of the Marines around me with the Formosan guards was better then with the Jap guards. I understand there had been a little conflict with them, but that's the way I remember it, and that's the way I have to tell it (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, did the outfit suffer any relapses physically here in Korea? Obviously you were working under rather wretched conditions.

Crews: Yes, we certainly were. I don't think that as many were sick in Korea as back in Peking because that was to me the low part of our physical condition here in the second time around in Peking. Just before we left Korea they made us do something that would probably be kind of interesting to you. They had sterilization plants. They called them sterilization plants. And we were told that since their soil in Japan was so sacred and beautiful and clean and everything, they didn't want us dirty Americans going over and messing up their soil and land. So they

took us out to this sterilization plant and made us all strip off our clothes. And they ran us through something, I don't know what--steam bath or something--and they kept us out there nearly all day sterilizing all our clothes and equipment. They didn't even let us go back to this horrible place in there. They placed us immediately aboard ship.

Marcello: Now that wasn't too long a trip from Pusan to Japan, was it?

Crews: No, it wasn't too long, but it was . . . I was very apprehensive, and so was everyone else because we figured at that time that we had submarine activity in the area, and we found out later that we did have many. The ship would go in one direction for a little while, another direction a little while, zigzagging all the way. They had us in the deepest hold on the ship. I don't know how many floors it was down. But I wasn't a bit happy being aboard because I expected a torpedo to come into the ship, and how in the hell were we going to get out!

Marcello: This is strange but all of the prisoners have commented on this. The Japanese would never allow the prisoners up on deck for any extended length of time. And you would have thought that perhaps they would have wanted to have done this so that the American submarines could see the prisoners and perhaps not sink the ship. But evidently--is this true in your case--they did not allow you above deck?

Crews: No, not one minute.

Marcello: How long did this trip take altogether?

Crews: Several days . . . close to a week, I presume.

Marcello: Other then that, how were conditions on the ship?

Crews: Well, a little more crowded then the boxcars, I guess. The food was just whenever you could get it. It seemed like they sent down some kind of a box of food or something. I don't know how they . . . I'm kind of hazy about how they fed us on that ship.

Marcello: Now you'd been a prisoner for a couple of years. Had the mortality rate more or less remained stable by this time? Were you loosing any additional men?

Crews: Oh, we tried not to think about that part of it. Even now I don't like to think about it. We lost a lot of good men. But I don't know if we lost any on that trip itself. I can't recall.

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

Crews: On Honshu, the southernmost island. And immediately that night there was an air raid, and that made us very happy.

Marcello: Now from a chronological standpoint, could you estimate when this occurred? Are we into 1944?

Crews: We're into the last year of the war, yes.

Marcello: This would be what--late '44 perhaps?

Crews: I think so. After we landed and we were subjected to air raids which heightened our spirits a little bit, we were taken off ship and we were marched into Tokyo.

Marcello: Now you landed at Tokyo?

Crews: Near Tokyo, somewhere in the area, because the next thing I remember is that they had us off the train . . . possibly we might have took a train trip between there and Tokyo. I'm not sure. But we wasn't in boxcars. We were still in crowded conditions on passenger-type trains. Again, there was no place to rest, no place to stick your feet. I'll always remember that.

Marcello: Incidentally, when they were marching you through Tokyo were you ever the targets of any sticks or rocks or anything by civilians after the bombing raids?

Crews: Well, that's what I was going to say. The Japanese population turned out and threw garbage and rocks and trash. And we were old and bedraggled, and some of us were barefooted. By then (chuckle) we were in pretty bad shape, I'll tell you. But they threw everything they could throw at us.

Marcello: I would assume that you were glad to get on that train again.

Crews: Yes, we were. Just one thing happened on that trip that I enjoyed. A Jap civilian stepped out of the crowd and

hit somebody with something. I don't know who, but it was one of the Marines. And he stepped out of line, and it so happened that he was far enough away from the Jap guard to not be seen. And he clobbered that Jap and then just jumped back in line and marched on and nobody caught him. (chuckle) That was the one thing that happened in Tokyo that that ragged bunch of marchers really enjoyed.

Marcello: I would assume that this kind of shook you up a little bit, having to march through these crowds of people and not knowing what's going to happen, if the guards would be able to control them or anything like that.

Crews: Well, I don't know. At this point I think that it would have took more then that to shake you up. You really went through so much.

Marcello: Did the thought of suicide ever cross your mind or anybody else's mind? Did you ever talk about anything like that?

Crews: No, not myself. I've seen several of them who got up on the electric fence in Shanghai that we wondered about. But outside of that, it wasn't even talked about.

Marcello: I would assume more then anything food was constantly on your mind.

Crews: Food was 90 per cent of it because everything else seems of no consequence if you've ever been in the condition of starving. Because you're not concerned . . . you catch

yourself wondering what in the world a person would have to worry about if he was getting food, just enough rice. This was of the utmost of importance. This old boy is in Alcatraz don't know how good he's got it. He's getting fed; he's getting food every day. He may work a little, but what's he got to worry about? This is what you think about when you're starving.

Marcello: Also, the old boy in Alcatraz knows when he's getting out.

Crews: Yes.

Marcello: And I would gather that you had no . . . in fact, I would assume that you lost all sense of time almost. By this time you had lost all sense of time.

Crews: Yes, we sure had. Time wasn't of any importance to us and, of course, I think we always made it through our prayers and our hopes. You had hopes or you wouldn't have made it.

Marcello: Did you kind of live from day to day?

Crews: We lived from day to day, but if you didn't still have a glimmer of hope that someday with the help of the Lord you'd get out of there, you never would have made it.

Marcello: Well, I would assume, like you mentioned, that the guys that did give up are still over there today yet.

Crews: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, so where did you go from Tokyo? You were on this train out of Tokyo.

Crews: From Tokyo all the way across Honshu, and there was

another island. I don't know what the name of it is, but you probably do.

Marcello: Well, it would probably either by Kyushu or Shikoku.

Crews: It was Kyushu. It was a very short trip. It took just a few hours it seemed. We boarded another ship and then we were back on land once again. Incidentally, in our travel through the island of Honshu . . . they talk a lot about the atomic bomb destroying so much. They kept the curtains closed on this passenger train, but at times we managed to peek through. And through most of these cities incendiary bombs had already done their work. All you could see was smoke stacks in lots of areas. But anyway, we landed on Kyushu and boarded another train and . . .

Marcello: Were these passenger trains that you were on now?

Crews: That's right. Still crowded, still no room to rest or stretch out, but the passenger train was better then the boxcars in China. We didn't ride in any boxcars in Japan. Anyway, off of Kyushu on to another ship and on to Hokkaido.

Marcello: Now whereabouts did you land on Hokkaido? Do you know offhand?

Crews: Do you mean the city?

Marcello: Right. Was it Hakodate?

Crews: That's right Hakodate. Then a long, long march. Oh, I don't know if it was days or one day or what it was, but it was a long, long march.

Marcello: What time of the year was this?

Crews: It had to be in the spring.

Marcello: Were you being abused by any of the civilians?

Crews: Well, I don't think there was enough of a civilian population in that area.

Marcello: That's the most barren of the four main Japanese islands, and I don't think there's a whole lot of things of strategic importance on Hokkaido.

Crews: I don't remember anything about that. There must not have been too much if any. But it was wilderness, hills, mountains. But anyway after a long, long march that might have been a day or even two days--it seems like we camped out somewhere--we came into this area where you could see slag heaps of coal off everywhere, and you could see a mine here and a mine there. And inbetween there was a stockade. It was like an old western stockade like you might see the Indians attacking. And they marched us into this thing. It had about twelve-foot high split rail logs for a fence and sentry towers on each corner, as was true in Shanghai, of course. I didn't mention those, but they had sentry towers in Shanghai that were around the electric fences. And again they

assigned us quarters, and the only difference here from the old barracks or barns that we were living in since we had been in Japan was that they had racks. You had to pull your shoes off when you went in there and put your shoes in these racks. And there was no mats or anything. Shanghai was the only place we ever had a mat to sleep on. Everywhere else we had to sleep on either the dirt or the floor. And, of course, the mats in Shanghai weren't much better. This place had no mats, but it had a double bunk area. It had a little flat surface and a few steps and then up to another area. They sort of doubled you up in there. I don't know if you've seen the movie The Bridge on the River Kwai, but you saw how they slept in those racks, wooden racks. We had something similar to that. And anyway, they quartered us in these places and began to boil some more fish heads and rice. And I think there must have been . . . all of us were apprehensive, of course, because I was born in Texas on a farm and had been outside all my life, and coal mines were something foreign to me. And it was to the rest of the men, I presume. And I had a horror of going down in those coal mines and working. I just didn't understand. You know, this was the worst thing they could possibly do to me as far as making me work in something I didn't understand. I could build a mountain

and haul stuff and push stuff, but this was something else. I was very apprehensive about it. Then after about three weeks, I think they let us . . . I don't know why they didn't put us in the first day, but for some reason they didn't.

Marcello: They wanted to fatten you up a little bit.

Crews: I guess so. They issued us all one of those headlamps and told us that we were going down into the mines to work.

Marcello: No prior training whatsoever?

Crews: No prior training. So they had two shifts. They had one shift that worked days and one shift that worked nights. And if you worked day shift, you didn't see daylight for a month, you see. You were usually sleeping at night and working during the daytime. Or it was all vice versa. It was all daylight or no daylight for the whole month.

Marcello: Did they alternate you on these shifts?

Crews: Alternated us, changed us every other month.

Marcello: What was your job down in the pits?

Crews: Well, these coal mines were something else, of course. The first day you walked in there . . . it was not a mine with elevators like our mines. You'd go in for miles and down for miles it seemed. You'd go down for a mile or more.

Marcello: On an incline?

Crews: On an incline. And you got seepage, and you had to bend over. You couldn't stand up straight even in the main shaft where it was timbered up pretty good. You still didn't have much room. And it's slick and slimy and mushy, and if you never been in one you can still imagine how horrifying it would be to have to go down there. As a matter of fact . . .

Marcello: Especially for a farm boy from Texas as you pointed out (chuckle).

Crews: Yes. I've often said--and I'll repeat what I've often said--the day the war was over I wouldn't have walked down in that mine and out for $5,000. But you had to do it if you have a bayonet pushing you. But anyway, when you got in the mine, a mile or two in, it branches off into little bitty holes that go up like rat holes, you know, up to another shaft maybe. And they got a ladder that just leans against the ground like this (gesture), and there was no timbering. And you climb up a hundred feet or so to another hole area where you drop coal down into the main chute.

Marcello: Was this pick and shovel work, or did you have pneumatic drills or . . .

Marcello: They had pneumatic drills but the instructors, the people we had working with us, were Koreans. The Jap guards didn't even go up into the coal vein, the untimbered part

where they forced us to go. They stayed down in the timbered shaft. But they'd send the Korean supervisors. And these guys had been over there with the Japs for years, since they took over Korea. They brought them over there to the coal mines. And he was our instructor and would show us how to dig coal. And he was very superstitious. He didn't whistle or do anything in there. He was afraid the walls would come down and all this kind of thing. I wasn't familiar with that either. But anyway, we made it in there. I worked for months, and everytime I went down in there I planned to escape, but I never did go through with it. I'd be out the next day (chuckle).

Marcello: I would assume that you could have suffered from all sorts of rheumatism and what have you from working in this dampness all the time. Your resistance was so low anyhow.

Crews: Of course, I'm sure that you could, and some probably did. But fortunately the war was . . . we didn't have to endure years of that like we did the Shanghai and Peking thing. I don't know how many months it was, but I think it was a little less then a year that we were there.

Marcello: Did you have any contact with civilian workers in this mine other then the Koreans--Japanese civilians?

Crews: No, none whatsoever. I wasn't conscious of there being any civilians in there with the exception of these supervisors. We took them to be supervisors because they'd show this bunch of Marines that had never been in a coal mine how to mine this coal. Well, it was a terrible job. I sympathize with our coal miners in this country. I think they are worth everything they get, and I don't want any of it even now.

Marcello: I would assume that you were permanently black from working in those mines. You couldn't get that coal dust off.

Crews: We'd go in at night just covered with it. They'd issue you a ration of rice for breakfast and lunch.

Marcello: Now obviously this was pretty hard work. Did they increase your ration of rice?

Crews: No, no they didn't increase it.

Marcello: Incidently, were you getting as much rice as the Japanese soldier, or were they cutting your rice allowance?

Crews: In the Shanghai area I'm sure that we weren't. In this area I'm sure that we never got as much rice as the Japanese soldiers.

Marcello: Even if you did, they were giving you the low-quality rice. Is that correct?

Crews: That's right. What I started to tell you is that we'd use this rice they issued us for lunch. We'd go ahead and eat it that morning. We wouldn't bother to take it

with us. We'd spend the day down there and eat the one meal and then come home and get another cup of rice. We got about an ordinary teacupful of rice each meal. Sometimes we had seaweed soup and fish heads or something to go along with it. The fried grasshoppers came on special occasions in here somewhere.

Marcello: What were they like?

Crews: Well, they were good. Anything would have been good at this time, of course, and anything edible would have been real great.

Marcello: Now were the Japanese providing these fried grasshoppers?

Crews: Yes, they would on occasions where they thought that we worked extremely well.

Marcello: Did you ever have a chance to loaf or malinger down in the mines? I assume it was kind of dark. Did you ever get a chance to go off by yourself someplace and just sit down and rest or anything like that?

Crews: No, I didn't. Of course, you never could tell one of those Jap guards was looking. Usually, though, in the coal vein itself the guards might be a mile or two from you. All they had to worry about was the entrance of the thing, and they knew we weren't going anywhere. But these mines were extremely dangerous. It was obvious that they were dangerous. And as an example, this ex-fighter that I have mentioned before in this interview, a real good friend of mine, he and I went through it all

from the start to the last of it. And he happened to be working the opposite shift from what I was working. And we kept an old coat down there. You know, it got cold in the mines, and when you get down there, after awhile you'd get a chill, and we kept this old coat down there. And he told me one time when he came out with his light on . . . at the mouth of the mine before we went in he said, "You all want to be careful when you get down there because the whole thing is going to come in. It's going to cave in on you." So like I said before, I think I said it took us about forty-five minutes to get in after we first entered the mine down to the point where you were working. And sure enough when we got in there . . . sometimes the whole deal caved down onto the cars and everything. From the time they were out to the time we got in the whole damn outfit had fallen in.

Marcello: You were just lucky you weren't at the other end.

Crews: That's right.

Marcello: Were cave-ins a common occurrence?

Crews: Cave-ins were a common occurrence.

Marcello: Did you lose many men in these cave-ins?

Crews: Fortunately, we didn't lose any men. It's miraculous.

Marcello: What sort of treatment did you get from the guards at

these mines? Were they roughing you up any at all or did they more or less leave you alone.

Crews: Well, they left us alone. They weren't even with us except just to get us in there. And, like I say, they didn't go up into the work area at all. I don't know whether they were afraid to or . . . I know I wouldn't if I didn't have to, so I guess that's the reason they weren't going up there.

Marcello: In other words you had a pretty routine day. You worked your shift in the mines, you went back and you slept.

Crews: Right.

Marcello: You went to the mines, and you went back and slept again. And in that sense there was really not much of an opportunity for the guards to harrass you.

Crews: That's right.

Marcello: Maybe at roll call might have been one of the few times. I'm sure they took roll every day.

Crews: Yes. If you missed your number or something when they'd fall you in . . . if you didn't fall in at the same place . . . you had to learn how to count off in Japanese. And if you missed your number and counted wrong, well, you've had it. Things of that nature and misunderstandings of what they said would get you in trouble.

Marcello: Did you have any way here to supplement your diet at all, other then the grasshoppers? In other words, there were

no civilians around, I guess, that you could buy things from.

Crews: No, not at this place. But what I meant to mention . . . something was brought up earlier about the officers working or not working. And when the time came in Hokkaido for us to go to work in the mines, the officers were not included in the mine details. They did not have to work in the mines, only enlisted people. But they did have the officers work on the mountainside gardening and digging and things like that in Japan, whereas in Shanghai and Peking and Pusan the officers had not been required to do any labor. They were required to do manual labor but not coal mining in Japan.

Marcello: Describe the events leading up to your liberation. I'm sure they're probably rather vivid memories. Just start maybe a couple of days before the liberation.

Crews: Well, I'll start with the day, more then likely. What was most unusual about the day--and I don't remember the exact name either--but they told us one morning, "Today you do not work in the mines." They made a big speech. They didn't say why. They said, "Today, you rest. Don't work in the mines."

Marcello: Now did you have any hints before this that the war was on its way over.

Crews: No, no hints. Oh, maybe six months prior, there had been something said by somebody but nothing you could rely on.

Marcello: I'm sure there were all sorts of rumors in these camps.

Crews: But anyway, we had a pretty good idea that something was afoot because they just didn't tell you you don't work because they had us working regardless.

Marcello: This was seven days a week, also?

Crews: That's right. That's one thing about the Japs. I understand that that's one thing the German prisoners didn't have to contend with. The Japs weren't nearly satisfied with starving you; they slaved you also. And the Germans, I understand, they didn't go for that hard labor stuff. But anyway, they told us we didn't have to work in the mines today. Some of the boys, of course, had learned to read Japanese. I don't remember who they were, but they got hold of a Japanese paper somehow or someway, and they read in there where we had dropped the atomic bomb, violated all international laws.

Marcello: I'm sure they just mentioned that it was some kind of a bomb. I'm sure they didn't know what sort of a bomb it was.

Crews: Yes, I think your right there. I think it was nuclear explosion or something of that nature. They knew it wasn't an ordinary bomb. They did come out in the paper and tell you that it wasn't an ordinary bomb. Anyway, these men

after they read it decided to give it a test. So he ran and climbed up the stockade fence--the Jap guards were still on duty, still there--and climbed over, jumped out, and ran into the hills, and all the Jap guards said was, "Come back, come back." They didn't shoot him. So, of course, we knew then that this wasn't some sort of publicity. We knew it was true that the war was over. So they called us together then and made a speech. They were having to surrender, and once again we had been cruel and inhuman, and they had been forced to surrender. They were going to turn the camp over to us, which they did, and at that time we . . . you mentioned earlier about revenge. Well, now there was two officers--and I don't remember who they were--that did think they had a score to settle with the Jap camp commander, and they did go over and pummel him a little bit.

Marcello: Did the guards kind of disappear?

Crews: The guards disappeared. You did not see any more guards. They was gone when the camp commander called us together. They were already gone. So we just took over and formed our own guard, and we kept the camp commander there. We wouldn't let him go. And I think the Sergeant-Major Dietz had something to do with that. They let him keep his sword and let him go out into this Korean coal mining village and commandeer us some beef and some food. And he brought

it all into the camp there, and we boiled it all up, and everybody got sick. They couldn't stand to eat it. Our stomachs had shrunk, and this rich food was too much after we hadn't eaten anything but rice in so long. It didn't agree with anybody, but we all had our meal. My buddy and I got a chicken from somewhere or other, and we cooked it up ourselves . . . two chickens . . . a lot of chicken anyway. We put it on a board and . . .

Marcello: Did you go down into the village yourself?

Crews: Yes.

Marcello: I gather you were exploring the countryside by this time. You were coming and going.

Crews: Yes. We could go where we wanted to. Of course, we didn't go out . . . we stayed together. We were still Marines in spite of the fact that we'd been prisoners for four years. So we got all the food. And then somehow through the radio, they got word for us to mark our camp. You see, we were in the wilds. I mean we weren't where anybody could find us. And so we got some old strips of canvas and sheets and blankets and went out on the hillside, the mountain, and there we marked "POW" in big letters. And in a couple of days they began to fly over and drop food and clothes and beef right off of the battleships and things. They dropped it in parachutes--candy bars, coffee and DDT. We used that DDT to get rid of all the vermin and everything.

Marcello: Where did you get the DDT?

Crews: They dropped it to us.

Marcello: I see.

Crews: They figured we'd need it.

Marcello: And they were right.

Crews: They were right, and that was a welcome relief, too.

Marcello: What were your feelings when you heard that the war was over and that you'd soon be going home?

Crews: Well, believe it or not, the first feeling I had . . . I'm sure it should have been one of happiness that we were free and loose and no more of this and no more of that. The first thing I thought about was no more coal mines because I had a horror of going down into that coal mine. And that was my first thought. And then I know when they got in to us in a couple of days, a couple of Americans, they came in in clean khakis, polished shoes, to tell us how to get out. It might have been four or five days or even a week before they got in to us. We had plenty of food. We were alright as far as being hungry was concerned, but they were the most wonderful looking people we ever saw (chuckle).

Marcello: I'll bet.

Crews: Well, this guy with them who had something to do with publicity, one of the first ones that came in. We

tried to get him to go into that old coal mine to take some pictures, and he wouldn't do it. We scared him off. He just went to the mouth of it, took some pictures, and said, "No, I'm not going in there." I didn't blame him (chuckle). And that just about winds up the Hokkaido part. Of course, once again when we got our orders to get out of there we . . . our first orders for my group was to go aboard an aircraft carrier. And once again we were all marched into Hakodate.

Marcello: You apparently weren't along the coast. You were back in the interior quite a way.

Crews: Yes. And they put us aboard . . . the first ship we were to board was a British destroyer. There was some kind of a mixup. They shuttled us onto this destroyer, fed us good, and we even had soda pop, I think. And . . . well, wait a minute, I got my story wrong. First thing, we went along an aircraft, a C-47. I'm going to have to back up. And we took off, and we got into a storm, and we got almost to Tokyo and had to turn around and go back and land. And then the next order was the aircraft carrier. So I almost got to Tokyo in an airplane . . . didn't . . . had to go back . . . looked like the plane was going to crash. But we finally got back (chuckle). That was the first plane I was ever on, incidently. And then we went aboard the aircraft carrier after we stayed a short time on the British destroyer.

Marcello: I would assume all this time you were eating quite well.

Crews: Yes, we were. And believe it or not, we got aboard that aircraft carrier, a converted job--and I wish I could think of the name of it but I can't--they turned the post exchange over to us, turned the cafe over to us, gave us all the ice cream we wanted. The ship's crew just forgot about us. They were really good people. They really treated us nice. We waited several days aboard this thing and we enjoyed every minute of it. We got to see a movie and all that good food, milk shakes, and anything else. And then we arrived in Yokohama. Then from there we went to an LST for a couple of days. For some reason they took some of us ashore and walked us around in Yokohama. And then we went aboard a troop-ship and headed for Guam, and when we arrived at Guam they put us all in the hospital and checked us out thoroughly for a couple of months. And fortunately my group boarded an airplane, a C-54 to Honolulu. And then in Honolulu they stopped us and processed us again, checked us over in the hospital. And then it was some-thing wonderful to see all those women and everything that you hadn't seen for awhile. Well, we got food and clean clothes. And then they put us aboard a PBY-2. I'll never forget . . . they had one of these big Pan-American clippers sitting out there. And we was marching

down to the dock to catch the plane, and, boy, we saw that Pan-American clipper and we thought, "Boy, we're going in style. Man, we get to go in a Pan-American clipper."

Marcello: A couple of questions come to mind at this point. As you look back on it, what do you think pulled you through more then anything else?

Crews: I guess faith in the Lord and maybe some of my old farmer background or something like that. That might have had something to do with it.

Marcello: Also, there was the determination of not to give up. I'm sure that certainly was a factor.

Crews: You had to have that. That was certainly one thing that you couldn't possibly have made it without.

Marcello: At that time were you very bitter toward the Japanese?

Crews: No, I was too thrilled to get out of there, and everything was a brand new day. It was just great, especially when my health was alright.

Marcello: I gather then that you did not suffer any permanent disabilities as a result of . . .

Crews: No, evidently not. I think I was just extremely fortunate in that respect. There's no doubt about that.

Marcello: Do you still eat rice today?

Crews: I don't have anything against rice. I don't prefer rice when I have it on a Mexican plate or something. I usually take a spoonful of it and then push it back. I have nothing against rice. If it wasn't for rice I

wouldn't be here.

Marcello: One of the prisoners told me that rice is the greatest food in the world because anything you add to it makes it taste better.

Crews: Yes. The rice that we survived on over there is a different kind of rice. You couldn't survive on our rice.

Marcello: What would they do, just steam it?

Crews: Well, let's see. The rice had most of the hull on it, and this is where you get the food value. Polished rice like ours is . . . wouldn't have enough food value for survival, I don't think. I'm not a medical man, but I've been told that by people who do know something about it.

Marcello: Let's get back to the Pan-American clipper.

Crews: Okay, anyway, we saw this big, wonderful luxury-type clipper sitting there, and we were all elated because we were all leery of this C-54 anyway because it had no pontoons on it. But as we got near the clipper, on the other side we saw a smaller, ramshackle ship. And it turned out to be a PBY-2, Navy flying boat (chuckle). This was our boat, our ship. So we went aboard the PBY-2, and we spent sixteen hours in the air between Honolulu and San Francisco. That's a long time to spend in the air nowadays. If you're not familiar with all

those ships the tail kind of swings back and forth like this (gesture), and it was quite a thrilling ride to tell you the truth. And we'd never been on anything like that before. So we didn't get the Pan-American clipper into San Francisco. We got the PBY-2.

Marcello: That may have been a temporary letdown, but I'm sure you didn't let it bother you that long.

Crews: No, we sure didn't.

Marcello: Now when you got back, had your parents given you up for lost, or had they known that you were alive and were a prisoner?

Crews: Oh, they had received, like I said, maybe two or three letters during my internment. And when we arrived in Guam, of course, we were two or three months' away from the States, I wrote them letters, and they knew I was alright.

Marcello: Did you have any trouble readjusting to civilian life when you got back?

Crews: Yes. Not a great deal, really.

Marcello: What was the toughest adjustment that you had to make?

Crews: Well, I don't know. I guess I'll have to answer that by saying that if I had adjustments to make, and I'm sure I did, I wasn't really too aware of them. I know I had a little trouble in movies and things. I was real anxious to get out and not stay inside a place for

any length of time. And I know when I went to work for the police department, at one time I heard that I might have to do a little time up in the jail. And I went to the captain and told him that I didn't have anything against jails, but I couldn't work in one and I told him why. I didn't want any part of it, even as a guard in the jail. And if I was going to have to do that, well, I'd just quit now. And so he didn't make me go to work in the jail (chickle).

Marcello: In other words, you could say then probably the biggest adjustment that you had to make was your confined spaces.

Crews: That's right. I'm still that way today. I still don't like to be confined to certain areas too long in the same place. I like to get out and work in the yard, anywhere, just to get out.